

Text: Heb 9.15

After three weeks of multiple verse texts, today we settle down to just one, Hebrews 9.15.

We will read a few more to start, however:

Read Heb 9.11-15, text 15

We've talked about the word mediator before:

*“gen. A person who intervenes between two parties, esp. for the purpose of effecting reconciliation; an intercessor; a person who brings about an agreement, treaty, etc., or settles a dispute by mediation.”*¹

And theologically...

*“An intermediary between God and humankind, spec. Jesus (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5).”*²

We are also contrasting the Old Covenant and the New Covenant repeatedly in these passages. We see by the reference to “first covenant” in our text that the contrast continues.

I think I'd like to review the covenants with Israel once again:

1. Abraham: national and collective
2. Moses: relational and individual
3. David: royal and singular
4. New: relational and individual

When I call the Mosaic and the New Covenants “relational” I mean that they address the question, “how can I have a personal relationship with God?”

Since the Fall that is the key question.

God said to Adam:

Gn 2.17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “mediator (n.), sense 1.b,” March 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6254606431>.

² Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “mediator (n.), sense 1.a,” March 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1036496120>.

From the day Adam sinned, men died. Death came by Adam's sin; a barrier came between God and man.

How do we get past that barrier? Something must come in to bridge the gap, to enable sinful man to enter a personal relationship with a holy God.

Enter the mediator, Jesus Christ.

Proposition: Jesus Christ mediates an opportunity for anyone to receive an eternal salvation that cannot be taken away.

I. His death made him the mediator of the covenant

A. "For this reason" points back to v. 14

1. A reference to blood (*metonymy* for death)
2. The language of sacrifice ("offered himself without blemish")

B. The argument of v. 15 plainly rests on his death "since a death has taken place"

C. Death is the mediating factor in relational covenants

1. In the Mosaic covenant, many deaths occurred – sheep, goats, cattle, even birds
2. In the New covenant one death occurred: Jesus

D. The bridge between sinning man and God is death

"Since the first sin committed by Adam brought death as its curse, so it would only be through death of sacrifice that God would accept man and his worship."³

- I think that's right.

1. Every man is under the penalty of death

Rm 3.23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Ezek 18.4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

Rm 6.23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ Ken Smith, quoted in Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2023), 136.

2. The only way to escape death for sin is to have someone else die for your sin
 - a. Old Covenant: the sacrificial animal died in the sinner's place
 - b. New Covenant: Jesus died in the sinner's place

That makes Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, the "who intervenes between two parties ... [the] intermediary between God and humankind"⁴

Mk 14.24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

1 Cor 11.25 In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."

II. His death overcame the deficiencies of the first covenant

A. We've talked much about the comparisons between the covenants

1. Many sacrifices vs. one sacrifice
2. Many priests vs. one priest
3. Temporary vs. permanent

B. The OT temporary view of redemption

1. The daily, weekly, yearly worship was constantly renewed
2. It was never enough to offer permanent redemption

No one in the OT came to his sacrifice and said, "Ok, now I have all my sins forgiven, I don't need anymore."

Next year, or next month, or next week, or next day ... he would need another sacrifice.

3. One error of NT saints is to take an OT view of redemption
 - a. I can call on the name of the Lord for salvation
 - b. Yet if I sin too much, I can lose my salvation

⁴ See the OED references above

c. I need more than the one sacrifice of Christ

1) I need good works

2) I need repeated rituals (rosary, mass, for example)

The problem is an OT view of redemption applied to the NT doctrine of the cross

C. The death of Christ is one that occurred “for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant”

1. The transgressions committed under the first covenant were not effectively covered by the first covenant

2. Why? Because the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin

a. The soul that sins shall die

b. I’ll substitute a goat then... [how can that really be sufficient?]

c. The OT saint has to look *beyond* the first covenant means to a better means, by faith

“The sins which the Law had set in a clear light could not be ignored. The atonements provided for sin under the Law could not but be felt to be inadequate. They were limited in their application and so to speak arbitrary. Christ at last offered the sacrifice, perfect in efficacy and moral value, to which they pointed.”⁵

3. The death of Christ is the reality that satisfies the needs of the faithful under the first covenant since...

III. His death offers the eternal promise to anyone who responds to his call

A. The OT saints who are called are guaranteed the promise of the eternal inheritance by his death

1. The New Covenant, first of all, is between God and Israel (Jer 31.31-34)

⁵ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 266.

2. The OT saints who came to God in faith, resting on his promises and the symbols he provided, *now* have real redemption because Christ died
 3. Jesus Christ is their mediator, too
- B. The person in the NT era who *receives* the promise does so because of Christ

1. The “called” are not a select few

Consider Jesus’ parable in Mt 22.1-14

- a. The “called” (“invited” – same word as Heb 9.15) refused to come (1-6) [a reference to unbelieving Israel]
- b. The king sent his servants everywhere to find guests (7-10) [a reference to the Gentile appeal of the gospel]
- c. The king, however, rejected a guest improperly clothed (11-13) [a reference to the one essential, robed in the righteousness of Christ]
- d. Parable conclusion

Mt 22.14 “For many are called, but few *are* chosen.”

2. The offer of the eternal promise is to the ones who receive the promise

those who have been called **may receive** the promise of the eternal inheritance

- a. The inheritance is eternal (never ends)
- b. The offer is for those who receive it
- c. The call is to all

Conclusion:

Proposition: Jesus Christ mediates an opportunity for anyone to receive an eternal salvation that cannot be taken away.

Have you received Christ’s salvation by faith in his sacrifice as your stand-in against God’s wrath against sin?