***Biblical Theology Equip Class-The Mosaic Covenant—***

***Slide 1***

*As we continue in our study this morning, we arrive at the Mosaic Covenant. My task this morning is to simply talk about what the Mosaic Covenant is. Next week Scott will flesh out a bit of the typology that surfaces as you look more closely at this covenant. Though we will touch on some of that in today’s lesson, our primary goal is to consider the Mosaic Covenant in its immediate historical context- as we encounter it in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. As we do this, we will also consider how it relates to the covenant that precedes it, specifically the Abrahamic Covenant. It is important that we do this, as the Abrahamic covenant is always close at hand as God relates to the nation of Israel through the Mosaic Covenant. And finally, we will talk about how the Mosaic Covenant relates to those covenants that will follow, making mention of the Davidic Covenant, but considering especially the New Covenant.*

*This is not an exhaustive treatment. Not everything can be said. Christians will and do differ on these matters, especially what features of the covenants they tend to emphasize. Even though there is no tension or wrestling or imbalance in God’s perfect mind, there certainly are felt tensions as* ***we*** *approach and wrestle with the text. These are important issues- and because they are important, they are surrounded by this expansive world of theological constructs designed to help resolve our tensions- many of these constructs are helpful and insightful. But the theological constructs of good men can differ. As a result, this is an area of study surrounded its own fair share of disagreement.*

*It is not my aim to resolve every tension that the Bible puts before us. But I am going to make a good faith effort to stay close to the text, to be biblically balanced****. You will by design see a wide array of Scriptures. That it by design.*** *I hope that it will not be overly tedious. We will not exposit each individual text- the task is just too large- but I have made a genuine effort to use the Scriptures in line with their intended meaning.*

*Let’s pray.*

***Defining the Terms- Slide 2***

*It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with some of the terminology surrounding this Covenant. You will see it referenced in a few different ways. Of course, you have heard me reference it as the Mosaic Covenant. You may hear me call it the Mosaic-Law covenant or sometimes simply the Law- since laws, commandments and statutes figure so prominently in the covenant. It is often called the Sinai Covenant, since it was first inaugurated at ratified at Mt. Sinai, Exodus chapters 19-24. It is sometimes referred to as the covenant with Israel, for obvious reasons- God established this covenant with the nation of Israel. And of course, we all are familiar its identification as the Old Covenant- an idea that shapes the way we structure our Bibles on a most fundamental level. The Bible is divided into two* ***testaments****, which is another way of saying two covenants. The Old Testament and the New Testament. This is for good reason. The Old Covenant is a prominent feature, not only in the first five books of the Bible- but in its theological impact on the entirety of our whole Old Testament- we see the language of the Mosaic Covenant reverberating through it all.*

*So that is a bit of our basic terminology.*

***The Covenant with Abraham- Slide 3***

*Let’s begin in earnest. Although the lion’s share of space in the first five books of the Bible and whole Old Testament is taken up with matters that relate explicitly and implicitly to the Mosaic Covenant, we must not begin thinking small thoughts about the theological significance of the other covenants. This is especially true when we think about how the Mosaic Covenant relates to the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul did not make that mistake. Paul, under the divine inspiration of the Spirit addresses both the Abrahamic and Mosaic-Law covenants together saying-*

***“the Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.***[***18***](https://biblehub.com/galatians/3-18.htm) ***For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.” Galatians 3.17-18***

*We must not think that the covenant with Moses somehow replaces, or suspends, or annuls the covenant that God makes with Abraham. The covenant with Moses does not render the covenant with Abraham as some sort of footnote.*

*Rather- the covenant with Abraham forms the theological backbone that gives support to the Mosaic covenant. It is the indispensable backdrop for the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, God’s promises to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant are essential in how we are to think about the Mosaic Covenant. In fact, we see that the Mosaic Covenant becomes a means by which the promises in the Abrahamic Covenant are to be advanced through a large portion of redemptive history. Therefore, the two covenants are interrelated.* ***This is not to say that they are the same covenant. But we cannot make the mistake of isolating the Mosaic Covenant from the Covenant with Abraham.***

***The Exodus- Slide 4***

*Some key texts in this regard are found in the book Exodus. And I want us to look at some of those texts.*

*The Exodus from Egypt is perhaps the most formative event in Israel’s self-understanding. After all, it is the* ***greatest redemptive event*** *in our entire Old Testament.*

*The Exodus is essential to understanding the Old Testament, it becomes a controlling theme.*

*As we read our Bibles, the commandment to worship God and to serve him is oftentimes grounded in the fact the God is our Creator* — *God our Maker is sovereignly sustaining, providentially ruling and therefore we owe him allegiance.*

