

## Biblical Theology, Lesson 8

### The Mosaic Covenant

*Read Exodus 19:1-6*

Review:

In our last Sunday School lesson, we saw how God began to draw a people to Himself through the covenant He made with Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. We saw this this is part of the unfolding of redemption, in which God, the hero, is forming a new people to be GOD's People, to come back and live in a relationship *with God* in GOD's place. The story is all about how God fixes the problem presented in the Garden of Eden - how humanity, created to be God's people, sinned against God, no longer being His people, but His enemies, and were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, the place where God and Man could dwell together. The story of the Bible is how God progressively sinful humanity *back to Himself*, to be His people and live with Him once again!

And God does this through making *covenants* with His people. So God made a covenant with Abraham, promising that He would make Abraham's family into GOD's covenant people, in which they would receive God's blessing. And part of that covenant included God giving Abraham and His family a promised *land*, or *place*, to dwell in. We see God beginning to form a new people, to live in GOD's place, through a new covenant. The rest of Genesis (12-50) tells the story of Abraham's family, who ended up moving down to Egypt because of a famine. Over the years, they multiplied into a great nation, but the Egyptians enslaved them out of fear. So Israel cried out to God, and he delivered them from Egypt through his servant Moses (Exodus 1-15). Then he brought them through the desert to a mountain called Sinai, where God made *another covenant* with Israel.

This covenant is still given to Abraham's family, God's people - and it's given for the same purpose, of progressing the story of redemption, playing a part in redeeming sinners to be *God's People*, who can once again live in *God's Place* with Him, through *God's Covenant*.

*[Draw concentric circles of covenants on board]*

So let's walk through each of these

#### **I. The Mosaic Covenant and God's People**

Given to form Israel into God's holy people

##### **A. A Kingdom of priests, a Holy Nation(Ex. 19:6)**

Reminds us of humanity being made in the “image of God” in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were to represent God, both in ruling, or exercising dominion over creation, like little kings, and representing Creation in their worship and service to God, like little priests. Humanity was created to be Priest-Kings as God’s People. And God tells Israel here that He is making this Law-Covenant with them so that all the people of Israel will be a “kingdom of priests” - so that they will be priest-kings, as God’s “treasured possession among all peoples” - that is, as God’s special, covenant people.

## **II. The Mosaic Covenant and God’s Place**

Given for God and Israel to dwell together

### **A. Land promises**

From the very beginning, it’s made very clear that the purpose of God bringing Israel out of Egypt and giving them the Law Covenant on Sinai is to bring them to the promised land - the land promised to Abraham. But it’s also clear that the Mosaic covenant is given so that they can *dwell with God*; or, more precisely, so that God can dwell among them in the land.

This is symbolized in many ways (such as the cloud of God’s glory in the wilderness, on the mountain, on the tent of meeting, etc.), but is most clearly represented by the *tabernacle*, and later the more permanent temple.

### **B. Tabernacle/Temple**

**Ex. 25:8**, “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, of all its furniture, so you shall make it.”

Much of the rest of Exodus gives many instructions on how to build the tabernacle/temple. The construction is very revealing: the very center is the “Holy of Holies,” where God dwells in the midst of Israel, His people. But Israel can’t come in there. Not even the priests can, except for the high priest, once a year, to make atonement. The rest of the temple is around the holy of holies, where the priests live and mediate between the “unclean” people and God. Then there’s the outer court, where Israel can come to God and make sacrifices and worship.

So, on the one hand, this provides a way for sinful humanity to be brought near as God’s people, for God to dwell with man once again!

But, on the other hand, *this also highlights their sinfulness, the holiness of God, and our inability to approach God fully because of our sin*. The Mosaic Covenant Draws Sinners Closer, but Keeps Them at Arm’s Length

And this is made even clearer when we look at the demands of the covenant itself: the Mosaic Law.

### **III. The Mosaic Covenant was a Covenant of Works**

But this covenant is different; the covenant of Moses *gives the Mosaic Law to Israel*. While the Abraham covenant was one of grace, where Abraham simply had to trust in God's promise, this covenant is *conditional* - it offers blessings, but they are conditional.

#### **A. The blessings of the covenant were conditional on keeping the Law (Deut. 27-30)**

- 1. Obey - Blessings**
- 2. Disobey - Curses**

However, there's a problem - Israel can't keep GOD's law covenant; they can't be holy and clean enough to live with God as His people.

#### **B. Atonement and forgiveness built into the Law:**

- 1. Levitical Priesthood (Num. 18:5-7)**
- 2. Sacrificial System** - entire book of Leviticus deals with the problem of how a sinful people can dwell with a holy God in a covenant relationship - they need sacrifices to be offered to make atonement for their sin so that they can *draw near* to God in relationship with Him and live *as His people with Him*.

#### **Conclusion:**

- 1. Show our inability to keep the law**
- 2. Shows our need for a sacrifice to take our place**
- 3. Shows our need for a better priesthood** - Christ is our great high priest; he's without sin, and able to go to the true holy of holies, in Heaven; and in Christ, *we* are a "kingdom of priests" as the church: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1 Pet. 9a)
- 4. Shows our need for a better sacrifice - Christ** - The blood of bulls and goats can't take away our sin; leaves us longing for a sacrifice that *can* take away our sin
- 5. Shows our need for a better temple - Christ**