

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
October 17, 2021

Title: A Better Covenant

Subject: New Covenant Ministry, Mediator, Covenant Promises, Better Promises, Old Covenant, New Covenant

Theme Text: Hebrews 8:6-7 (ESV) ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Theme Illustration: Is the New Covenant better because it has a better mediator and ministry or is Christ's ministry better because He mediates a better covenant? Is this a chicken and egg question? Without a qualified mediator there could not be a new and better covenant. This mediator would have to be appointed to this ministry not to minister from the types and pictures but from the realities that the types and figures represent. In other words, an improved covenant would have to have as its guarantor a better mediator qualified to minister in the real sanctuary in heaven, accepted by God, and offer a better sacrifice than the blood of bulls and goats. Since this ministry is from heaven the results of this ministry are spiritual, not strictly temporal, and thus is able to produce a saint perfected to God as a member of His redeemed people. The New covenant is built around its mediator and guarantor, Jesus Christ, a greater priest than the order of Aaron sworn on oath by God Himself to be the eternal high priest, mediator, and guarantor of the promises of this New Covenant. The Old Covenant was faulty because its promises were largely temporal, this worldly, whereas the promises of the New Covenant apply spiritually and eternally. Old Testament saints were saved by grace through faith in God's promises in the Mosaic Covenant as are Christians in the applied work of our mediator/savior and the better promises of the New Covenant. The word that jumps out at us is the word

better.

Read: Hebrews 8:6-9

Introduction: Last week, we examined the perfections of Christ's ministry as High Priest, mediator, and guarantor of the new covenant as being superior over the ministry of Aaron and his successors. It is important to briefly refresh our memories. His ministry is superior because He is seated, His seat was on the throne of God, His ministry was in the heavenly sanctuary. This truth is not just an interesting fact for theologians to discuss, but it has a very practical and eternal application for the Christian. Christ's own person model from which the earthly tabernacle was modeled. He presented before God a more excellent sacrifice that was actually able to perfect the believer. He is a mediator of a superior covenant, which is able to perfect and save to the uttermost those who draw near to God. Lastly, the superior covenant over which he mediates offers better promises. These promises include salvation and eternal life and are actually guaranteed to God's true worshipers.

The inspired writers object is to draw the acceptance and trust of his audience to this new and better way promised by two major prophets, and to let go of the typological and temporal and embrace Christ as Savior, High Priest, mediator, and guarantor of these better promises.

Transition: Since we see that Christ ministry is more excellent. It is obvious, it is because He is a better:

1. Mediator: Hebrews 8:6 (ESV) ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

Verse six signals a transition from the excellency of Christ's priesthood to the excellency of the new covenant above the old. Biblically, there was a older covenant which came before the Mosaic covenant. That covenant is the covenant of works given by God, to Adam, **Hosea 6:7 (ESV) ⁷ But like**

Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. The covenant of grace was actually first promised or inaugurated by God's promise to Adam after the fall, **Genesis 3:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ **I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."** God's promise to Adam of a covenant of grace was confirmed to Abraham, Genesis chapter 17.

At the writing of this letter, the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing with all of the Levitical ordinances being observed. One cannot help but think that this letter received in faith would have prepared the Hebrew believers for the shock of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Herodian temple. Pious Hebrews today still yearn for the temple, made of stone to be rebuilt where the sacrifices could resume. For Christians this would constitute heresy. Therefore, as the true, eternal, and thus perfect High Priest.

Christ's more excellent ministry is strongly asserted by the Holy Spirit. This is a contrast between the relative aspects of both covenants. This does not mean that God's appointed ministry in the old order was not excellent but that Christ ministry is more excellent. Christ's ministry is a higher order ministry. The Levitical ministry was temporary and restricted to the earthly tabernacle.

Christ's ministry was obtained by inheritance, as God's son. Obviously, the mediator of a better covenant has a more excellent ministry, **1 Timothy 2:5-6 (ESV)** ⁵ **For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,** ⁶ **who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.** A mediator is a middle person between two parties entering into a covenant. Mediation of a covenant presumes that the two parties are so different that they cannot deal directly with the other one unless they have a go-between.

