

THE MOSAIC COVENANT – PART 3

THE NATURE OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT

It Was a Conditional, Bilateral Covenant

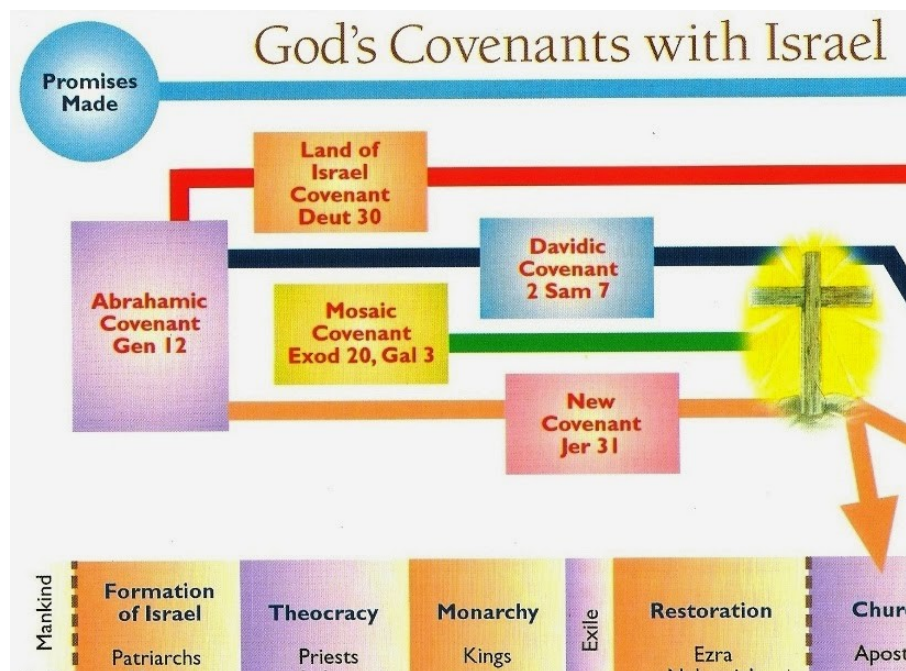
- The MC is not an unconditional, unilateral covenant like the AC is (and the rest of the covenants with Israel)
- The blessings of the MC are conditioned upon the fulfillment of the stipulations...that is why the MC has “if...then” statements within it
- It was a conditional, bilateral covenant that either brought God's direct blessing for obedience or God's direct cursing for disobedience upon the nation of Israel

It Was a Temporary Covenant

- The MC is not an eternal covenant like the AC is...it ended with Christ
- The covenant with Israel had a built-in obsolescence and focused on Israel as a nation; it did not transform the heart of those who heard the covenant demands.

It Was What Allowed Israel to Stay Connected to the AC

- The Mosaic Covenant was the constitution for the nation of Israel, governing the relationship between God and His elect nation...it was the means by which the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant would be fulfilled
- The Exodus event and the establishing of the MC at Sinai were based on God's covenant to Abraham and the patriarchs
- Obedience to the MC was the means through which the people of Israel could remain connected to the blessings of the AC
- If they wanted to experience the blessings of the AC, the people needed to obey the commands of the MC



- The Mosaic Law, then, did not replace the Abrahamic Covenant

Galatians 3:17 ~ What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

It Was Given Specifically to Israel

- The Mosaic Law was given to Israel alone...not to all mankind

Exodus 19:3 ~ Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel:

Exodus 34:27 ~ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

It Constitutes the “Law” Described in the NT

- The Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the OT) are often referred to as “law”

Matthew 5:17 ~ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

Compare Leviticus 19:18 with Luke 10:26-27

Leviticus 19:18 ~ You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

Luke 10:26-27 ~ And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” 27 And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

Compare Numbers 28:9-10 with Matthew 12:5

Numbers 28:9 ~ Then on the sabbath day two male lambs one year old without defect, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its drink offering: 10 ‘This is the burnt offering of every sabbath in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.

Matthew 12:5 ~ Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?

