



Sunday 12th September 2021. The Last Will and Testament of Jesus. Hebrews 9:15-28

You may think it a strange topic for a sermon but it is extremely relevant to all of us. The Greek word translated as *covenant* can also be translated as *testament*. The difference is the context. Here, the writer had in mind a testament.

When someone has a will drawn up they are specifically and legally showing who gets the inheritance. As long as you are living the will doesn't come into effect. It only has power when testator dies.

I wonder how many of you have a Will? Having a will is common practice in our society and most people understand how it works. The practice of having a will and testament is not something modern, it was an ancient practice.

The Will and testament specifies who will receive the legacy of a person – that is the money or property left behind. I have just updated my Will and it was a challenge to work out how to divide up what may be left when I die between my brothers, nieces and nephews. And though it may not amount to too much, this will be my material legacy to them, but I pray they will also see my Spiritual legacy.

Every now and then, old ways become superseded, outdated and irrelevant. For example you may have used a typewriter in the past, learnt how to touch type even. Then there was the arrival of the personal computer and it was only a short time later that the typewriter was relegated to history. The PC was simply superior – the new technology made the old obsolete, the typewriter basically died.

However, there is a connection as there are some similarities between the typewriter and the PC. They both have the same aim – to type up documents, they have the same basic keyboard.

That is the kind of relationship in Hebrews between the old and the new. In the Old Testament, God revealed the pattern of what was required for sinful people to relate to Him. This pattern became obsolete once the perfect reality appeared on the scene. The New Testament is all about how Jesus brings the superior reality.

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. He died before the Hebrews could journey into their inheritance which was the Promised Land. Even the first will and testament, the old covenant, had to have a death in order for an inheritance to be received.

The Jewish people understood that on the day of atonement when their High Priest went in to make atonement for the sins of the people, the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat covered their unintentional sins committed in the previous year.

The sacrifices of the old covenant were merely symbolic of what Christ would eventually do and they only covered sins. They did not remove them once-for-all. They were never a means of salvation. They were merely a symbol of salvation. They were only marks of faithful obedience of those who trusted in God to save them by His grace alone.

The effectiveness of the old covenant was inextricably linked to the sacrificial death of Christ. It all pointed to Him and symbolized Him. All of the symbolic sacrifices, therefore, would be absolutely meaningless apart from Christ.

So let's take a look at the Legacy that Jesus has left us.

Firstly, the legacy of forgiveness of sins. Jesus had a grand legacy – He has passed onto all of us Eternal Blessings.

After the cross and resurrection Jesus declared before His ascension that His people – that's you and I, would be given forgiveness of sins.

Luke's Gospel 24:46-47 Christ said "You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in His name to all nations - starting from here, from Jerusalem!"

No greater legacy or gift could have been left to another than the forgiveness of sins. When a person finally closes their eyes in death, there is nothing on earth that this world contains that would be more important than having their sins, which stand between them and God, to be forgiven.

Sin separates us from God – *Isaiah 59:1-2* tells us that God still has His arms, He can still save and He can still hear. But it is the sinful lives that are lived, that causes the split between you and God.

And without forgiveness there is separation from God for all eternity.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says: *Those who refuse to know God and refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus, will pay for what they've done. Eternal exile from the presence of the Master and His splendid power is their sentence.*

Secondly, the Legacy of Eternal Life.

Linked to forgiveness is the promise of eternal life in heaven with God.

The greatest legacy that could ever be imagined – passed on to us.

Hebrews 10:19-23 states that *Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of His sacrifice – Jesus cleared the way into the Holy of Holies. And because of this we should remain confident that we're presentable inside and out.*

Take for example when a rich person dies. There is often a crowd of people who knew them, going around saying – I sure hope my name is in the will. And sadly, I know of a number of families who have continued to fight for years afterwards because either their name was not included or they didn't receive the portion they expected. This is all about earthly possessions only.

Jesus's Will and Testament went into effect at the moment of His Death.

As I mentioned earlier, there has to be a death before the will can take effect. When Jesus died upon the cross a "New Testament" or new will,

went into effect. This New Testament replaced the Old Testament with all of its laws and regulations, as prophesied in Jeremiah 31:33-34

As part of the new covenant, the Lord has put His instructions into everyone's heart. He will be our God and we will be His people. And we won't need to teach anyone this for all will know God and He will forgive our sins and not remember them anymore.

When doing a new will, there is a clause which states – this will and testament replaces any prior wills or testaments in this person's name. That is the same in the Bible – the New Testament supersedes the Old Testament in relation to the annual animal sacrifices. Jesus' shed blood replaces, and we have forgiveness once and for all.

But just like someone wanting to continue to follow the information contained in an old will, those who continue to follow the Old Testament or Old Covenant, will be cut out of the will.

The Apostle Paul stated this clearly in Galatians 5 when he challenged his readers that if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ. You have fallen away from God's grace.

The Conditions of the Will.

Every will and testament have conditions which must be met for those included to inherit the legacy. The author of the will has the absolute right to make whatever conditions they wanted to make.

Jesus has done the same and, most times children are the beneficiary of their parent's legacy, meaning they must be one of the testator's children.

To be one of God's children we must be adopted into His family or to be "born again" spiritually. We are not the natural born children, but we become a part of His family through adoption. We become legitimate and intimate members of God's family.

Are you included in Jesus' Last Will and Testament?

Have you been adopted into God's family and thus become an Heir of Christ?

You can become an heir of Christ through the grace of God found in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Titus 3 tells us: "He saved us because of His mercy. He washed away our sins giving us new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

Because of His grace we will inherit eternal life."

To gain this grace you must believe in Christ, confess your faith in Him, repent of your sins and be baptized into Christ as specified by Jesus in His will.

Mark 16:16 declares that anyone who believes and is baptised will be saved, but anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.

Only those who are baptized into Christ are children of God and thus heirs of eternal life.

Galatians 3:26-27 declares "you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus and have been united with Christ in baptism – just like putting on new clothes.

To remain an heir of Christ after baptism, you must maintain an obedient faith in the Lord until the very end.

A new Mediator has now died, bringing in the power of the New Covenant. Christ had to die because only His death would cause the new covenant to take effect. Jesus will appear one more time. This time His coming will not have a thing to do with our sin but will be for the purpose of completing our salvation.

All people die physically, but Christ died so we wouldn't have to die spiritually.

- Jesus has forgiven our past sin when He died on the cross.
- Jesus sacrificed Himself once for all.
- Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin.
- Jesus appears before God for us now in heaven.
- Jesus has promised to return and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

Because of the death of Jesus everything we have of eternal value as believers is in heaven – our sanctuary; our heavenly Father; our Saviour; our citizenship and our treasures.

Sometimes this earth can be a hard place to live. The things that happen to us happen because of this sinful world- failing health; failing finances; failing trust in others – nothing will fail in heaven.

As believers, we can be confident that because of Christ's death, everything is settled in heaven and His last will and testament has taken effect. Our inheritance is waiting for us. What great promises we have concerning our inheritance.