

THE MOSAIC COVENANT

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I. Introduction

- A. [Turn in your bibles to Exodus 19.]
- B. Continuing a series of messages on Biblical Covenants.
- C. Last Sunday – the Abrahamic Covenant.
- D. Today – God's covenant with Israel via Moses, the "Mosaic Covenant."
- E. This is the "Old Covenant" which corresponds to the portion of the Bible designated the "Old Testament" and which was broken and is superseded in Scripture by the "New Covenant" or "New Testament" (Jer. 31:31-32).

II. Israel To Be A Special Treasure (Ex. 19:1-8)

- A. "So Israel camped there before the mountain" (v. 2).
 - 1. Israel separated from Egypt to the wilderness of Sinai.
 - 2. But Moses said to God, "Who [am] I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this [shall be] a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." (Ex. 3:11-12 NKJV)
- B. Conditional nature.
 - 1. "if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant *then...*" (v. 5)
 - a) "you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people..." (v. 5)
 - (1) "special treasure to Me" is "My personal property," or "My private property" [Heb. seggulah]
 - (2) Of personal value.
 - (a) "My jewels" (Mal. 3:17)
 - 2. "above all people"
 - a) "From [among] all peoples" -- a separation.
 - b) This favored position of Israel is what fuels antisemitism.
 - (1) Having been specially favored by God, other nations are jealous of Israel.
 - (2) Satan also opposes Israel because of her role in the plan of God in history (Rev. 12).
 - 3. "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (v. 6)

- a) That each individual was to act as if he were dedicated to ministering to God.
 - b) A "holy nation" in the sense of being *separated to God*.
 - c) Also a revelation of God's law and character to the other nations of the world.
- C. Israel's voluntary acceptance of the conditions.
1. "So Moses ... laid before them all these words..." (v. 7)
 2. "All the people answered... 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do.'" (v. 8)
 3. A bilateral agreement between God and the nation.
 - a) Israel is now responsible to uphold her promises or risk breaking the covenant.
- D. Many people claim they are 'basically good' and that they keep them.
1. Most people, including Christians, can't even enumerate them.
 2. Jesus showed the true nature of sin involving the heart and motives (Mtt. 5).
 3. Rabbis have identified a total of 613 commands¹ consisting of 248 'thou shalt's' and 365 'thou shalt not's'.²

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"The 613 commandments of the Mosaic Law cannot simply be divided into categories of commandments, laws, and statutes. The fact is that these Hebrew words are used interchangeably for all of them. They may have a slight shade of emphasis here and there but sometimes the same order could be called a commandment, a statute, a law, etc. There is really no clear way of defining which order falls into which category. There are basically 613 laws, 613 commandments, and 613 statutes." *Ariel Ministries Newsletter*, (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries), Fall 2001, <<http://www.ariel.org>>. "According to Jewish thinking, God chose the Jewish people to be the source of light in the world. They were to study the rule of law given to them and obey it--to take the 613 *mitzvot* (365 'thou shalt's,' 248 'thou shalt not's') and incorporate them into their daily lives." *Israel My Glory* (Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry) , July/

2 August 2001, p. 26, <<http://www.foi.org>>

"Rabbi Simelai expounded, 'Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses, three hundred and sixty-five negative ones, corresponding to the number of the days of the solar year, and two hundred forty-eight positive commandments, corresponding to the parts of man's body. . . . David came and reduced them to eleven. . . (Ps. 15). Isaiah came and reduced them to six. . . (Isa. 33:24). Micah came and reduced them to three. . . (Mic. 6:8). Isaiah again came and reduced them to two. . . (Isa. 56:1). Amos came and reduced them to a single one, as it is said, *For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel. Seek Me and live.* Habakkuk further came and based them on one, as it is said, *But the righteous shall live by his faith* (Hab. 2:4)'. " *Babylonian Talmud*, Makkot 24A-B, cited in Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks With Jesus* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp. 107-108.

- a) Tassels (*tsitsith*) on garments (Num. 15:38-41) are tied in a pattern which includes knots meant to enumerate the 613 commands (*mitzvot*).³
- b) Bar-Mitzvah, *son of command* – a boy who comes of age and is now directly responsible before God for keeping the law. No longer under father's cover.

III. The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17)

- A. These ten commands receive special emphasis.
- B. Written directly by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18; 32:16; 34:1,28).
- C. Written on tablets of stone whereas others were written on a scroll.
- D. Spoken by God, out of the midst of the fire on the mountain, directly to the people of Israel (Ex. 19:9,17; Deu. 4:12-13; 5:22-26; 9:10,16; 10:4).

