

"The Death of our Covenant Maker"

Hebrews 9:15-22

May 19, 2024

I. Understanding Heb. 9:16-17

- A. Translations like the ESV suddenly introduce the topic of a *will*.
- B. The NAS does a little better with its rendering:

Hebrews 9:16–17 - 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, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

- C. A closer look at the words of vs. 16-17:

1. The end of v. 16 actually says: "the death of the covenant maker must be *shown forth*."
– in a representative way...
2. The last phrase of v. 17 actually says: "for a covenant is ratified only upon *dead bodies*."

- D. The ancient ceremony of covenant ratification best reflects the wording of the passage:

Jeremiah 34:18–20 -¹⁸ 'I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts— ¹⁹ the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf— ²⁰ I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. And their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

- E. With all that in mind, Hebrews first readers would've read vs. 16-17 this way:

For where a covenant is involved, the death of each covenant maker must be shown forth. For a covenant is only legally established over dead bodies, since it is not in force until those who made it symbolize their deaths. →

- F. Christ's death was necessary because it inaugurated the New Covenant.

- G. By doing so, it fulfilled the shadowy promise God had made to Abraham in Genesis 15:

Genesis 15:9–12 - ⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

Genesis 15:17 - When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

1. Smoking pot = the cloud in the wilderness / Flaming torch = the pillar of fire.
2. God alone passed through dead bodies promising to take the penalty for His people's covenant breaking upon Himself.
3. This was fulfilled in Christ's actual death.

II. The Blessings of Living in the New Covenant Age

- A. Our covenant relationship with God was ratified upon a true death for our sins that has already taken place.
- B. By faith, we have entered a covenant with God where our past, present, and future failings have already been taken care of.
- C. We are free to live in the blessed liberty of such a fact.
- D. That blessed liberty enables us to serve the living God in all that we do.