

# 2 Corinthians 3:6

LESSON 13

## The New Testament Not of the Letter

1. **“Able Ministers of the ...”** – *How can it be?*
  - a. This is not applying the new testament to the church, the mystery body of Christ.
  - b. *“How can we be able ministers of the new testament if we are not in it?”*
    - i. Can a minister of marriage not be a part of the marriage?
    - ii. Can a minister of education not be in school themselves?
    - iii. Can a minister of welfare not qualify for the welfare?
    - iv. Can a minister to a foreign country not be a citizen of it?
    - v. We are ambassadors. We are not a nation, Israel, under law or covenants.
  - c. We can also be able ministers of the law – Rom 3:19-21, 13:4, 1Ti 1:8, Gal 3:19, 24
  
2. **Note: Testament vs. Covenant** – *Are they different?*
  - a. Testament – a statement of will dedicating and distributing inheritance after death
  - b. Covenant – an agreement/contract between living people obligating responsibility, performance, or outcome (e.g marriage, mortgage, rainbow)
    - i. He who stays alive makes a covenant; he who is about to die a testament.
    - ii. Testaments stated before death – Jer 31, Eze 36, Ps 110:4 (Heb 7:22), Mt 26:28
    - iii. Testaments require death, and are of force after death -Heb 9:15-20
    - iv. Blood necessary for dedication, purging, remission – Heb 9:18,22
    - v. The new testament establishes a covenant (a better one). Heb 10:9-10
  - c. Both recorded, written, & witnessed to be enforced/fulfilled to the letter
    - i. Both made with Israel – Rom 9:4, Eph 2:12, Heb 8:8, Mk 14:24, Luke 22:15-30
    - ii. Are the words different? Yes. Do they overlap? Yes. Is this the key? No.
    - iii. Interchangeable? Yes. See - Heb 9:15/12:24; Exo 24:8/Heb 9:20; Rev 11:19
    - iv. Do both speak to the same salvation to Israel? Yes. Is NT the mystery? No.
    - v. Is “testament” the right word? Yes. Paul ministers by the cross not covenant.
  
3. **“New Testament”** – *What is it?*
  - a. The biggest problem with this verse for people = not knowing what the NT is.
    - i. NT not merely Jesus Christ, grace, blood, or faith (though they’re necessary)
  - b. New Testament = Israel’s salvation in Christ. ( ← *How are they in Christ before Paul?*)
  - c. The NT salvation promised in the OT (Jer 31, Isa 45) dedicated by the cross (Heb 8:6), will be delivered when Christ returns (Rom 11:25-27; Acts 3:19-21)
    - i. The mystery never promised, established, then delivered b/c it is a mystery
    - ii. You not under the NT b/c you are not Israel, not under law, never promised
  - d. The Mystery = Salvation in the body of Christ (w/o Israel, law, covenant)
  
4. **“Not of the Letter...”** – *A qualifying statement*
  - a. We minister the new testament NOT OF THE LETTER!
  - b. The letter declares who is Israel – Rom 2:27-29 – A Jew defined by letter
  - c. The letter of the covenant – *“as it is written”* – Rom 11:26-27
  - d. The letter of the law – John 7:15, Rom 7:6

- e. Prophecies are recorded with letters = what is written.
- f. Hebrews concerns the new testament of the letter (Israel, law, covenants, prophecy)
- g. "but of the Spirit" - The NT not of the letter = no Israel, law, covenant → Spirit
- h. Testaments are written with letters and blood.
- i. The NT provided the Spirit to Israel to fulfill the law and covenant.

**5. Our Ministry of the New Testament**

- a. Ministering the NT not of the letter, is ministering it acc. to the mystery - 2 Co 5:16
- b. Who would you minister the new testament to? Those stuck under OT law.
  - i. How? Show the inadequacy of the OT and the need for grace, Spirit, Christ
  - ii. Establish how to identify true Israel - Rom 2:29, Rom 9:5-8
  - iii. Establish the law through the preaching of grace - Romans 3:31, Gal 4:21
  - iv. Establish the necessity of the Spirit - Gal 3:1
  - v. Establishing Israel's future salvation by grace and faith - Rom 9-11
- c. Our ministry found in 2 Cor 3:3, 8,9 - of grace, of the Spirit, righteousness by faith
- d. If we are not able ministers of the NT, then we can't be of the mystery - Rom 15
- e. We are able ministers of the NT because of our knowledge of the mystery
- f. The mystery of Christ can explain the NT, but the NT cannot explain the mystery.

	Israel \ Christ		Covenant \ Christ		Works \ Faith		Law \ Heart	
OT	Israel		Covenant		Works		Law	
NT	Israel	Christ	Covenant	Christ	Works	Faith	Law	Heart
Mystery		Christ		Christ		Faith		Heart
	Israel \ Spirit		Covenant \ Grace		Israel \ Salvation		Law \ Spirit	
OT	Israel		Covenant		Israel		Law	
NT	Israel	Spirit	Covenant	Grace	Israel	Salvation	Law	Spirit
Mystery		Spirit		Grace		Salvation		Spirit
<b>2 Cor 3 Theme: Sufficiency</b>			Letter \ Spirit		Sufficient?		Who is Sufficient?	
	OT		Letter		X	No		
	NT		Letter	Spirit of God	✓	Yes		
	Mystery			Spirit of God	✓	Yes	God	

This chart shows the relationship of the old testament, new testament, and the mystery. It is intended to show how an able minister of the mystery can be an able minister of the new testament not of the letter according to 2 Cor 3:6.

**Note 1** - What the OT and NT have in common are not elements of the mystery.

**Note 2** - What the NT and mystery have in common are not featured in the OT.

**Note 3** - What makes the mystery distinct is not what it has in common with the NT, but what it has different; namely what is missing (without Israel, without covenants, without law, without works, etc.)

**Note 4** - This chart does not adequately describe the mystery of Christ. There is much more to it than what appears here. For example, the new creature the body of Christ is the mystery of Christ, and yet this chart does not explain this nor our walk, destiny, position.