*But with the coming of the Exodus- another voice is added to the orchestra- and His call to worship and serve Him are also now grounded in God as the Redeemer; for he has redeemed Israel from bondage. Moving forward this becomes the basis for many prophetic appeals, and the Psalmist takes up this theme, and so on.*

*It essential to bear in mind that without the Exodus from Egypt- without God rescuing the nation of Israel from bondage-* *there is no Mosaic Covenant as we know it. On a most basic level- If the people of Israel are not brought out of Egyptian bondage, there is no gathering of God’s people at the foot of Mt. Sinai in order to enter into covenant with God.*

***Exodus- The Crucial Link- Slide 5***

*In fact, God’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the Exodus undergirds the whole Mosaic Covenant. Think about the opening movements of Exodus 20, right before God declares the 10 Commandments, the apex of the Mosaic Covenant as it were.*

*Exodus 20.2-3:“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3“You shall have no other gods before Me.”*

*There is an Exodus connection there. Now why am I belaboring this point- a point that so many of you are very familiar with?*

*Because God’s deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egypt in the Exodus* ***forges the crucial link, it is the linchpin, that connects the Abrahamic Covenant to the Mosaic Covenant.***

***The Opening Moves of Exodus and the Promise to Abraham- Slide 6***

*You begin to see this connection form even as the book of Exodus begins. When you think of chapter 1 of Exodus, think of it in connection with God’s Words to Abraham in chapters 12 and 15 of Genesis. What you essentially see in chapter 1 of Exodus is something of the promise of God to Abraham materializing.* ***Stage 1 of the fulfillment of those promises as it were****.*

*As the book of Exodus begins- we see the initial fulfilment of the promise to Abraham expressed in* ***Genesis 15.5-***

***And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”***

*And we read in Exodus 1:7-*

***But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.***

*Abraham’s extended family- by means of Jacob- had gone down to Egypt*, *as recorded in the closing chapters of Genesis.* *Meanwhile, through Jacob and his sons, Abraham’s descendants had grown into a multitude*, *in this wonderful initial fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. The divine fingerprint is all over this situation, because the people are growing in number, becoming a great nation, despite circumstances that should have stifled any sort of flourishing.*

***Exodus 1:11-12: So they appointed taskmasters over them to oppress them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12But the more they oppressed them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they dreaded the sons of Israel****.*

*Pharaoh of that day- a king who had no regard for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph- even institutes a policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing- an edict to murder every male child born to Hebrew women- it was a strategic move designed to break the spirits of God’s people and slow population growth among Israel. But God’s purposes cannot be thwarted- so we read in* ***Exodus 1:20-***

***So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty.***

***Divine Prerequisites for the Promise- Slide 7***

*Remember in Genesis chapter 15, God issues to Abraham a list of divine prerequisites that must be met before he would establish this great nation-*

*Genesis 15.13- Then God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants* ***will be sojourners*** *in a* ***land that is not theirs****,* ***where they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years****. 14But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.*

*So everything is essentially in place in order for the ‘great nation’ promised by God to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 to emerge on to the world stage. Indeed, this is the very purpose of the Exodus- as God shows himself powerful in keeping His word against all odds, and honoring his promises to Abraham.*

***Exodus 6.2-8: Slide 8***

*So what happens?*

*Listen to the Words of Exodus 2: 23-25-****Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage ascended to God. 24So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.***

*From this text*, *it is clear that God would deliver his people from Egyptian bondage*-*in fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* *And this dynamic, this motivation, this reality will surface again and again.*

*Exodus 6:2–8.*

***God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD;***[***3***](https://biblehub.com/exodus/6-3.htm)***and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name,  LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.***[***4***](https://biblehub.com/exodus/6-4.htm)***I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as strangers.***[***5***](https://biblehub.com/exodus/6-5.htm)***Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.***[***6***](https://biblehub.com/exodus/6-6.htm)***Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the labors of the Egyptians, and I will rescue you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.***[***7***](https://biblehub.com/exodus/6-7.htm)***Then I will take you as My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the labors of the Egyptians.***[***8***](https://biblehub.com/exodus/6-8.htm)***I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession; I am the LORD.’”***

*Here it is clear that as the Lord brings Israel out of bondage and promises to bring them into the land, and the Lord is doing so in fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham. And in this text we see the covenant trademark as it were, the expression that Scott has drawn our attention to again and again, resurface as the Lord declares* ***that he will be their God and they will be his people****. Therefore, something of the essence of the covenant relationship that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enjoyed with God is to carry over into the covenant that the Lord made with Israel.*

***The Burning Bush- Slide 9***

*When the Lord appears to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:1–10), he expressly states that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

[***5***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/3-5.htm)***Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”***[***6***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/3-6.htm)***He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.***

*God is being very intentional in the Words that he chooses. Both Moses and Israel must understand that the covenant that God will make with the nation of Israel stands in continuity with the covenant with Abraham.*

