

Our Divine Mediator Hebrews 8:6 – 9:22

Hebrews 8:6 – 9:22 Introduction

Definitions of Mediator:

- One that reconciles differences between disputants. (*Dictionary.com*)
- One who mediates between two parties to remove a disagreement or reach a common goal. (*Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon*)
- One who interposes between two contending parties, with their consent, for the purpose of assisting them in settling their differences. (*Bouvier's Law Dictionary*)

The Nature of the Dispute:

- We have set up huge barriers between ourselves and God.
- God desires to remove them.
- His holiness requires that a price be paid from the human side to atone for our many sins.
- We owe God more than we can honestly pay.
- We are in over our heads.

The Nature of the Settlement:

- God initiates the process through Christ.
- Christ settles the differences between God and His aggressively disobedient children, by dying for our sins.
- He has formally sealed our reconciliation with God by an eternal covenant in His own blood.
- Christ is our Divine Mediator.

Christ our Divine Mediator has sealed a New Covenant between a rebellious human race and a perfectly Holy God.

Hebrews 8:6 – 9:22 Outline

- I. The New Covenant Was Prophesied. 8:6-13
- II. The New Covenant Was Needed. 9:1-10
- III. The New Covenant Is Effective. 9:11-15
- IV. The New Covenant Has Been Sealed. 9:16-22

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It Was Prophesied 8:6-13

- Things God Promised to Israel as part of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34:
 - Inward change (8:10)
 - Intimate relationship (8:10)
 - National conversion (someday) (8:11)
 - Complete purification (8:12)
- Though our rabbi is writing to Jewish believers, this is the covenant under which God accepts all of us into His family.

- Weaknesses of the Old Covenant:
 - Limited In Its Power: It gave instruction regarding God's will without providing the power to do it.
 - Incomplete In Its Effects: It provided only for ceremonial (not moral) cleansing and stopped short of inward transformation.
 - Temporary In Its Duration: It was useful for a specific time and place, but was always intended to point us to Christ.

- Strengths of the New Covenant:
 - Unrestricted In Its Power: It has the power to reconcile anyone with God, regardless of present condition.
 - Complete In Its Effects: It transforms us by making us new creatures in Christ.
 - Eternal In Its Duration: It gives us eternal life, encouraging us to look past this present fallen creation, tainted as it is by our sin.

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It Was Needed 9:1-10

- 9:1 This section describes the tabernacle, which Moses & Co. built in the wilderness.
- 9:2 The first room was the Holy Place.
- 9:3-5 The next room was the Holy of Holies.
- 9:6 The Holy Place was the setting for daily and weekly service.
- 9:7-8 The Holy of Holies was only entered on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

- 9:9-10 Here the rabbi reminds us that all of this was only symbolic.
- It could never perfect the conscience of the priests or the people.
- A time of reformation had to come.

- Limitations Under the Old Covenant:
 - Limited Access: Only the priests could enter the tabernacle. Only the high priest could enter the holiest place and that only briefly once a year.
 - Limited Purification: The cleansing was purely ceremonial, it did not remove guilt.
 - Limited Pardon: No offering was provided for intentional sin.
 - See Numbers 15:27-31.

- By Old Covenant standards, we now have an enormous problem.
- I have sinned intentionally, knowingly, deliberately, presumptuously.
- And so have you.
- Read Numbers 15:30-31 again.
- We need a better covenant than this.

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It Is Effective 9:11-15

- 9:12 eternal redemption
- Redemption in this context is the language of the slave market.
- The implication is that we were in bondage to sin with no way to free ourselves.
- Christ has bought our freedom for all eternity.
- The word “once for all” gives the sense of “once and only once,” once, not repeatedly.

- Hebrews 9:12 (NLT)
“With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.”

- Advantages of the New Covenant:
 - It secures our redemption: No animal sacrifice could really pay the price for our sins.
 - It cleanses our conscience: No good works of ours would ever be good enough.
 - It empowers us for service: Once we remove any intended merit from our works, we are genuinely free to serve God.

