

II. The New Testament: Background Survey Materials

A. Some definitions

1. Testament:

a. from a Latin root with the idea of "will" or "testament"...the decree of a testator. This is the common meaning..apparently an irrevocable action

b. Classically but in a rare sense it is an arrangement made by one part for another which the latter may accept or reject. It is used this way in the LXX to render the Hebrew term "b'rith".

c. In both these cases the Latin term renders the Greek diatheke

d. The Hebrew term "b'rith" suggests:

(1) a mutual agreement between two parties.

(2) an obligation imposed by a ruler on vassal or subordinate rulers

(3) an obligation imposed by God

The terms "dipleuric/monopleuric" and "bilateral/unilateral) are frequently used to explain the relationships in the aspects of "testament" along these lines. In the final analysis, neither "testament" nor "covenant" really captures the idea of "b'rith"

2. New Testament

As far as I can tell the term was popularized by Tertullian about 200 AD and used to express the final will or legacy of God through Christ Jesus. When we compare/contrast it with the Old Testament covenants we come up with the idea that the Old Testament demonstrated a covenant of blood based upon legal and moral expectations and this was typified in the repetitious offerings. The New Testament is a covenant of blood based upon the gracious self-offering of the Lamb of God, finalized in one offering for sin forever. The New Testament is foretold in the Old and is superior in effect and application, not in moral tone or posture. God is one and His decrees are one in that extent. But in the New Testament we see completion of what had been given by type and shadow in the Old Testament. The legal compact is finalized by the death of the testator.