

LD 6 ser 5

JESUS: THE MEDIATOR/DELIVERER WE NEED

Text: Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 6 **Read:** Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:14-18

1: What kind of mediator/deliverer do we need?

One that is completely human – like us in every way (Ro 5:19; He 2:17)

Except for sin - perfectly righteous (He 7:26-27)

More powerful than every creature (Ge 3:15)

Able to bear God's anger against sin

That is, one who is also true God

2: Who is this mediator/deliverer?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, (Mt 1:20-23)

3: How do you know?

How do you come to know this?

The gospel revealed in God's word, the Bible (Ge – Rev)

And so: *Jesus is the kind of mediator/deliverer that we need!*

Dear Congregation

Christmas is only 6 hrs away now. Tomorrow we'll meet again to commemorate the birth of Jesus – the Son of God - born as one of us.

But why did he come? That's a question worth asking, isn't it? And that's the question we're thinking about tonight.

If you think back to Lord's Day 5, you'll remember that we already started thinking about that then.

We talked about our need for a mediator. You'll remember that a mediator is someone who helps people reconcile their differences. It could be two kids fighting at home, or two multinational companies threatening to go to court over a billion dollar deal. But one thing they might do is bring in a mediator to help them reach an agreement and settle their differences.

And Lords Day 5 also talks about our need for a deliverer – someone to rescue us. That might bring to mind the miners at beaconsfield. Or maybe the firefighters in Victoria or Tasmania over the past few weeks, trying to save lives and houses from the fires that have raged in those parts of the country.

Humanity's problem, though, is that God himself is the one who has a problem with us. Our sin is the problem between us and God that we can't resolve. We need a mediator that can heal our relationship with God. And with the punishment for sin being eternal hell, we need a deliverer who can save us from God's

anger against sin.

Point 1

But then what kind of mediator / deliverer do you look for? A parent can mediate in a fight between their kids. Some companies specialise in corporate mediation. You have groups like the SES that specialise in emergency rescue. And our fire fighters are trained to fight fires. But where do you go to find someone who can mediate between us and God and rescue us from his anger against sin? What are the qualifications you even look for in someone like that?

And picking up again on where we left off with Lord's Day 5, we're going to spend a few minutes thinking about the ***qualifications of the kind of mediator / deliverer we would need.***

The first qualification is that he would need to be ***completely human*** – just like us. In Genesis 3 we read how Adam, the first man, led humanity into sin. The punishment for that is death.

And the Old Testament sacrificial system teaches us that God will accept another life in our place. But the way God sees it, since humanity sinned, a human should pay. When Australia is represented at the Olympics, we don't all have to be involved, but our representative has to be an Australian.

And so in places like Romans 5 the Bible presents the possibility of a second Adam, a last Adam, a perfect Adam, paying the price for sin on behalf of others, as our mediator / deliverer / Redeemer. Hebrews confirms that 'both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. ... Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity ... he had to be made like us in every way, ... ?'

But there would have to be one exception to his being like us. ***He would have to be like us in every way except for sin.***

A pauper can't pay the debts of other paupers. A spiritual bankrupt can't pay his own debt, let alone the

debts of others. If we're going to have someone else pay our spiritual debt, and take upon himself our punishment, he needs to be able to do that. And so he would have to be like us in every way, except for sin. Hebrews teaches us that too when it talks about the one that meets our need being 'holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners'.

Another qualification for this mediator/deliverer we're looking for would be *power beyond any creature*. He would need to be able to defeat sin and Satan, death and hell, and restore to us righteousness and life.

Genesis 3:15 already begins to teach us that, when it talks about a seed of the woman one day crushing the serpent's head even if the serpent would crush his heel. But which fallen human being on their own can crush Satan and cheat death? We need someone more powerful than any creature.

And *he would need to be able to survive God's anger against sin for every one he represented*. Every human being deserves to be forsaken by God for all eternity – this person would need to be able to take that upon himself, and survive, for everyone he represented. The ancient Greeks imagined a god carrying the sky on his shoulders, and they called him Atlas. Sculptures and paintings picture him carrying the full weight of the world on his shoulders. Our mediator / deliverer would have to be able to carry a load even greater than that – the full weight of God's anger against the sin of the world.

The ancient Greeks understood that carrying the sky on your shoulders was a feat for the gods – no man could do it. And Christians come to the same point too, acknowledging that bearing the weight of the world's sin and God's anger against sin is a feat for God himself. We can't do it - no human can. And so, *the only one who matches these kinds of qualifications is God himself*. The kind of mediator / deliverer we're looking for would have to be not only true man, but also true God.

And many people today are looking for a mediator between themselves and whatever god they believe in. They turn to gurus, mediums, channels, spiritual leaders and a whole range of people like that. Or they associate themselves with a church that teaches that that's all they need – 'just leave it to us we'll look after

you'. But you see from these kinds of qualities and qualifications that nobody fits the bill, except someone who is not only like us in every way except for sin, but is also true God. If you're looking in one of these other directions, depending on anything else except the kind of person these qualities describes, then you need to reconsider, because nothing else measures up.

Point 2

But then, *who does measure up to these kind of qualifications?*

If you're an employer here in WA, you know how hard it can be at the moment to find the right kind of person for the job, with all the kinds of qualities and qualifications you're looking for. How much harder isn't it, though, to find someone who can measure up to the kinds of qualifications we're looking for in this mediator / deliverer?

