

MORE THAN AN ARBITER

Job 9:32-33

In 1960, Harper Lee published *To Kill A Mockingbird*, a book that has become a well-known and well-loved classic of American literature. Lee's story, set in a Great Depression era city in Alabama, narrates themes of racial inequality, tolerance, and justice through the tragedies experienced by the story's main characters. The wide-spread and continuing popularity of the book attests, not only to Lee's writing ability, but also to the importance of the themes her story addresses.

We can appreciate the values developed in the book – we all want just laws and people to enforce those laws with fairness and impartiality. That desire, however, is not unique to our democratic society; the Old Testament book of Job records Job's desire for justice, fairness, and impartiality. In recording conversations Job had with three of his friends about the sudden and severe hardships he encountered, the book illustrates Job and his friends' misunderstandings about God and the ways He interacted with humanity. Job's misunderstandings focused on his belief that God unfairly targeted him for suffering and that he had no way to address his situation.

Job chapter nine offers a good summary of Job's beliefs about his suffering. Responding to his friend's comment that God would not afflict a just man (*Job 8*), Job took up the implied idea of pleading his case before God (*Job 9*). After describing God's inscrutable, absolute sovereignty (*Job 9:5-12*), Job explained his fear about going to trial before God - because God is the sovereign judge and because God, he believed, was persecuting him, he had no confidence that God would act justly or that He would even hear his case (*Job 9:13-24*). Job therefore concluded that he could not have a fair trial before God and lamented that he had no one to arbitrate between himself and God, that he had no judge to decide his case with God (*Job 9:25-35*).

Job's lament that he had no "arbiter"¹ (*Job 9:32-33*) helps us appreciate the New Testament's explanation for why we need Jesus – he mediates a relationship between God and humanity (*1 Timothy 2:5*).

We have a mediator

- We, like Job, need someone to mediate between God and us, a need we have because we have all participated in open rebellion against His good will and sovereign identity (*Romans 3:9-18, 23; 6:23*).

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- But, unlike Job, we have someone to mediate our relationship with God, “the man Christ Jesus” (*1 Timothy 2:5*). Consider, therefore, some of the things that define Jesus’ mediating role:
 - Jesus’ experiences as a human give him sympathy towards us and informs his activity as a mediator on our behalf (*Hebrews 2:7*).
 - But Jesus does not act as a neutral party between God and us; God sent him to be our “advocate” (*1 John 2:1; cf. Romans 8:26-27*).
 - Jesus’ partiality toward us reveals an important truth – God loves us (*1 John 2:1-2; 4:9-10*).
 - God’s love-motivated commissioning of Jesus does not merely seek to address our guilt before His law; it more importantly seeks to establish a relationship with us (*Romans 5:6-11*). For example:
 - Jesus prepares a way for us to come into God’s presence and then help us navigate that way (*Hebrews 6:13-20*).
 - Jesus allows us to “receive adoption” as children of God who receive all the helps and blessings of being God’s children (*Galatians 3:26; 4:4-7*).

Applications

- Because love rather than merely law defines our relationship with God, our relationships with the people around us should also be defined by love (*1 John 4:7-11; Matthew 5:43-48*).
- The relationships with God that Jesus mediates for us carries an important expectation – because God, through Jesus, gives us the opportunity to become His children, He expects us to act like Him (*cf. Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 4:7-11*).
- The blessings we enjoy in the relationship Jesus enables us to have with God ought to motivate us to help others enjoy that relationship too; we should be motivated to serve as mediators between our world and God (*1 Peter 2:9*).

Job lamented his perceived lack of mediator between himself and God. God has blessed us with a mediator, with Jesus. Let us not, therefore, fail to recognize the value of what God offers to us through Jesus; let us embrace the helps Jesus offers; let us turn our lives over to Jesus’ control so that he can secure our relationship with God and bring us into His presence.