

Text: Heb. 8:6b-13

Title: "Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the better covenant"

Time: 8/23/2015 pm

Place: NBBC

Introduction: One of the things that came out of the recent banking crisis in our country was a bunch of unexpected bank fees that were snuck in one unsuspecting customers like me. They put through those fees, took my money, and would not give it back. I had no recourse. You might say that I wished at the time that there were a mediator between the Bank of America and me. I was in trouble for lack of a mediator.

The Bible is clear that sinful man needs a mediator between himself and his holy God. When it comes to God's dealings with the nation of Israel, it speaks of two mediators between God and Israel (Moses and Christ) and two covenants that they mediated between God and Israel (the first and the second, or the old and the new).

The first covenant was enacted after the Exodus at Sinai (v. 9), and Moses was the mediator of that first covenant (Gal. 3:19-20); the second covenant was enacted in the days of Jeremiah among the ruins of Jerusalem (vv. 6-7). It was actually a renewal of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (Gal. 3:15-18).

So the author of Hebrews contrasts these covenants, the old covenant (the Law given at Sinai) and the new covenant (the promise about Israel's glorious future given to Jeremiah and Ezekiel) in the same way Paul contrasts the old covenant (the Law covenant of works) with the still older covenants (the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants of promise).

One category of covenants (the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New) is better than the other category of covenant (the Law of Sinai) because it is legislated on the basis of better promises. The promise is the same promise that saves our souls – the promise that Christ would die for the sinner’s sin.

The promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants are all promises made to Israel and not the local church, but they tell us what our lives should be like because the work of Christ that guaranteed their fulfillment is also the work of Christ that saved our soul and made us part of Christ’s church.

I want us to see this evening some ways in which the New Covenant is better than the old covenant and what that means for our lives as Christians.

I. The New Covenant finishes the job of atonement; the old covenant could not (vv. 8-9).

Application: What went wrong with the old covenant? One party did not continue in the agreement. Sinful man sinned. He could not earn heaven by fulfilling the old covenant. What is the solution offered by the New? Very simply, God says, “I will finish it!” [v. 8, *make = sunteleso; consummate; bring to completion*; v. 9, *made = poieo; make*].

Illustration: Compare the student who has a group project and one party in the group fails to get his part of the assignment done. The whole thing fails. That is what happened with the first covenant’s arrangement.

Application: So in this New Covenant, God does all the work. In the ratification of the New Covenant through the

blood of Christ, the work is done. Under the old covenant, the work could never be done, for it was righteous assignments assigned to sinful man.

As New Covenant believers, we should not be worried that we will somehow someday fail to receive the blessings of the Covenant. Christ is the author and finisher of the faith (Heb. 12:2). He who began a good work in us will perform or complete it until (against) the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6). The New Covenant finishes the job; the old covenant could not.

II. The New Covenant changes the inside; the old covenant could not (v. 10).

Illustration: Our Ford Escape is rusting from the inside out. A nice exterior paint job makes the car nicer to look at, but it has little to do with whether or not it will run correctly. Ultimately, what is on the inside determines whether the car can continue.

Application: The promises of the New Covenant are based on a work of Christ that changes a sinner at enmity with God into a law-loving saint who longs to do His will.

The old covenant could tell us “Do not lie,” and it could tell us how God is going to judge us for being the liars we are. The New Covenant is based on a promise of salvation that can make us want to tell the truth and give us the power not to lie.

The old covenant can tell us to worship only the Lord, and it can tell us what God does to idolaters. The New Covenant is based on a promise that can make us love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, so

that there is nothing we would rather do than worship the Lord as He has prescribed for us to worship. The New Covenant can change us on the inside; the old cannot.

III. The New Covenant can give us a personal relationship with God; the old covenant could not (v. 11).

Illustration: I have been married to my wonderful wife for 27 years. And she has been married to me that long. I feel like I know her better than anyone else does, and that she knows me the same way. When I first met my wife, I did not know her—I was buying a book from her at the college book store. I could admire her from a distance, but I did not know her then.

