

Title: The Mediator and Covenant Maker
Date: 4/13/25
Subject: Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant.
Scripture: Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:22 - 24

It was a beautiful day. The birds were singing. The flowers were colorful. The earth was clean and fresh. A rainbow arched across the sky. It seemed like everything was right with the world when the eight people stepped off the ark to find a peaceful environment.

The Lord made a covenant with Noah and his sons that never again would all life be destroyed by water. This is one of the covenants God made with people. The number of covenants depends on who you ask. One source had 9 (Merrill F. Unger, The New Unger's Bible Handbook, revised by Gary N. Larson, p. 595). These include the Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and new.

Hebrews focuses on the old or Mosaic covenant and the new one under Christ which is better and superior. These descriptive words are prominently used 15 times in Hebrews. Jesus Christ is better and superior because of his personhood as the Son of God; by position to angels, the OT prophets and patriarchs, Moses. He is better and superior because of his message and abilities. He serves in the better and superior tabernacle. He is the better and superior Prophet, Priest, Intercessor, Sacrificer who finished his work, Sacrifice that is complete and sufficient for all humanity's sins.

Add to the resume: Mediator and Covenant Maker. Three verses give Jesus the title of Mediator.

Read Hebrews 8:6.

It simply states Jesus has a ministry of a mediator. It doesn't state what a mediator does but asserts he has a ministry superior to high priests because the covenant he brings is founded on better promises. We'll explore the meaning of covenant in a little bit. Keep our focus on what we discover about Jesus as mediator.

The second place "mediator" is found is 9:15. Read 9:15.

The sacrifices under the old covenant weren't sufficient to take care of humanity's sin problem. Jesus' sacrifice was. He died as a ransom. Jesus identified this as his purpose: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). His death is the sufficient payment for people's sins to free them from their sins and enable them to receive an eternal inheritance.

Farther along in Chapter 9, v. 20 speaks of the blood of the covenant that was part of the Mosaic covenant. Jesus used similar language when he instituted the Lord's Supper. He called upon his followers to remember his sacrifice, the giving of his blood, with instructions about the cup: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20).

The third place for "mediator" is in chapter 12. Read 12:22 - 24

The writer of Hebrews is getting a little excited as he contrasts what happened with Moses – the fear causing gloom and storm surrounding Mount Sinai when the laws were given - with a more celebratory spiritual

red carpet atmosphere - the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God; thousands and thousands of angels in joyful assembly; the church of the first born who are those with the privileged position of being fellow heirs with Christ and whose names are written in heaven; God himself; the spirits of righteous people made perfect as in those who trust in God and are waiting for the resurrection from the dead and last and most certainly not least – Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

What does it mean to be a mediator? A mediator is an intermediary who mediates. How's that for making things as clear as mud? A mediator is more than a negotiator between two parties as that can be between equals, like businesses that are going to merge. It's more than a person who is a reconciliation expert as in a marriage counselor who tries to bring spouses back together. It's more than a bridge that connects two sides of a river. It's more than simply someone who intervenes. It's more than an arbitrator. It's more than an ambassador. It's more than a defense attorney. Jesus is all of those wrapped into one. He makes it happen.

Why do people need Jesus to be their Mediator? It's because humanity's issues with sin, being under judgment from God, and eternal destiny weren't resolved by the Mosaic covenant.

Definition of covenant. Some think of a covenant in terms of a contract. However, Christian historian Bruce Shelley points out covenants and contracts have similarities, but they aren't the same: *"In modern times we define a host of relations by contracts. These are usually for goods or services and for hard cash. The contract, formal or informal, helps to specify failure in these relationships. The Lord did not establish a contract with Israel or with the church. He created a covenant. There is a difference. Contracts are broken when one of the parties fails to keep his promise. If, let us say, a patient fails to keep an appointment with a doctor, the doctor is not obligated to call the house and inquire, "Where were you? Why didn't you show up for your appointment?" He simply goes on to his next patient and has his appointment secretary take note of the patient who failed to keep the appointment. The patient may find it harder the next time to see the doctor. He broke an informal contract...The Bible indicates the covenant is more like the ties of a parent to her child than it is a doctor's appointment. If a child fails to show up for dinner, the parent's obligation, unlike the doctor's, isn't canceled. The parent finds out where the child is and makes sure he's cared for. One member's failure does not destroy the relationship. A covenant puts no conditions on faithfulness. It is the unconditional commitment to love and serve."*

The New Bible Dictionary agrees in its tremendously insightful article on covenant. It says the one God made with Noah *"shows us more clearly than any other instance what the essential nature of the covenant is, and it advises us again how alien to the covenant-concept is any notion of compact or contract between two parties. The thought of bilateral agreement is wholly excluded."* The writer cites Genesis 9:9 where God says he'll establish a covenant with Noah with the emphasis on God and what he does.

