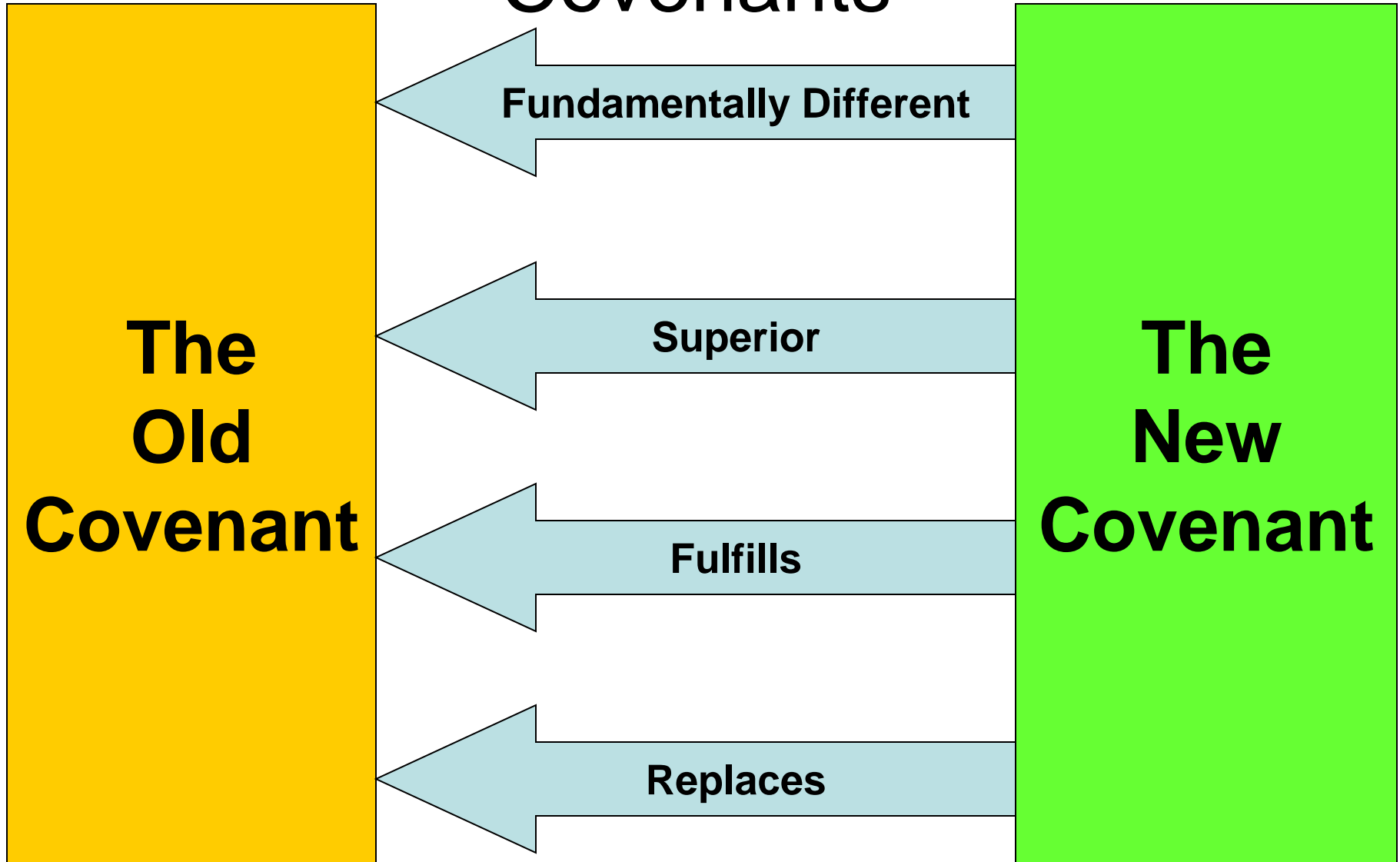


New Covenant Theology



A Comparison of the Old and New Covenants



A scenic view of a waterfall cascading over rocks in a lush green forest. The water is white and frothy as it falls, surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. The background shows a river or lake flowing through the forest.

