

The New Covenant.

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The new covenant is a better covenant than the old, having better promises, a ministration of the Spirit, and spread out to all nations, with Christ as the mediator who takes away the quarrel and reconciles sinners to God.

Scripture: Exodus 24:1, Hebrews 8:6

Topics: "Grace and Redemption", "Covenants"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne expounds on the New Covenant as described in Hebrews 8:6, emphasizing its superiority over the Old Covenant. He outlines the various covenants in the Bible, illustrating how the New Covenant, established through Christ, offers better promises and a more excellent ministry than the old. M'Cheyne highlights that while the Old Covenant was a ministration of death, the New Covenant is one of grace and life, inviting all to come boldly to God. He stresses the importance of recognizing Christ as the mediator who reconciles us to God, urging believers to trust in His obedience and sacrifice.

Transcript

Hebrews viii. 6.--"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

The last day that I spoke on this chapter, we saw three things.

1st. What was the pattern showed to Moses in the Mount. And we saw that it was not a vision of the Tabernacle, but that which it represented. He showed him the true mercy-seat--the true sacrifice for sin ; and that was the reason why Moses and the believing children of Israel worked so willingly in gathering materials for the building of the Tabernacle, because that was a shadow of the heavenly things.

2d. I showed you, in the second place, that the Jewish high priests were a shadow of the heavenly high priest. Their dress was a shadow of him that was to come.

3d. I showed you, thirdly that Christ's was a more excellent ministry, because theirs was only a shadow--his the substance ; and I showed you his ministry was more excellent, because it was in heaven. And now, from these words, let us notice--

I. The covenants that are spoken of in the word of God.

II. The betterness of the new covenant over the old.

III. The superiority of Christ's ministry, seeing that he is the mediator of the covenant.

I. First of all, let us inquire into the covenants that are spoken of in the word of God.--The first covenant that is mentioned in the word of God is the covenant of works, which was made in Paradise with Adam. Now, it is evident that it is not called a covenant in the Bible, and therefore it has been quarreled with by some people, --namely, our calling it a covenant ; but if we look at the transaction, we will see, that, by whatever name we call it, it was a covenant or agreement. When God placed Adam in the garden of Eden, he promised that he would give him life on condition of perfect obedience. We have no mention, indeed, of the promise ; but the ever-green tree of life showed, that it would be so ; but if he transgressed, he should die. And we are quite sure that Adam accepted it, for it was what he owed to God. This, then, was the first covenant God made with man; but this is not the covenant mentioned in the passage before us. It is not the covenant mentioned here--for these two reasons; First, the covenant of works had no mediator, and it needed none. Before Adam sinned there was no need of a mediator. The other reason why it is not the covenant mentioned here is, verse 9,--"Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers," &c.

There is a second covenant mentioned in the Bible--it is the covenant God made with Noah after the Flood. You remember Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord ; and it is said, God smelled a sweet savour, and he said, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." And a little after, God said, "I will establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you." And God placed the rainbow in the heavens, as a sign of the covenant. Now, it appears to me, that this was intended to be a type of the covenant of grace.

There is a third covenant mentioned in the Bible,--namely, that made with Abraham. You may read of it in the 17th chapter of Genesis at the beginning, --"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect," &c. This was the first promise that was made in the covenant when established. And then, verse 8--"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." That was the second promise made. Now, it appears to me that this was a type of the covenant that was to be afterwards.

A fourth covenant which was made by God was, when he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Verse 9--"Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." The time when this covenant was made, was the time when God took them by the hand : It was the time when God spoke to them from heaven--when they were at Mount Sinai, which is a rocky mountain in the desert of Arabia. It was there God made the covenant with them. We are told of the making of the covenant in Hebrews xii. 18-21. It was an awful day. Now, some of you will ask, "What was the subject matter of the covenant ?" You may read of it in Exodus xxiv. 1-8. You will observe, that in the making of this covenant, there was--First, a revival of the holy law of God. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and he went and showed them to the people, and they said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." The second part was touching the building of the Tabernacle. So this was the double object of the covenant. There is another point I would like you to notice,--that is, what was the use of the covenant. You will see it mentioned in Galatians iii. 19--"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Here the very question is asked. And then, verse 23--"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." Now, here you will see the true object of the law : It was intended to convince men of their sin. That was the great object of the covenant. It was intended to let men see their sins, that they might be shut up to the faith, and

that they might wait for Christ. This, then, is the old covenant mentioned in this chapter.

Now, it remains for me to show you the new covenant. The new covenant is that made between the Father and the Son. Now, here the same objection is raised, that we have no account of the covenant transaction. Now, it is true that we have no express mention of it in the Bible, yet we have many hints of it : For example, we are told in Revelations of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And then, in the 17th of John, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And we are told in this verse, that "he is the mediator of a better covenant." So that, although we have no express mention of the covenant, we gather from these and many other passages that there was ; and in the covenant, God promised to the Lord Jesus that he would give life to sinners, if he would die for them ; and he promised that he would die. As the children of Israel said at the foot of Mount Sinai, "All that the Lord hath said will we do." So Christ said, "All that the Father hath given me to do I will do it." Now, this is the better covenant here spoken of.

My dear friends, I fear I have wearied some of you in going over this. I would have you learn from it, the amazing love of God in entering into a covenant at all. The covenant which he made with Noah was a covenant of grace ; and the covenant he made at Sinai, it was also a covenant of grace ; and the covenant that was made with Christ was a covenant of grace.

II. The betterness of the new covenant over the old. Verse 6-- "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." I say, then, first of all, that the covenant of Calvary was a better covenant than that of Sinai. You will see this in 2d Corinthians iii. 7,8--"But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" Here you will notice, brethren, that the covenant made at Sinai is called the ministration of death, because it was a revival of the law--it was given with great signs of terror. The greater part of the Sinaitic covenant was intended to condemn men ; but how different that of Calvary ! It was one of love : It had words such as these--"Come, and I will give you life."

The betterness of this covenant may be seen in various particulars.

1st. The new covenant was a better covenant than the old, because it had better promises. Observe, that the old covenant had hardly any promises. The old covenant says, "If you will be obedient, and do what I command, you shall have life." But the new covenant says, "If you are sinners, believe, and you shall be saved." The new covenant says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And, again, it says, "I will give unto him that hath the Son eternal life."

2d. The new covenant is a better covenant than the old, because it is a ministration of the Spirit. Under the old covenant, the Spirit was not given with such power as it was given afterwards. You remember it is said, "The Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." And Christ promised, when he left the world, that he would send the Comforter. The old covenant had no promises of the Comforter--it had only the type. I believe that the laver was a type of the Spirit, so that it is a better covenant.

3d. It is a better covenant, because it is spread out to all nations.

4th. The new covenant is better than the old, because we can come with boldness to God. Under the old, they had the types. The high priest went in only once a year into the holiest of all ; but we have a high priest who ever lives within the vail, to make intercession. There is a greater nearness to God under the

new covenant than under the old.

Now, dear friends, if you have taken up what I have been saying, you will take away this lesson with you : If you would have been punished for trampling under foot the old covenant, what may you expect who trample under foot the blood of Christ ? You live under an economy where you have access to God.

III. And last, Christ has a better ministry than the Old Testament priests, because he is the mediator of the covenant. I told you what a mediator was-- it is one who comes between two parties ; but Christ has not only come between, but he took away the quarrel--"He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." God says, "This is my beloved Son ; hear ye him." Do you trust in him then ? Do you delight in him ? Are you willing that his obedience be called your obedience ? If you are, then you will see that he is the mediator of a better covenant--one that was made to reconcile sinners to his Father. Amen.

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