The article continues with what it calls the salient (added - significant) features: *a. It is conceived and established by God himself. b. It is universal in its scope; it embraces not only Noah but his seed after him and every living creature... c. This covenant is unconditional; no commandment or requirement is appended which could be construed as the condition upon which the grace bestowed is contingent. In fact, there is no ensuing obligation for Noah and his seed which could be regarded as the means through which the grace promised is to be realized. Hence the thought of breaking the covenant is irrelevant. d. The divine*

monergism (added - from Greek terms meaning one and energy, therefore God is the sole energizing or unilateral acting agent) is intensely exhibited in this covenant; there's no human contribution to the agency by which the promises are fulfilled. The sign does not even take the form of an ordinance to be performed by man at the divine behest. The bow in the cloud is for the purpose of attesting the faithfulness of God and, in anthropomorphic terms, is to bring to God's remembrance his covenant promise. It's not a sign over which men exercise any control. e. The covenant is everlasting. The perpetuity is correlative with the unilateral character and with the divine monergism. No uncertainty or mutability can belong to God's unconditional promise. The covenant is, therefore, a sovereign administration of grace and forbearance, divine in its origin, disclosure, confirmation and fulfillment (pp. 264, 265).

Go back to chapter 8 for insights on why a new covenant was necessary. V. 6. Christ has the superior covenant. Question: why wouldn't you want a superior covenant rather than an inferior one? The logic for replacement continues in V. 7: if there had been nothing wrong with the first, there wouldn't have been a need for another. V. 8: God found fault with people. V. 9 indicates how they didn't remain faithful. The Israelites and all people are unable to abide by the terms of the covenant because we're sinners. The chief thing wrong with the first covenant was people. They sin. They sin a lot. They broke their agreement with the Lord. Yet, they kept offering sacrifices and putting their trust in the sacrificial system.

Add in what we've seen in our study of the pictures of Christ in Hebrews - the old covenant was limited because it had human priests who were sinners (9:8), it was ineffective in providing cleansing for the consciences of worshippers because the offerings needed to be repeated year after year (9:9 - 10:4, 11), the old covenant was merely an illustration with its ceremonial washings and external regulations that would apply until the time of the new order (Hebrews 9:9, 10). It was never meant to be permanent. It was a shadow of the good things that were coming (Hebrews 10:1). The old one was set aside because it was weak and useless (7:18.) The law made nothing perfect (7:19).

Biblehub.com Study Bible on 7:19: *"The Mosaic Law, given to Israel, was a set of commandments and rituals designed to guide the people in their relationship with God. However, it was never intended to bring about spiritual perfection or complete reconciliation with God. The law served as a tutor to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), highlighting humanity's inability to achieve righteousness through works. The sacrificial system, central to the law, pointed to the need for a perfect sacrifice, which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The law's inability to perfect is echoed in Romans 8:3, where it states that what the law could not do, God did by sending His own Son...The Mosaic Law was unable to bring about perfection or complete reconciliation with God. It served as a guide and a shadow of the things to come, pointing to the need for a savior."*

Barnes' Notes on the Bible: *For the law made nothing perfect - The Levitical, ceremonial law did not produce a perfect state; it did not do what was desirable to be done for a sinner; see the note on Hebrews 7:11. That Law, as such, did not reconcile man to God; it did not make an atonement: it did not put away guilt; in one word, "it did not restore things to the condition in which they were before the Law was broken and man became a sinner." If man were saved under that system - as many undoubtedly were - it was not in virtue of any intrinsic efficacy which it possessed, but in virtue of that great sacrifice which it typified.*

Jesus made the old covenant obsolete (8:13). It's also aging and not aging well.

A family from the hill country ventured into the big city. They were amazed by the lights and buildings that seemed to reach the sky. The father and son entered a building by way of a revolving door, something new for them. They stood in the lobby and looked around. They saw a little old lady standing by a wall. She pushed a button and waited. The doors opened, she walked in and the doors closed behind her. A little later a bell chimed, the doors opened and out walked a young woman. The father looked at the woman, down to his son, back to the woman and back to his son. "Son, go get your ma." He'd never seen an elevator. He thought there was a promise somewhere in there. He completely misunderstood how it worked and his desires were misguided about replacing his wife.