Appl: The old covenant allowed sinners to know God from a distance. They could see that He is awesome and holy and powerful. They could see that He is very far away from them, and that He has every right to judge them.

The promises of the New Covenant allow us to know God in the perfections of His love. Like a bride espoused to a bridegroom, we have the privilege of a personal relationship with Him. We still know all about Him that the old covenant taught us; but along with that we know Him. The New Covenant can give us a personal relationship with God; the old covenant cannot.

IV. The New Covenant forgives in mercy; the old covenant did not (v. 12).

Illustration: You ever have someone who refused to let you forget something? Sometimes a project has to be done around the house, and my wife will provide her kind reminders—"the toilet still needs to be fixed."

Application: The old covenant could remind us that we are sinners who need forgiveness and mercy because we are under the judgment of God. It would never let a sinner forget that.

But the New Covenant is based on a promise of a work of Christ that provides grace and mercy and forgiveness and the remembrance of our sins no more. It lets us forget that we are sinners because God has refused to remember our sins, and it makes us the adopted children of God. The New Covenant forgives in mercy; the old covenant did not.

V. The New Covenant defines a glorious future in Christ; the old covenant defines a dismal past without Him (v. 13).

Application: The tenses of the verbs are of interest here. The old covenant is said to be *becoming obsolete* and *growing old* and *ready to disappear*. This is all true in an ecclesiastical sense as our author goes on to explain in chapter 9. In A.D. 70, just a few years after this passage was written, the Romans destroyed the temple, and it remains destroyed today. Our author's words became a very true prophecy. He understood that God was to use the church today, not the temple — a new ecclesia, not the old one.

But in terms of our relationship to God, the old covenant represents how we related to God personally in a dismal past without Christ (Gal. 4:21-31). Remember what your relationship with God was like prior to coming to Christ? That is what the old covenant defined. It defines the sinner's relationship to God without Christ.

But the day we were saved, that ignominious past became a glorious future. The work of Christ on the cross that ratifies the New Covenant promise guarantees a bright future for the nation of Israel in its fulfilment. It also guarantees the

bright hope of our glorious future as local church members in Christ. This was God's promise to Israel and Judah in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 31:35-37). Like Israel, the blood of the New Covenant guarantees the saint in Christ a glorious future. We must live for that glorious future, and not pine after our ignominious past.

Conclusion: And so we have seen from Hebrews how much better the New Covenant mediated by Christ is than the old covenant mediated through Moses. The New Covenant finishes the job of atonement, changes our inside, gives us a personal relationship with God, forgives in mercy, and defines and guarantees a glorious future in Christ. The old covenant could do none of these things.

Why does the author of Hebrews speak to these readers about how much better the New Covenant is than the old?

It is because they were tempted to go back to the old. They were tempted to think that their life experiences before they came to Christ were better than what their lives had experienced since coming to Christ.

Are we tempted at times to go back to the life we had before we came to Christ, the Mediator of a better, new covenant? Have we lost sight of all the many ways in which the New is better than the old?

Do we understand that though it may be difficult to continue forward, it will be worth it all, because our Savior is indeed the Mediator of a better covenant? It finishes the job, it changes us from the inside out, it allows us to know God personally, it forgives us completely of all our sins, and it defines our glorious future. What more could we possibly

ask for? Why would we ever want to go back to what we were before Christ?

Perhaps we must admit honestly this evening that we are guilty of pining after the things of this world we once enjoyed the way the children of Israel longed for the leeks and garlic of Egypt. Bored and tired of the mana of God, we can fall into the trap of ungrateful complaining about the difficulty of our Christian life.

When that happens, this author would remind us that the New is far better than the old. Do not go back. Stop being ungrateful. Pray that God forgives your sin and restores again the joy of your salvation.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*