The New Covenant Fulfills The Old Covenant

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- Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, tells us that his purpose in coming to earth was to **fulfill** all that was written in the Old Covenant scriptures:
 - **Matthew 5:17** - *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*
 - **abolish** = *kataluo* - to dissolve, to destroy, demolish, deprive of success, bring to naught
 - **the Law or the Prophets** = A phrase that refers to the Old Testament in its entirety
 - **fulfill** = *pleroo* - to make full, to fill up, to complete, to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting, to make complete in every particular, to bring to realization

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- Matthew uses the same Greek word (that is translated “fulfill”) in relation to Jesus at least 13 times (outside of Matthew 5:17). In each case, Matthew shows where Jesus or an event related to Jesus’ coming fulfills an Old Testament prophecy:
 - **Matthew 1:22** – Virgin Birth, Called Immanuel
 - **Matthew 2:15** – Called out of Egypt
 - **Matthew 2:17** – Mothers weeping over babies
 - **Matthew 2:23** – From Nazareth
 - **Matthew 3:15** – To “fulfill all righteousness”
 - **Matthew 4:14** – A great light
 - **Matthew 8:17** – Healing
 - **Matthew 12:17** – God’s Chosen Servant
 - **Matthew 13:35** – Spoke in Parables
 - **Matthew 21:4** – Riding on a donkey
 - **Matthew 26:54,56** – The events of His arrest
 - **Matthew 27:9** – Betrayed by 30 pieces of silver

The New Covenant Fulfills the Old Covenant

- So in other words, Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in that they point to Him, and He is their fulfillment.
- **Luke 24:44** – *[Jesus] said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*

The New Covenant Fulfills the Old Covenant

- The Old Testament (Law and Prophets) Contained Many:
 - Specific Commands
 - Promises
 - Prophecies
 - Types and Shadows
- Christ Fulfills the Old Testament By His Entire Mission
 - By what He was
 - By what He taught
 - By what He did
 - By what He is still doing
 - And by what he will yet do

The New Covenant Fulfills the Old Covenant

- In Matthew 5, Jesus goes on to say:
 - **Matthew 5:19-20** - *Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*
- What does Jesus mean by this? Does he mean that we are to continue keeping all of the Old Testament Laws, including the commands to offer sacrifices, not eat certain foods, etc.?
- Or does he mean that we are now to “keep” these laws by obeying **him**, because these laws pointed to him and he is their **fulfillment**?

The New Covenant Fulfills the Old Covenant

- Notice how Jesus goes on in that passage to point **away** from the Old Testament commands and practices and points instead towards **his** commands:
 - **Matthew 5:21-22** - *You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.*
 - **Matthew 5:27-28** - *You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
 - **Matthew 5:33-34** - *Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.” But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all...*



The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant



- **Hebrews 8:7-8,13** - *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. ⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... ¹³ In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant



- **2 Corinthians 3:6-7, 11** – [God] has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end... ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant



- **Ephesians 2:14-16** – *For [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made the two [peoples – Jews and Gentiles] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross.*

(NIV)

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant



- **Colossians 2:14, 16-17** – *having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross . . . Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*
(NIV)

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant

- In Summary, the New Testament writers tell us that the Old Covenant, including *all* of its parts (laws) which was:
 - “Being brought to an end”
 - “Growing old”
 - “Soon to disappear”
- Is now:
 - “Obsolete”
 - “Abolished”
 - “Cancelled”

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant

- The Old Covenant has been **replaced** with a new and better covenant that is more glorious and permanent!
 - **Hebrews 8:6b** – *The covenant [Jesus] mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.*
 - **Hebrews 8:13a** – *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete.*
 - **2 Corinthians 3:11** – *For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.*

The New Covenant Replaces The Old Covenant

Martin Luther put it like this:

- *That Moses does not bind the Gentiles can be proved from Exodus 20, where God himself speaks, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' This text makes it clear that even the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us. For God never led us out of Egypt, but only the Jews. The sectarian spirits want to saddle us with Moses and all the commandments. We will just skip that. We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver – unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law... Paul and the New Testament... abolish the Sabbath, to show us that the Sabbath was given to the Jews alone.*

“How Christians Should Regard Moses,” *Luther's Works* 35:165-166 (quoted in Zaspel and Wells *New Covenant Theology*, p.152)

Questions

- Why do Christians who reject New Covenant Theology think Matthew 5:17 teaches that we're still under the Law of Moses? How would show them that they have missed the point that Jesus is actually making in that verse?
- In my experience, Christians who hear about New Covenant Theology for the first time have the greatest difficulty accepting the idea that the New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant. Why do you think that is?