Compare Deuteronomy 25:4 with 1 Corinthians 9:9

Deuteronomy 25:4~ You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

1 Corinthians 9:9~ For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

- When Paul refers to “the law” or the “law of Moses,” he usually has in the mind the injunctions contained within the MC

Acts 13:39 ~ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

Romans 5:20~ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Galatians 5:3~ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

Galatians 6:13~ For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

It is an Indivisible Unity

- It is common to divide the Mosaic Law into three parts – 1) Moral (Ten Commandments); 2) Ceremonial; 3) Civil
- These divisions, though, helpful for study, have no scriptural authority...the Mosaic Law is one Law and is an indivisible unity

James 2:10 ~ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

Galatians 5:3~ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law

- "It is common to make a distinction between the ceremonial and the moral parts of the law, and to suppose that, while the, former are done away, the latter are still binding upon Christians. But this distinction is recognized neither in the Old Testament nor in the New; it is a modern division of the law which is quite convenient and natural for us to make, but one of which a quite unwarrantable use is commonly made."¹
- This is important to understand because the unity of the Mosaic law leaves us only two alternatives: 1) Complete deliverance from the entire system; 2) Complete subjection to the entire system

THE PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC LAW

It Revealed God's Character to Israel

- God's character is the basis for the entire law...it revealed the holiness of God

Leviticus 11:45 ~ I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy

It Revealed Israel's Special Relationship With God

- It showed that Israel was unique among all the nations of the world

Exodus 19:5-6 ~ Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

- The giving of the law demonstrated God's graciousness to Israel
- The fact that God had given Israel a set of guidelines for the affairs of life, such as government and worship, constantly reminded them of God's concern for them as His special nation

It Provided Instructions for Living Acceptably Before God

- The law defined the responsibility of the covenant nation to God, marking out the requirement for fellowship and communion with him
- It gave specific instructions to them concerning appropriate behavior within the covenant relationship
- This instruction included how to worship God and how the theocracy was to be organized and managed

¹George B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 24.

- Being under the law in the Old Testament era did not mean that salvation was by means of keeping the law (Rom. 3:20)
- "Under law" for Old Testament saints meant they were under it as a rule of life
- They followed the Mosaic Law not for salvation but for sanctification...it was a way for Israel to be separate and holy
- It restrained wrong doing in order to protect the moral, social, and religious institutions of Israel

It Revealed and Exposed Sin

- Its purpose was to inform humankind of their sinfulness...to show them they couldn't ultimately keep the law
- The giving of the law is related to man's sinfulness...it reveals to the unrighteous that they are sinners

Romans 3:20~ For through the Law comes knowledge of sin.

Romans 5:20~ And the Law came in that the transgression might increase.

Galatians 3:19~ Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions.

- The Law of God establishes that everyone in the world is not only guilty of sin but deserving of God's wrath because of their sin

Romans 3:19~ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God.

- The law functioned in Paul's own life to force him to come to grips with the ugliness and pervasiveness of sin
- It produced not merely a recognition that he was sinning, but accompanying that knowledge was an inner conviction of sin
- Although the law is good and holy, it not only fails to eliminate sin, it actually stimulates it

Romans 7:7-13 ~ What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." 8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

1 Timothy 1:8-9 ~ But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious.

It was Meant to Drive Sinners to Christ

- The Mosaic Law acted as a temporary guardian for Israel until Christ came

Galatians 3:23-25 ~ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

- The tutor in Paul's day was the equivalent of a guardian who temporarily took care of all a child's needs... when the child reached maturity the tutor was no longer needed
- Thus, the Mosaic Law would reveal to people their sinfulness and their need for a Savior

It Saved No One!

- The Mosaic Law, with all its detailed laws (613 in all), could save no one
- It is not that there was any problem with the Law itself, for the Law is perfect and was given by a holy God, but the Law had no power to give people new life, and the people were not able to obey the Law perfectly

Romans 3:20~ By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight

Romans 4:2-3 ~ For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Galatians 2:16~ By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 2:21~ If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

Galatians 3:11 ~ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident.