- 9:14 The word “serve” is related to the word “worshippers” in 10:2.
- Service and worship are linked:
- *“Gratitude for our redemption must also express itself in willing surrender to God’s will and loving devotion to God’s work.”*
 - Raymond Brown, former principal, Spurgeon’s College, London

- *“Purity is not the end but the means of the new life. The end of restored fellowship is energetic service to Him Who alone lives and gives life. The thought of performing certain actions is replaced by that of fulfilling a personal relation.”*
 - B. F. Westcott (1825-1901) Professor of Divinity, U. of Cambridge and Bishop of Durham

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It Has Been Sealed 9:16-22

- The rabbi will give us three illustrations:
 - One from civil law.
 - Two from Old Testament ceremonial law.

- 9:16-17 This makes perfect sense to the rabbi teaching in Greek.
- The word “covenant” is not only “a formal agreement,” but also carries the idea of “a last will and testament.”
- It is something of a play on words.

- 9:16-17 The rabbi shows that Christ’s death puts the New Covenant into effect, as if its stipulations were His last will and testament toward those who survived Him.
- This is, of course, not your typical “testament.”
- People don’t normally rise from the dead immediately afterward to share in the new arrangements. 😊

- 9:16-17 Covenant and testament, in the “last will and testament” sense, are the same word in Greek. This is why our Bible contains the Old Testament and New Testament.
- We might just as easily call them the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
- Someone used the word *testament* a long time ago and we’ve just stuck with it.
- 9:18-20 The rabbi reminds us of what happened in Exodus 24:3-8, when the Old Covenant was sealed by the sprinkling of the blood of animal sacrifices.
- 9:21 In Exodus 29 the altar, Aaron’s robes and even Aaron & sons were anointed with the blood of sacrifices for ritual cleansing.
- 9:22 Under the Old Covenant blood was the means of ritual purification.
- It was the revealed means by which cleansing from sin was obtained.
 - See Leviticus 17:11
- Thus Christ, by shedding His blood and dying, seals the New Covenant, accomplishing for us what we could never do ourselves.

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Hebrews 8:6 – 9:22 Conclusions

The Priority of Bible Study.

- Hebrews contains some complex topics.
- They are made simpler through a consistent study of the Scriptures.
- Bible study offers the joy of daily reassurance.
- Habitual Bible study promises a more satisfying relationship with God as deeper truths become clearer and more precious.

The Reality of Forgiveness:

- Read 8:12 and 9:13-14 again.
- When God says our sins are cleansed and forgotten, He means it.
- The devil wants to keep us in bondage to guilt over past sins and present weaknesses.
- God offers forgiveness and real power to move forward, leaving our sins behind us.

The Joy of Sacred Service:

- The word “service” in 9:14 has been described as “the service of a sacred ministry of complete surrender” (Westcott).
- Related to “worshippers” in 10:2
- The NLT translates this as “worship” in 9:14.
- See also the same word in Revelation 22:3.
- ESV and NLT translate it as “worship” there.

The Significance of Christ’s Blood:

- We can lessen the value of the cross by taking the focus off of Christ shedding His blood for our sins.
- People emphasize Christ’s role as a moral example, rather than a Mediator between a holy God and lost humanity.

- This does make Jesus more palatable to some, but it does so by robbing the New Testament of its core message, namely:
- Christ settles the differences between God and His aggressively disobedient children, by dying for our sins.
- Christ is our Divine Mediator.

- *The gospel contains some features so alien to modern thought that it will always appear “folly” ... however hard we strive (and rightly) to show that it is “true and reasonable.” The cross will always constitute an assault on human self-righteousness and a challenge to human self-indulgence. Its “scandal” (stumbling-block) simply cannot be removed.*
 - John Stott (1921-2011)

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