In serving as a mediator, Christ is required to remove whatever kept man apart from God, sin. Also, the mediator must be accepted, trusted, by both parties in the covenant. On God's part, He has declared His acceptance of

His son, **Matthew 3:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ **and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”** This mediator must also be accepted by God’s elect, **Psalm 110:3 (ESV)** ³ **Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.**

Every covenant contains promises please notice the word enacted. This is a legal term which means to establish by law, or divine decree. We must ask ourselves what makes the promises of the new covenant better?

The promises contained in the old covenant pertaining to mostly to the present life. The promise is involved. A longer life, the bounty of the harvest, of national privileges, and of extraordinary peace, abundance, and prosperity. The promises the old covenant primarily concerned temporal affairs.

In the new covenant. The promises are spiritual blessings. New covenant believers gaze is directed towards heaven and hopes of immortal life and of heaven itself. These better promises our justification, regeneration, and sanctification or to wrap it all up, redemption. These blessings were ratified by Christ’s blood.

Transition: Thus Christ more excellent ministry promises a better:

2. Expectation: Hebrews 8:7 (ESV) ⁷ **For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.**

The first covenant is the one entered into by the Lord at Sinai. In referring to it as the first covenant, it was the first covenant in respect to Israel. It resembled the original covenant of works that God made with Adam because in Israel the Mosaic covenant became more and more a covenant of works. Prior to Sinai, God dealt with Israel on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, **Exodus 6:3-4 (ESV)** ³ **I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known**

to them. ⁴ **I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.** Thus, it was on the basis of the covenant at Sinai that Israel entered Canaan.

The second part of the verse affirms that the new is superior and the old was defective. Why was it defective? The sacrifices required served a ceremonial purpose. They had no power to remit sin. They were unable to secure salvation. I must reinforce that every work of God is perfect, and that the old covenant achieved God's purpose. In this light, the old covenant was faultless. Considering Hebrew expectations, it was not faultless. The old covenant was not designed to deal with moral guilt, moral pollution, and could not justify, sanctify, and certainly could not save.

Transition: Thus, the new covenant is better because it provides a better:

3. Outcome: Hebrews 8:8-9 (ESV) ⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

The Lord found fault with the people because the covenant of which they were signatories failed to produce a heart change. The results of that hardened heart and the rebellious spirit, God gave them over to their own wills and desires.

The inspired writer continues with a declaration from Jeremiah 31:31. The phrase “house of Israel and with the house of Judah” biblically has different senses. Israel was the name God gave to regenerate Jacob after his encounter with the angel of the Lord. Secondly, his descendants are called the children of Israel, the Jewish nation. Thirdly, the name Israel is used of the 10 northern tribes which broke away as a distinction from Judah. The name Israel also is applied to all of God's people, **Galatians 6:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ And**

as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. Thus, Paul identifies Israel as the whole of God's redeemed people. Jesus, by identifying himself as the true vine of Isaiah 5:7, is calling himself Israel, **John 15:1 (ESV)** ¹ **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.**

Here, in verse eight, it appears to refer to the physical descendants of Israel and also to the whole of God's people. We need to be reminded that the Old Testament Israel is a type of the whole people of God.

This new covenant is different in that it has a different outcome. In verse nine, the Holy Spirit is referring to the incident of the golden calf. That incident framed the whole conduct of Israel. Throughout their history.

Conclusion: What an act of grace this was for God to offer a new covenant of grace to His rebellious people. The Lord judge them and numerous times thereafter until Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and scattered them across the face of the earth. In this new covenant, he re-gathers them again such as at Pentecost as God builds his kingdom people.

Being a member of the new covenant people of God is an incredible blessing because of the superiority of the blessings such as peace with God, salvation, and eternal life. The application for every Christian. Even today's Christian is what God does in and through Christ and his covenant of grace made with us through faith in Jesus Christ.