But with most of us having thought about these things for a long time already, acknowledging that the *only person who fits the bill is Jesus* comes as no surprise.

But imagine that you were one of the people by the Jordan River with John the Baptist when he acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah for the first time. Imagine hearing God speaking from heaven acknowledging him as his Son in whom he was well pleased.

Or imagine that you had been on a spiritual quest, trying to find spiritual answers, looking in a whole range of places, only realising tonight for the first time that Jesus is the answer. Then this answer would carry a bit more punch. Maybe some of us did find ourselves in that situation - maybe you can remember back to what it was like to realise for the first time that Jesus was the answer to all your questions.

Keith and Melody Green, the Christian singers, travelled that road. They had been on a spiritual quest for years, trying a range of the options that were out there in the 60s and 70s, not finding satisfaction in any of them. But they found that Jesus' name kept popping, as an important person, a prophet, a guru, or something like that. And so eventually they decided to find out more about him. And they discovered the Bible. And in time they were saved.

CS Lewis travelled the same path in a different way. He describes himself as being dragged kicking and

screaming into the kingdom of heaven, irresistibly drawn to the answer of Jesus as he struggled and grappled with the ultimate questions.

We expect this answer to pop up here because we know this is where things have been moving all along, but it hasn't been that simple for everyone.

For that matter, some of us might still be on this journey right now. You might have grown up in a Christian family, but maybe you've reached the point where you need to believe these things for yourselves – stand on our own 2 spiritual feet – not believe them just because your parents do.

Or maybe you've only recently started to consider the gospel as the answer to the ultimate questions. Maybe you've only begun to move in church circles in the last year or so. You're still grappling with some of these things, not completely convinced yet that they are true, trying to discover and confirm for yourself what the truth is.

If that is you, then hopefully working through these questions and answers has helped you to settle these things in your mind. Hopefully Christmas this year will carry a whole new significance than it did last year, or the year before.

Point 3

If you haven't made it to that point yet though, maybe one thing you're struggling with is the question of *how can we possibly know?* How can we know what the truth is? Is there any such thing as truth? Aren't the competing ideas out there all as valid as each other – just alternative points of view?

And *that is the struggle of a post-modern culture*. Our society has come to profess that there is no such thing as truth, and that all alternatives are as valid as each other.

Except *our society hasn't completely accepted that really*.

When you borrow someone's car keys, and then tell them that after all it is your car, people have a problem with that – apparently that isn't true. Suddenly truth is important.

Or when the World Trade Centre is bombed, or innocent civilians are held hostage, or a country takes over another country for no good reason, suddenly those actions aren't as acceptable as peaceful alternatives.

Or when middle age men prey on children – suddenly those actions aren't acceptable either.

Even post-modern societies don't really believe that all options are as valid as each other. They don't always believe that your truth is as valid as their truth.

But then where do you discover the truth?

Some would say you turn to science for unquestionable answers – science deals with the facts. And that's true for some questions, but what about when science begins to delve into areas outside its jurisdiction, and offers possibilities that it can't really prove – answer to questions like where did we come from, where are we going, why are we here? Science can't really answer questions like that, even if too many scientists think it can.

Some would say that for those kinds of questions you turn to philosophy. The only problem is that the answers philosophy gives are constantly changing. One generation gives different answers to the previous generation. Even in the same generation, different philosophers will offer different possibilities.

So then where do you turn?

And it would make sense to ***turn to the one who made everything in the first place***, the one who knows. It would make sense to ***turn to the book of answers that he has given us – the Bible***.

A problem for some people is that God doesn't even bother to prove that he exists. He doesn't bother to prove that the Bible is his book of answers. He just expects us to accept that.

On the other hand, if you take the time to look into it, ***there are very good reasons to believe that both of these things are true***.

Even non-Christian archaeologists use the Bible as one of their main sources of accurate information. And philosophically, a rational, orderly universe does demand a rational, orderly creator, which is why the debate

on intelligent design is raging.

And the sense of moral right and wrong imprinted on everyone's conscience demands a creator with a strong sense of what is right and what's not.

And it's interesting to know that when the evidence from history and the Bible for Jesus' death and resurrection has been tested in the federal courts of a number of countries, it has consistently been defended as fact.

We do have very good reasons to accept the Bible as God's word to us. We do have very good reasons to accept that the gospel is true.

But ultimately, the only answer we can give as to how we know that Jesus is the mediator / deliverer that we need, is because God through his word, the Bible, has told us so himself. We can't prove it. But God himself, by his Word and Spirit, has revealed the truth, and still convinces people of that today.

In fact, as you see from the Bible, ***God has increasingly revealed to the world*** that his chosen one, who we know as Jesus, is our Saviour from sin.

He already began to reveal that at the time of the fall into sin in Genesis 3. He continued revealing the details of his plan throughout the Old Testament. And finally the whole message was revealed through his son Jesus, in the gospel. As Hebrews 1 says, 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son'

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And so, in a few hours from now, we're going to go to bed, hoping for a good night sleep. In around 5 hours, the clock is going to tick past midnight, and we'll be into Christmas Day. And then, when we meet here again in about 14 hours, we'll commemorate all of these same kinds things again.

Christmas is about remembering that Jesus was born in a stable to Mary and Joseph.

He was born to die as our mediator / deliverer.

He came to make right everything that has gone wrong because of sin.