

**Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant
Hebrews 9:15-22**

There is a Old Hymn that some of you may be familiar with and it goes like this, **"There is a fountain filled with blood / drawn from Immanuel's veins / and sinners, plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains / lose all their guilty stains / lose all their guilty stains; and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains."**

So do you believe that an unbelieving world is capable of understanding the significance of these words? No! They are not capable of understanding the significance of these words. But this shouldn't be true for us as Christians. These words should hold great meaning for us, for we should know that these words speak of Christ's blood sacrifice that it possible for us, who are now living in this age of grace to receive the gift of eternal life by faith.

But we are not the only ones who have been blessed in this way. Those living under the Law and in the age of the Law, who sought to live their lives in obedience to the Law as an expression of their faith have also been blessed in this way through the sacrifice of Christ. And hopefully this will come alive for us this morning as we return back to our study of Hebrews.

So hopefully as you know the Book of Hebrews was written to a group of struggling Hebrew believers, who under a great persecution, were in danger of turning away from Christ and returning back to Judaism.

And how did the author of this book counter this danger? The author countered this particular danger by focusing on Christ's superiority. So what have we seen so far?

We have seen the author setting forth the superiority of Christ to prophets, to angels, and to Moses and now we are seeing him setting forth the superiority of Christ's priesthood over all other **priesthoods**. So how has the author been seeking to demonstrate this particular superiority so far within our study?

The author began by focusing on Christ's appointment as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:1-7:28) and now he is focusing on Christ's superior high priestly offering (Hebrews 8:1-10:18).

So where are we now within this section? We have just finished **Hebrews 9:11-14** which noted that Christ's **atonement** death did in fact secure eternal redemption and now we are moving on from that fact to a by-product of that fact. And what is that by-product? This is the by-product: Christ is the mediator of the new covenant (9:15-22).

So what is my hope for this message this morning as we develop this passage? My hope is this: that God will use this passage to help us, to never forget what it cost Christ to become the mediator of a new covenant so we and others might be able to enter into the blessings of that covenant. This is my hope for this message.

So how did this author begin to develop this particular thought that Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant in **Hebrews 9:15-22**? The author began developing this particular thought by stating it as a fact at the beginning of Hebrews 9:15.

So how does **verse 15** begin? It begins with these words, "**For this reason**" or in other words because "**Christ was willing to sacrifice His own blood to secure eternal redemption,**" (as put forward in **Hebrews 9:11-14** ... now here comes the fact) "**He is the mediator of a new covenant.**"

So what does this mean? That Christ is a mediator of a New Covenant? A mediator is someone who makes it possible for two parties to come together, who had not been able to come together prior to the mediator's involvement. And this is exactly what Christ was able to do when He, having willingly shed His blood on the cross of Calvary, provided the ransom that was necessary to eternally redeem us from sin and death, as I have already indicated was noted by this author in **Hebrews 9:11-14**. And this is why the author here at the very beginning of **verse 15** was able to declare, as a fact that, "**He is the mediator of a New Covenant.**"

So after the author declared this fact what did the author do next? The author then explained why Christ, through the shedding of His own blood, had become the mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 9:15). And why had He done this? He had done this not only that those under the New Covenant might be able to experience the blessing of eternal redemption and fellowship with God but He had also become the mediator of the New

Covenant, so that those who had faithfully lived under the Old Covenant Law as an expression of their faith might also enjoy that same blessing and fellowship.

So let us continue to read **verse 15** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, "**For this reason** (or in other words because 'Christ was willing to sacrifice His own blood to secure eternal redemption') **He is now** (stated as a fact) **the mediator of a new covenant.**" And why did he become such? Why did Christ through the shedding of His own blood, become the mediator of a new covenant? He became the mediator of a New Covenant "**so that since a death (referring to Christ's death) has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant (or in other words under the Old Covenant) those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**" So what does this mean?

This is what it means: Under the Old Covenant or in other words under the first covenant the blood of goats and bulls did not provide the necessary ransom payment to set the people of Israel free from sin. And because of this they would have remained at a distance from God and therefore eternally separated from God forever, if this situation did not change.

But this situation did change when Christ shed His blood and became the mediator of a new covenant for His blood was not only proactive but retroactive, or in other words we could say it this way: His blood was so effective in cleansing sin that every person who had been called to salvation under the Old Covenant or called to salvation under the New Covenant would in fact "**receive the promise of the eternal inheritance**" or in other words "**the promise of eternal life**" even in spite of the fact that earlier sacrificial system under the Old Covenant had not been able through its sacrifices to cleanse away all sin.

So what the blood of goats and bulls could not do under the first covenant Christ the mediator of the New Covenant was able to through His blood shed on the cross of Calvary.

So what will this author do next? After explaining why Christ through the shedding of His own blood had become the mediator of a new covenant the

author then expanded on that explanation in **two** different stages (Hebrews 9:16-22). So what was the first stage of that expansion?

In the first stage of that expansion the author sought to explain why a death was **necessary** for the ratification of a new covenant (Hebrews 9:16-17).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 9:16-17** from the NASV and see if this is not so and what do these verses say? They say this, "**(16) For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. (17) For a covenant is valid only when men are dead** (or better said when the man who made the covenant is dead. And then what does the rest of the verse say?) ... **for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.**" So clearly I believe that we can see that this author is seeking to explain in these verses why a death was necessary for the ratification of a new covenant and even more specifically why the death of Christ was necessary.