**Consider also Deuteronomy 7:7–9 Slide 10**

***“The LORD did not make you His beloved nor choose you because you were greater in number than any of the peoples, since you were the fewest of all peoples, 8but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of [m]slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His faithfulness to a thousand generations for those who love Him and keep His commandments-***

*Here Moses explains, after the covenant at Sinai has already been established, that in no uncertain terms, the Lord chose them to be his people, freeing them from Egypt bondage, not because of some redeeming quality that characterized the nation, but because of the Lord’s sovereign electing love and because of the Lord’s unwavering determination to honor the covenant promises that He had made with Abraham.*

*Again, the covenant with Israel and the covenant with Abraham are not the same, but they stand in a close relationship and there are real lines of continuity.* ***And when we read the text with an eye on the context, the Abrahamic covenant becomes the overarching theme within which the Mosaic Covenant is embraced.***

*A Gracious Covenant- Slide 11*

*Now you may have already picked up on this dynamic by virtue of some of the texts we have read- but clearly there is a strong flavor of grace woven into the Mosaic covenant, especially when viewed in light of its relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant.*

*As we have noted in the text from Exodus 20:2, before God established his covenant with Israel, he appeals to His redeeming them from slavery in Egypt. The Deuteronomy 7 text we just read shows that God acted in view of his electing sovereign love, not on the basis of Israel’s merit.*

*So-It is not that he gives them commandments- and, if the people obey the law adequately, then God will spare them. He reaches down to sovereignly save them from bondage and leads them out. Before any covenant expectation is formally declared- the Lord shows Israel abundant grace, judging wicked and obstinate Pharoah,* ***bearing up Israel on eagles’ wings and bringing them to himself-Exodus 19.4***

It is not as if the Lord leads off with a list of demands that Israel must first comply with in order to be his people. Israel had done nothing to deserve the Lord’s love and grace, and yet he rescues them from their Egyptian bondage- and only after, did he give them commands. ***And*** before those commands are declared, the Lord’s covenant mercies are made clear. **His grace and mercy precede and undergird his demands.**

***What’s more is that God refers to Israel as a son- Exodus 4:22-23- Slide 12***

***Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son,***[***23***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/4-23.htm)***and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.”***

*This is a rich expression of familial affection and extremely important theological designation that runs throughout the entire Scripture. We see it in the garden, we see it here, it will be taken up in various ways in the context of the Davidic throne and the Davidic Covenant.*

*Centuries later, after the Exodus- Hosea records God’s words, “out of Egypt I called my son,” looking back on the Exodus event. So, that is all part of the background that dominates the Old Testament storyline before you get to the New Testament.*

*Then in the New Testament it is not long before this theme is picked up. In Matthew 2:13–15, for example, a young Jesus is transported down to Egypt by Mary and Joseph, escaping the wrath of Herod and then eventually he returns. And this, we are told, fulfills the word, “out of Egypt I called my Son,” referring to Hosea 11:1. What is being established there is what might be called an Israel typology. The ultimate Israel is Jesus himself. This has huge ramifications for how we understand what Christ does for us, identifying with us, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He is the faithful covenantal Son, whose active obedience, seen against the backdrop of Israel’s characteristic disobedience, meets all the necessary conditions needed for a right standing with God.*

***Grace on Display in Provision for Sin- Sacrifices- Slide 13***

*We also see the grace on display within the Mosaic covenant in the provision for atonement by means of sacrifices offered for sin. These sacrifices are recorded in Leviticus 1–7. Sacrifices and provision for sin are present in Leviticus 16, which was the Day of Atonement- a day on which all of Israel’s sins were forgiven. The covenant, then, provided a means by which Israel could maintain fellowship with God. Therefore, Israel’s covenant fellowship with God was not dependent on perfect obedience in some absolute sense, since sacrifices could be offered for covenant violations.*

***Covenant Grace Brings Covenant Obligation- Slide 14***

*The people did not earn their salvation- however, having been rescued and redeemed by God, the people are expected to live holy lives by keeping the covenant obligations. After the Lord brought Israel through the exodus to Mount Sinai, he then charged them to respond to his salvation by heeding his voice, keeping his “covenant,” and being his treasured possession amid the world so that they might ultimately serve him as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”.*

***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;***[***6***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/19-6.htm)***and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”***

***The Essence of Covenant Obligation- Slide 15***

*Again, at the renewal of the Covenant in the plains of Moab, before entering the promised land, this expectation- what I would term the essence of Covenant obligation- is clearly articulated.*

***Deuteronomy 6:4–5: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!***[***5***](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/6-5.htm)***“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.***

*God called Israel to love him with all their hearts on more than one occasion. Again-*

***Deuteronomy 10:12-13: “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,***[***13***](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/10-13.htm)***and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?***

