

A Reason of Transgression

20 June 2007

Modern translations have, for the most part, updated the English from the King James, and other vernacular versions of the Protestant Reformation. So, using a variety of translations often helps when trying to understand scripture. Along with the Lexicons available today, a good dictionary, which shows archaic as well modern meanings of words, is very useful when using the King James Bible as a basis of study. While use of a word may have been accurate several hundred years ago, it is better to update them to a modern vocabulary so that one can have an accurate rendering of texts today. Two such words are considered in the following scripture:

Heb 9:15-18: *15. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament⁽¹²⁴²⁾, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator⁽¹³⁰³⁾. 17. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. 18. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.*

The KJ translation of the verses above are misleading according to the general understanding of the underlined words. The modern meaning of ‘testament’ is: *a legal document declaring a person’s wishes regarding the disposal of their property when they die.* A ‘testator’ is the person leaving a will. Testament also means *an expression of conviction*, the meaning which seems to be conveyed in some uses of the word. The archaic meaning of the word is: *a covenant between God and man* - which better fits the word ‘covenant.’ A covenant is an agreement between two parties, a will is not; the covenant from God to man contains a promise, a will does not; and, the covenant of God has a mediator, a will does not require a mediator.

There is even disagreement on these verses between scholars. Notice these quotes:

The ‘first testament’ is the first dispensation of the covenant of grace, reaching from the first promulgation of it to Adam after the fall, to the death of Christ... (John Gill’s Exposition, on Heb 9:15)

In these verses the apostle considers the gospel under the notion of a will or testament, the new or last will and testament of Christ, and shows the necessity and efficacy of the blood of Christ to make this testament valid and effectual. (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, on Heb 9:15-22)

Of the New Testament - Not “testament” - for a “testament,” or “will,” needs no mediator; but of the “new covenant,” or the new “arrangement” or “disposition” of things under which he proposes to pardon and save the guilty... (Albert Barnes’ Notes on Heb 9:15)

There was no proper reason why our translators should render *diatheke* by testament here, when in almost every other case they render it covenant... (Adam Clarke’s Commentary on Heb 9:15)

Because the Bible is described as Old and New Testaments, I can see why some churches teach that the Old became obsolete at the cross and is no longer in effect, and the New Testament is God’s ‘last will and testament’ put into effect at the Son’s death. Think about the way a will is used today and how this idea conveys a faulty message, leading people to miss out on richness presented in figures by the Old Testament, and many other ideas to substantiate correct teachings. The original Hebrew Bible IS the substance of the Greek version, called New Testament today.

The Greek word translated ‘testator’ is a verb meaning ‘to arrange, set in place’, and the context implies ‘an arranged sacrifice’ to ratify a new covenant. **Heb 7:26-27:** 26. *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;* 27. *Who needs not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself (as a sacrifice).* Scripture says (Rev 13:8) that the Son of God was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world - i.e. according to the Father’s plan, the Son was set-up as a sacrifice before creation even started. Here are the same verses in Hebrews 9 re-written below:

15. And for this cause he is mediator of a new covenant, death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions against the first covenant, so that the called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16. For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the arranged (sacrifice). 17. For a covenant is affirmed upon death, since it is of no strength at all while the arranged (sacrifice) lives. 18. Whereupon, the first (covenant) was not dedicated without blood.

Many of the newer versions, including the New King James, have translated *diatheke* ⁽¹²⁴²⁾ as “covenant” or “agreement”, making the texts more accurate. Example: **1 Cor 11:25:** *...This cup is the new testament in my blood...* This verse, as well as the those in Matthew, Mark and Luke, might lead one to think that Jesus was simply saying that the shedding of his blood was a testimony of a new era, or dispensation. Rewriting it to say *This cup is the new covenant in my blood*, says that the agreement has changed.

Understanding why the change and its effects are important, which importance is conveyed in the next two verses: **1 Cor 3:6, 14-15:** 6 *who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life...* 14 *but their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ.* 15 *But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart.* Keep in mind that the ‘new covenant’ is God’s writing of the understanding of the law in our hearts. This same law is that which most denominations say is no longer in effect. Anyone thinking that the old law is no longer in effect will not consider viewing it from God’s point of view. Paul is saying that we are sufficient as ministers, not applying the letter of the law literally, but applying the spiritual understanding of it. Everyone starts out under the law because we have a veil of flesh that keeps us from understanding it. The Jews of old Jerusalem are a type of the church today, which says they are not under the law, when in fact they are in bondage to it. A spiritual Jew applies the law to the inward man.

Summary: Generations have taken up with the idea that God gave the law as an extension of the Abrahamic covenant, and therefore conclude that after the cross all of it was fulfilled, and therefore done away. This idea comes from reading about the old and new covenants, but not understanding that what changed is how we are to view the law. Now, consider that redemption was for transgressions against the first covenant. From what did the outward transgressions stem?

Ps 81:10-11: 10. *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* 11. *But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel [consented not].* **Jn 5:37:** *And the Father himself, [who] sent me, has borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.* The instruction to Israel was to obey Yahweh’s voice and keep His covenant (Ex 19:5), at which they were never consistent. Not obeying God’s voice is the reason for transgressions and why the law was given. However, the law was to be obeyed by listening to God too. **Dan 9:10-11:** 10. *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.* 11. *Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice...* This emphasis on hearing and

doing what God says is through-out the Bible (cf Jer 28:13; Mt 7:24). God told Samuel that it was better to obey the voice of God than to offer a sacrifice (1 Sam 15:22). Ideally, had humanity obeyed the spoken word, they would never have sinned, and it would not have been necessary for the Son of God to die.

Carefully read the account of Adam and Eve and it can be seen that God gave instruction to Adam about the two trees. From Eve's dialogue with the serpent, it appears that Adam enhanced the instruction when he relayed it to her. The perversion, by adding man's understanding, can be seen with the sacrifices of Able and Cain! Now, can you imagine sinful people who will not listen to God, and who are passing verbally their version of truth to succeeding generations, and then those, thousands of years later trying to understand what is truth?

Our experience today is that we were drawn to Jesus by God, then stopped listening, and began to keep the written word (Bible) according to our own, or someone else's understanding. First, we were under the law (i.e. governed by the law), then we learned that we are to listen to the voice of God (under Christ - he is our head) in order to know how to understand and keep it. Israel's experience is a type of our experience - just as the Levites were the teachers of Israel, we have theologians and pastors today who teach the church, and the result is the same - the majority listen to them, but not to the spirit of God. So, God has implemented a new covenant whereby He will write the law in our understanding, which still requires us to listen to the still small voice. This whole process is an experience in listening and learning. Those who will not listen, Jesus will have come on them as a thief - totally unexpected.

Zech 6:12-13: *12. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch (the son); and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple (between my ears) of the Lord (the Father): 13. Even he (the Branch) shall build the (his own) temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.* The counsel of peace will be between us and God when we learn to listen, understand and obey His voice.