IV. Ratification Of The Covenant By Israel (Ex. 24:1-8)

- A. A *national* covenant.
 - 1. All the people answered with one voice (v. 3)
 - a) The response of the *nation*. The nation of Israel is a party to the covenant as a people group.
 - 2. The giving of the law was uniquely Israel's.
 - a) And what great nation [is there] that has [such] statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? (De 4:8 NKJV)
 - b) He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; And [as for His] judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD! (Ps 147:19-20 NKJV)
 - c) "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, [With the] statutes and judgments. (Mal 4:4 NKJV)
- B. A *written* covenant
 - 1. Moses wrote all the words of the Lord (v. 4)
 - 2. This is a separate covenant from the previous one made with Abraham.
 - 3. It concerns the law given through Moses to *this specific nation*.
 - 4. Called "the Book of the Covenant" (v. 7)

3

³The *Tsitsith* were originally directed to be of white threads, with one thread of deep blue in each fringe. According to the tradition, each of these white fringes is to consist of eight threads, one of them wound round the others: first, *seven times* with a double knot; then *eight times* with a double knot (7 + 8 numerically = י"ה); then *eleven times* with a double knot (11 numerically = ה"א); and lastly *thirteen times* (13 numerically = א"ח; or together א"ח ה"א, *Jehovah One*). Again, it is pointed out that as *Tsitsith* is numerically equal to 600 (צ"ס), this with the eight threads and five knots, gives the number 613, which is that of the Commandments. At present the *Tsitsith* are worn as a special undergarment. . . or on the *Tallith* or prayer mantle, but anciently they seem to have been worn on the outer garment itself." Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), footnote 5, p. 192.

C. A *conditional* covenant.

1. Volitional agreement to the stipulations of the agreement.
All the words which the Lord has said we will do (vv. 3, 7).
2. Blessings on obedience, curses on disobedience (Le. 26:3-13; Lev. 26:44-45; Deu. 28:1-14; 2K. 23:2-3; 2K. 23:25).
3. Example: Lev. 26:14-18
'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, [but] break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. (Le 26:14-18 NKJV)

D. A *blood* covenant

1. Ratified by the sprinkling of blood on the people (v. 8)
2. "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you..."
3. "...according to these words."
 - a) Emphasizing once again that this covenant concerns the written law given at Sinai.

V. The Sabbath As The Sign Of The Covenant

- A. Before the giving of the law, in the wilderness, Israel was told not to gather manna on the sabbath as it would not be given that day. On Friday, enough manna would be given for both Friday and Saturday (Ex. 16:23-29).
 1. The theme: rest in obedience to the Lord and He will provide what is needed.
- B. The fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8-11).
- C. Pronounced as a "sign" of the covenant (Ex. 31:13-16).
- D. Mandatory day of rest from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.
 1. Violation was punishable by death (Num. 15:32-36).
- E. Intended to follow the pattern established in the creation week (Ex. 20:11).

VI. The Breaking Of The Covenant

- A. Prophesied by God to Moses
 1. Now the LORD appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle. And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the

foreigners of the land, where they go [to be] among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them." (De 31:15-16 NKJV)

2. "When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant." (De 31:20 NKJV)

B. Pronounced by Jeremiah

1. "They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers." (Jer 11:10 NKJV)
2. Superseded by the New Covenant.
 - a) "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD." (Jer 31:31-32 NKJV)
 - b) This covenant was ratified by the spilling of Jesus blood at the crucifixion as commemorated by the cup of wine at the last supper (Mtt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1Cor. 11:25; Heb. 12:24).

VII. Summary - Relevance Of The Mosaic Covenant Today

A. Relevance for people of faith:

1. The law is an all-or-nothing proposition
 - a) For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." (Ga 3:10 NKJV)
 - b) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (Ga 5:3 NKJV)
 - c) For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one [point], he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (Jas 2:10-11 NKJV)
2. The law *cannot* be kept today.

