

Text: Heb 8.6

Well, I found last week covering three and a half verses so taxing that this week I have to go back to just one! Our text is Heb 8.6, which we partly talked about last week.

Actually, as the text goes, a new paragraph begins in verse 7. The words of our text today are a transition to the next paragraph, but the material that follows stands together and I think we should just talk about the ideas contained in verse 6 before proceeding to those that follow.

Read Heb 8.1-6, text 6

The big word in our text is “covenant.”

The Oxford English Dictionary gives us 16 definitions, 5 of them marked “obsolete.” Here is the first one:

“A mutual agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing certain acts; a compact, contract, bargain; sometimes, the undertaking, pledge, or promise of one of the parties.”¹

The OED also gives a definition for its use in Scripture:

“*Scripture*. Applied esp. to an engagement entered into by the Divine Being with some other being or persons.”²

Usually, a covenant is a very solemn promise. We attach different levels of importance to various promises. Here are a few I found on YourDictionary.com:

“I promise to behave.”

“I promise not to leave.”

“I promise not to plaster you with mud this time.”

“You have to promise whatever happens, it stays with us five of us.”

“I promise to stop yelling.”³

How serious do you think those promises are?

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “covenant (n.), sense 1.a,” March 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3950609579>.

² Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “covenant (n.), sense 7.a,” March 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6767185856>.

³ [Examples of "Promise" in a Sentence | YourDictionary.com](#) accessed May 25, 2024.

A covenant has some similarities to a promise, but it is a formal statement that binds the parties to a changed relationship and to a future course of action.

We call a marriage ceremony a “marriage covenant.” The old relationship changes forever, and new obligations begin (and do not end).

What we are saying about Jesus is that his ministry is *covenant* based. It obligates him to certain actions. If we enter into it with him, it obligates us as well.

Proposition: Our Lord’s more excellent ministry excels because of the better covenant on which it rests, which is enacted on better promises.

The Better Covenant and the Better Promises

I. The covenant the better covenant replaces

A. In the OT, there are five specific covenants made with men

1. Noah
2. Abraham
3. Moses
4. David
5. New (Jeremiah)

B. Characteristics that distinguish the covenants

1. The person(s) with whom the covenant is made
 - a. Noah: all mankind
 - b. Abraham: Abraham and his family
 - c. Moses: national Israel
 - d. David: individual, David (and sons)
 - e. New (Jeremiah): the house of Israel and the house of Judah
2. The object of the covenants
 - a. Noah: preserve all mankind from a universal flood
 - b. Abraham: make Abraham’s descendents innumerable and grant them land
 - c. Moses: allow Israel to live in the land

- d. David: preserve the throne for a Son of David
- e. New (Jeremiah): grant a new heart to God's people

3. The conditions of the covenants

- 1) Noah: none
- 2) Abraham: none
- 3) Moses: obedience
- 4) David: none
- 5) New (Jeremiah): none (once enacted)

C. The New Covenant of the New Testament (and Hebrews)

- 1. The New covenant clearly replaces the Mosaic covenant (the Law) (Heb 8.8-9)
- 2. The New covenant came first to bless the sons of Abraham (Ac 2.25-26)

Ac 3.25-26 "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.'²⁶ "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways."

- 3. The New covenant overflows and blesses all who believe, Jew and Gentile (Eph 2.11-13)

Eph 2.11-13 ¶ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands--¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

4. The New covenant comes into effect by Christ's blood (Mt 26.28, 9.15)

Mt 26.28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. (Also Mk 14.24, Lk 22.20)

Heb 9.15 ¶ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

The New covenant, then, is the better covenant, and now we need to talk about...

II. The ministration of the better covenant by a mediator

Heb 8.6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the **mediator** of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

A. The difference between an arbitrator and a mediator

1. An arbitrator decides between two positions

When hockey players submit their contracts to arbitration, the team has a position, and the player has a position. The arbitrator has to decide between the two positions, he can't propose something in the middle.

2. A mediator has the interests of both parties in view

"A covenant generally, and obviously a covenant between God and man, requires a mediator, one who standing between the contracting parties shall bring them duly into fellowship."⁴

B. The part of the covenant Jesus satisfied towards God

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⁴ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 220.

1. The Old Covenant's provisions could not really remove sin
2. The OT saint, trusting God, through the rituals, received credit for righteousness based on faith
3. Their sins awaited a real substitute, who could count for them, and count for all, finally solving the problem the Old Covenant could not solve

Rm 3.23-26 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness, **because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed**, ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

God is satisfied by the work of the mediator

- C. Those who have been called (believers) may now receive an eternal inheritance
1. This is the manward side of the mediation
 2. No longer the temporary, inadequate symbols of redemption
 3. But now a real redemption, right now, through faith in Christ

III. The promises that enact the better covenant

A. The promises of the new covenant

1. Heart change (8.10)
2. Personal relationship (8.10-11)
3. Forgiveness of sin (8.12)

B. The enacting of the new covenant

1. The word is a compound with two roots: "law" and "to place, to establish" — to put a law in place, or "to enact"
2. The mediator builds a bridge between God and man, but the whole plan is God's legislation

3. The Gospel is not a law, like the OT, but it is the perfect law (Jas 1.25) where freedom from sin is found

Jas 1.25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Our Lord's more excellent ministry excels because of the better covenant on which it rests, which is enacted on better promises.

Again, the call is for you to love him more.

If you don't know him as your personal saviour, come to him, he will save you.