- This is an important point because some people get confused by thinking that keeping the Law saved people in the Old Testament, but the Bible is clear that salvation has always been by faith alone

ARE NT BELIEVERS UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW?

- Some would argue that we are under the Ten Commandments (the moral law), but not under the civil and ceremonial aspects of the Law
- However, the NT is very clear that the believer is not under any part of the Mosaic Law

Romans 6:14 ~ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace

Romans 6:15 ~ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

Galatians 5:18 ~ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law

1 Corinthians 9:20-21 ~ And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law

- Believers have died to the law (all of it...not just the civil and ceremonial parts)

Romans 7:4 ~ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another

Romans 7:6 ~ But now we have been released from the Law.

- That this law Paul has been released from includes the Ten Commandments can be seen by his quote of the tenth commandment in the next verse, "for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COVET'" (v.7)

Galatians 2:19 ~ For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God

- The reason believers are said to have died to the law is because Christ was the end of the law...He fulfilled it in its entirety
- He is the point of culmination for the Mosaic law...He is its goal in the sense that the law has always anticipated and looked forward to Christ
- Christ abolished the Mosaic law with his death

Romans 10:4~ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Ephesians 2:15 ~ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,

- Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 3:6-11 that the Mosaic law had faded away, giving way to the superior New Covenant
- The New Covenant has made the old MC obsolete as a way of life for the believer...it has been abolished!

2 Corinthians 3:6-11 ~ who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. 10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

- The book of Hebrews also indicates that believers are no longer under the Mosaic Law

Hebrews 7:18-19 ~ For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 8:13 ~When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Hebrews 10:1 ~ For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come...

- The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 declared that Gentile believers did not have to keep the Mosaic law
- The immediate issue before this council was whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved and whether they need to keep the Mosaic Law
- The judgment of the council was that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to be saved (v.19)
- They only were to stay away from certain practices that would have been offensive to the Jews
- Nothing was said about them needing to keep the Law
- If there was ever a good opportunity to say that the Gentiles were under the law, this was it

Acts 15

- So is lobster back on the menu? Shrimp? Pork? Can you wear mixed fabrics? Can you get a tattoo? → Yes
- But can you steal? Murder? Commit adultery? → No!
- Because believers are still under law...even though the Mosaic law is not in effect today doesn't mean that the New Testament Christian is free to do whatever he wants
- Believers may be free from the Mosaic Law, but they are now under a different law known as “the law of Christ”
- In the law of Christ are the hundreds of commandments of the New Testament epistles and together these form a new and distinct code of ethics (i.e. the teachings of Christ the writings of the NT authors)

1 Corinthians 9:21~ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under **the law of Christ**) that I might win those outside the law.

Galatians 6:2~ Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill **the law of Christ**

James 1:25~ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, **the law of liberty**, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 2:8~ If, however, you are fulfilling **the royal law** according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well.

- “There are a number of similarities between Moses’ Law and the Law of Christ. In fact nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated as binding on Christians in the New Testament. But the reason we don’t murder and don’t steal, and yet we can lawfully enjoy playing basketball on a Saturday, is because the New Testament is binding on us as our law code, not because of the Ten Commandments. So homosexual practices are still offensive to God, not because Leviticus tell us that, but because Romans 1 says so. And that shouldn’t surprise us because both the laws in Leviticus and in Romans are based on God’s character. Adultery is still wrong, not because of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, but because of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19. Again, this overlap shouldn’t surprise us. And when in doubt the guiding law is “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”²

THEN HOW SHOULD WE VIEW THE MOSAIC LAW TODAY?

- Although we must realize that the Mosaic Law is not a code of conduct for today, it is still part of the inspired Word of God and, thus, is profitable
- It is still full of valuable doctrine and useful lessons for us

1 Corinthians 10:11 ~ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction.

Romans 15:4 ~ For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of, the Scriptures we might have hope.

² Clint Archer, *Lawschool: what law are we under?*, <http://thecrippleate.com/lawschool-what-law-are-we-under/>, accessed November 8, 2017.