Humanity doesn't have a very good track record when it comes to war. A former president of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences teamed up with historians from England, Egypt, Germany, and India. They discovered that since 3600 B.C. there have been 14,351 wars, large and small. 3.64 billion people have been killed. The value of the property destroyed would pay for a golden belt around the world 97.2 miles wide and 33 feet thick. The world has known only 292 years of peace.

Most people don't like war. Nations make peace treaties to end wars with the hope there won't be another one. However, 40% of peace agreements since 1975 have collapsed within five years.

Humanity has been at war with God and needed a solution better than a handshake or piece of paper or the blood of animals. To end the people's war with God, Jesus came to set aside the first covenant order so he could establish the new (10:9). The sign of the new covenant isn't a rainbow but the cross.

Nature of the new covenant brought by Jesus. Chapter 8 reveals some of the superior benefits by recalling words foretold by Jeremiah (31:31-34) six centuries before Christ: God's laws and principles will be internally possessed (8:10a), God and his people will closely identify with each other and have intimate fellowship (8:10b), people will personally know God (8:11); forgiveness of sins will be complete and everlasting (8:12). No additional sacrifices for sin are required or necessary.

There is a sense that the new covenant predates the Mosaic covenant as it points to the covenants given to Abraham and Noah. Abraham is known as the father of the faithful. Those who have true faith and trust in Jesus Christ are his descendants and heirs (Romans 4:16 - 18).

Many years after Abraham the Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40, Acts 7:6, Galatians 3:17). At the end of enslavement Moses received the covenant or Law from God. The apostle Paul writes that the law doesn't set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise (Galatians 3:17). The promises given to Abraham would one day be fulfilled in his seed, meaning one person who is Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16).

The Mosaic covenant is often referred to as the law and the new covenant is grace. Not completely accurate as God's grace was operative throughout all time and all covenants.

Benefits of the new covenant brought by Jesus. Let me take you to Fiji in the South Pacific, regarded as paradise with its many islands - warm sand, sun filled days, clear waters for snorkeling and touring. It'd be nice if I could load us up on the plane and take us all there, wouldn't it?

Over half of the residents of Fiji are Christian. It wasn't always that way. For a long time, Fiji was known as Cannibal Isles. The change came in the mid-1800s due to missionaries sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Cannibalism quickly disappeared and tribal warfare ended shortly after influential leader Ratu Seru Cakobau accepted Christianity in 1854.

Detractors of Christianity didn't like the Christianizing of Fiji. An atheistic college professor visited the islands and judgmentally told an elderly chief, "You're a great leader, but it's a pity you've been taken in by those missionaries. They only want to get rich through you. No one believes the Bible anymore in our culture. They know better now. I'm sorry that you have been so foolish to believe them."

The old chief responded, "Do you see that great rock over there? On it we smashed the heads of our victims and we roasted their bodies in that furnace next to the rock. If it hadn't been for the missionaries and the word of God changing us, you'd never leave this place alive! You had better thank the Lord for the gospel; Otherwise we'd already be feasting on you."

The good news of Jesus changes people.

Another practical difference the new covenant makes is we don't use cattle trailers to bring animals to be sacrificed. Jesus did away with all of that through his one sacrifice for sins. Another scripture tells us: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

More from The New Bible Dictionary (p. 267): "The new covenant will have to be regarded as referring to the grace secured and the relationship established by the blood which he shed. The covenant is the sum-total of the grace, blessing, truth and relationship comprised in that redemption which was secured by Jesus' blood."

Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant (7:22). Merriam Webster Dictionary defines guarantee as "an assurance for the fulfillment of a condition: such as a. an agreement by which one person undertakes to secure another in the possession or enjoyment of something, b. an assurance of the quality of or of the length of use to be expected from a product offered for sale often with a promise of reimbursement."

Wouldn't it be great if the stuff we buy came with a lifetime guarantee? The TV you bought 40 years ago? Or the phone you got last week? Promised fulfilled. Enjoy forever. Undiminished quality.

Jesus is the guarantee of a better hope by which we're able to draw near to God (7:19). He brings grace to its fullest expression and confers all its blessings. The everlasting covenant brought by Christ is the grand finale that goes on in continuous encore. Nothing will be able to surpass it. Nothing can replace it. It's all over but the shouting. Be lots of that in heaven.