- a) Even a perfect man, untainted by the sin of Adam, could not keep it *today*.
 - b) Ever since the Temple and sacrificial system were destroyed in 70 A.D., *it has been impossible to keep the law*.
 - c) Innovative rabbinical substitutions and legalistic Christian interpretations which attempt to bypass the details of the law given to Moses refuse to accept the reality of the missing Temple and rent veil (Luke 23:45; Heb. 10:19-20).
 - d) Attempts to separate or compartmentalize the law and then keep a portion thereof will not satisfy God.
 - (1) Example: the "Christian Sabbath"
 - (a) Those who think they are "keeping the Sabbath" on Sundays are mistaken. The Sabbath was, is, and always will be on Saturday.
 - (b) Redefining the Sabbath as "Sunday" is not scriptural and evidences an unwillingness to accept our freedom in Christ from the law (Rom. 14:5-6).
 - (c) An attempt to "keep the Big Ten" by redefining one to match Christian revisionism.
 - (d) Often reflects an unwillingness to recognize two very important facts concerning the Law of Moses:
 - i) The law was given to the nation Israel and not to other nations.
 - a) See the Jerusalem counsel concerning the pronouncement concerning what was required of Gentile believers (Acts 15).
 - ii) It was broken by Israel and is no longer serviceable!
 - (2) One can 'practice' a day of rest in recognition of creation week, but it's best not to think of it as "keeping the Sabbath" which was on Saturday and was a sign of the Mosaic Covenant made with Israel.
3. The Mosaic Covenant has already been broken and rendered obsolete.
- a) The old covenant is obsolete and vanishing (Heb. 8:13).
 - b) People of faith are not under the Mosaic Law (Gal. 3:25; 5:18).
 - (1) But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Ga 3:22-25 NKJV)

- (a) "Tutor" is a term from which we get the word 'pedagogue,' but which might be better rendered as "guardian" -- one who supervises, watches over, or guards a young child on behalf of the parents.⁴
- (2) You have become estranged from Christ, you who [attempt to] be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Ga 5:4 NKJV)
 - (a) These are very strong words from Paul!
- c) Salvation by faith is based on the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant-which preceded the Mosaic covenant and is independent of it (Gal. 3:7-18).
- 4. People of Faith will not be judged by the law.
 - a) Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Ga 3:13-14 NKJV)
 - b) Believers participate in the blessing of Abraham (Gen. 12:3) via faith in Christ (Gal. 3:8, 14) who fulfilled the law (Mat. 5:17; Rom 10:4).
 - (1) For Christ [is] the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom. 10:4 NKJV)
 - c) Believers are now subject to the *law of Christ*, the *law of the Spirit* (Rom. 8:2; 1Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; Jas. 1:25; 2:12).
 - (1) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Ga 5:22-23 NKJV)
- B. Relevance for those who reject God:
 - 1. Shows the need of salvation by grace through faith and not by good deeds.
 - a) The 613 laws reveal our inability to be righteous in our selves (Rom. 3:19; 5:20; 7:7) and should drive us to the cross (Gal. 3:19-25).
 - b) The Ten Commandments (and the entire law of Moses) has never been a means of salvation.
 - (1) No one is justified (declared righteous) by the law (Gal. 3:11). Justification has always been by faith in God based on the work of Christ (Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:6).
 - (a) "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; "and by Him everyone who believes

4

⁴ "The παιδαγωγος emerges from ancient literature not as the "tutor" leading a child on to something (a function often attributed to the law in the life of an individual in accordance with this understanding of Gal. 3:24-25), nor as an excessively harsh character, but as a servant who closely supervises, monitors and watches over a young child." Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," cited in John S. Feinberg, ed., *Continuity And Discontinuity* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), p. 214.

is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Ac 13:38-39 NKJV)

- (b) Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:20 NKJV)
 - (c) [Is] the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. (Ga 3:21 NKJV)
- (2) Acceptance before God is not being a “goody two-shoes” because the requirement is perfection which we cannot achieve.
 - (3) God-rejectors often are confused about why Christians attend church. Christians don't attend church to garner points with God as a good deed: they are in church because they recognize their sinful condition and their need of forgiveness which is only obtained by faith in Christ.
- 2. Standard of moral judgment for those who choose to stand on their own before God.
 - a) In Revelation, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the ark of His covenant is seen in Heaven:
 - (1) The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, ... Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. (Rev. 11:18-19)
 - (2) “Ark of His covenant” contains the stone tablets with the 10 Commandments which represent the entire law, but especially the moral law embodied by those ten.
 - (3) The seventh trumpet eventually triggers the final seven bowls of God's wrath. The seven angels carrying the seven bowls of wrath come forth from “the tabernacle of the testimony” in heaven (Rev. 15:5).

VIII. The Mosaic Covenant As A Dividing Line

- A. Every man has one choice. Either:
 - 1. Stand in your own righteousness before God—an insufficient righteousness.
 - a) Insufficient in relation to the “Big Ten” (Commandments).
 - b) Insufficient in relation to the additional 603 commands.
 - c) Insufficient of the purity of heart and motives which God evaluates as revealed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5).
 - (1) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mt 5:27-28 NKJV)

2. Or stand in the righteousness of God – the righteousness obtained by the perfect man: Jesus Christ, the only man to ever keep the law perfectly.
 - a) Paul states, concerning the unbelieving Jews:
For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom. 10:3-4 NKJV)
 - b) All that is needed is faith in the completed work of Christ in your behalf.