But before we go on we need to address whether or not the Greek word (DIATHEKE) consistently translated "**covenant**" in **verses 15-18** in the NAS, has been in each case translated correctly, in light of the fact that in the ESV, NKJV, KJV as well as in the NIV, this same word was only translated as such in **verses 15&18** but not in **verses 16-17**.

So what other English words did these other translations use in order to translate this particular Greek word? They chose to translate this particular Greek word, in **verses 16-17**, as either "**testament**" or "**will**," which of course both refer to a document that someone might draw up in anticipation of their death to provide the necessary direction that would be needed to disperse their property, according to their wishes, when they died.

So who got it right, was it the NAS or was it these other translations? (1) I believe that the NAS translation is the best translation first of all because of its consistency for it would seem that if we would choose to translate a word in a certain way in one sentence that it would be best to translate that same word in the same way in the next sentence. (2) But most importantly of all, I believe that the NAS translation is the best translation because it perfectly fits into the flow of the passage.

Therefore to translate the Greek word that the NAS translated as "covenant" in any other way than "covenant" in **verses 16-17** should be avoided if at all

possible. And is there a way to do that? I believe there is and that is by interpreting **verses 16-17** in light of the passages that immediately precede it and follow it and more specifically what they focused on. So what did they focus on?

The author in **verses 12-14** focused on the Old Covenant sacrifices and in **verses 18-22** focused on the establishment of the Old Covenant through sacrifice.

Therefore, based on these verses, and what they focused on, that immediately precede and follow **verses 16-17**, how should we understand the reference to the ratifier's death in **verses 16-17**? We should understand the ratifier's death, not as an actual death, but as a symbolically realized death which was what the Old Covenant sacrifices were all about and which were the focal point of the passages that immediately preceded and followed **verses 16-17**.

By this interpretation, **verses 16-17** is simply stating that someone (represented by the sacrificial victim) would eventually have to die and shed His blood for the symbolism of this symbolic representation of animal blood to have been valid in the ratification of the Old Covenant.

And this brings us to the second stage of the author's expansion. And what did the author seek to do in this second stage?

In the second stage of that expansion the author sought to explain in detail how God **ratified** the Old Covenant through the death of sacrificial victims (Hebrews 9:18-22), which we now hopefully understand symbolically represented the future death of Christ and the shedding of His blood. So now let me read for you **Hebrews 9:18-22** and see if this is not so.

So let us look first of all at **verse 18** and what does it say? It says this, **"Therefore (or in other words based on everything that I have shared with you in verses 16-17 this is what we can conclude) the first covenant (or in other words the Old Covenant) was not inaugurated without blood."**

So having stated this what did this author do next? The author then supported his point by emphasizing the role that blood played, on the day when the Old Covenant was inaugurated or ratified. As we read these verses

it will become evident that much of what he will be sharing was taken from **Exodus 24:3-8** but certainly not all of it.

So let us now continue to read beginning with **verse 19** and this is what he said, **"For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, (20) saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.' And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood."**

So obviously there was a lot of blood being offered up on the day when the Old Covenant was being inaugurated or ratified.

In fact, blood is so interwoven with the inauguration and the operation of the Old Covenant that the author went on to say in **verse 22** **"And according to the Law, one may almost say, in all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."** So what does this mean? The word "almost" (SCHEDON) in the Greek stands at the beginning of the sentence just after the word "and" and probably is intended to govern both clauses which follow.

Thus the sense is: "It is almost the case that the law requires all things to be purified with blood, and that without blood shedding no remission occurs."

The word "almost" does allow for exception, but they are clearly exceptions but the norm is blood. Purification, particularly of things in contrast to persons, was sometimes accomplished by water (Exod. 19:10; Lev. 15:5; 16:26, 28; 22:6) and by fire (Numbers 31:22-23). Blood, however, was the characteristic means of purifying in the Mosaic law, especially of persons. The clause **"without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"** refers to the requirement under the Law of a bloody sacrifice for all sin offerings. There could be an exception made in the case of the man too poor to afford the price of an animal, but even in that instance it was clearly noted that the flour and oil mixture was a substitute for blood, with blood remaining as the norm based on **Leviticus 5:11-13**.

So was blood important in the inauguration of the Old Covenant? Absolutely! Not only was it important in its inauguration but also in its operation.

But the blood of goats and bulls was not enough. It was unable to clear the conscience of those living under that covenant. There were sins that were not atoned for and never were meant to be atoned for under the sacrificial system. Therefore they under the Law and in that age of Law continually lived with guilt.

And this is the reason why Christ had to become the mediator of new covenant. But in order for him to become that mediator of a new or in other words better covenant that would not only make it possible to cleanse the sins committed by people under the New Covenant but also under the Old Covenant, it would require something! And what did it require? It would require His death.

CONCLUSION

This is why a new covenant had to be established through His blood. And it is that blood that became the inspiration for this hymn that contains the following words, "For there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners, plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains."

May we by the grace of God never **forget** what it cost Christ for Him to become the mediator of a new covenant and for us to enter into the blessings of that covenant.