*God also called Israel to love their neighbor as themselves- 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.***

*And as an aside, note that these commandments are taken up and applied by Jesus himself- establishing lines of continuity in the moral sphere between the Old Testament and New Testament.*

***Matthew 22: 37-40: And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ 38This is the great and foremost commandment. 39The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ 40 Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”***

*Here is a question to ponder in all of this- God calls his people to exclusive all-encompassing devotion to himself. That’s what Deuteronomy 6:5, also known as the Shema represents. And then we see Jesus taking that indisputable demand to exclusive, all-encompassing love to God, and somehow placing it alongside the command to love one’s neighbor as yourself, a command, that as far as the text is concerned, is sort of presented as one among many in the flow of Leviticus 19.*

*So Jesus takes the command that has pride of place in the Scripture and the Jewish mind, and places it alongside Leviticus 19:18 and in doing so says- “The second is like it”- So much could be said here. But understand that this injunction to love your neighbor in a way that none of us really love our neighbor if we are honest, this command to love our neighbor in God’s economy, should never be divorced from our conception of love for God, as if the two are competing or mutually exclusive claims. Jesus doesn’t see them as mutually exclusive. And the beauty of it is that it is built into the text of Leviticus itself. Look at what grounds the command- “I am the LORD”.*

***The Purpose of Covenant Obligation- to Reveal God Slide 16***

*By loving God supremely and by reverencing his image in* others, Israel would display God’s worth and beauty to their neighbors through words and lives that align with the words and ways of God.

*In that way, they could image forth the character of God to the world around them.*

*And this brings us to another observation-*

*The commandments that feature so prominently throughout the Mosaic Covenant are purposely designed to reveal God to us, what he is like, his character his ways. They have had a clear revelatory purpose; just as ancient law-codes generally were designed to make a statement about the king who issues those decrees, so the covenant obligations revealed at Sinai disclose something of the nature and character of Yahweh.*

*Do not lose sight of that fact- Therefore the law is concerned, not only with regulating and beautifying the life of Israel* *as a ‘great nation’, but it is also – indeed, and perhaps more importantly – making an unequivocal, glorious statement about Israel’s God-as He* ***makes himself known to Israel, and through Israel, to the nations, by means of the covenant relationship established at Sinai.***

*Listen to the words of Deuteronomy chapter 4, verses 5-8:*

***“See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it.***[***6***](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/4-6.htm)***“So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’***[***7***](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/4-7.htm)***“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?***[***8***](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/4-8.htm)***“Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?***

*And the idea is that God would be revealed to the surrounding nations not through word only, as they hold out the word of life, but through deed- the Israelites obeying his righteous decrees and commands and exemplifying them to an onlooking world. We can’t imagine that God would have been content to make himself known, the nation holding out God’s word, extolling its wisdom, while at the same time disregarding it with their words and their lives.*

***Showing God’s Character- Slide 17***

“Israel, as the people of the Lord, was summoned to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6), mediating God’s blessing to the world. Some understand this to mean that Israel had a mandate to go to all nations and proclaim the name of Yahweh. More likely, Israel as a nation, as a people governed by the Lord, were to show the nations God’s character by the way they lived under Yahweh’s lordship. Their way of life would attract others to the Lord as they lived in humble submission to their great sovereign. Such a reading fits with the uniqueness of the covenant made with Israel, for the stipulations in the covenant, the laws, contained many requirements that separated Israel from other nations. For instance, many foods eaten by other nations were off-limits for Israel (Lev. 11:1–44). Furthermore, the sign of the covenant—the Sabbath—set Israel apart from other nations. Israel was called to be a distinct people, consecrated to the Lord. Their holy life would demonstrate their covenant commitment to Yahweh and serve as a light to the nations.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World, ed. Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 67–68.

***Human Flourishing and the Law- Slide 18***

And that God gave the Law to this nation must reckoned among one of the greatest proofs of His love.

In the biblical view, humans flourish as they submit to God’s laws- Psalm 19 is all about this flourishing. Psalm 19. 7-8

***“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure,  making wise the simple;the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”***

*Certainly, the Law is holy, righteous, and good. And there is so much that can be said in this respect.*

***A Fitting Response- Slide 19***

*All this is easy enough right? This call to obey God fully, keeping God’s covenant, functioning as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and all that it entails- was the fitting response. And the people, I think, felt that.*

*But it almost feels like they have underestimated a few things- the utter holiness of God’s commands and subsequently the holiness of God, while overestimating their own ability to keep them.*

***Exodus 19.8- All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.***

***The Golden Calf-Moral Failure and Inability- Slide 20***

***But lurking beneath their overtures of commitment was a real moral frailty and inability on Israel’s part-*** and this is ***made clear by that infamous initial failure on the part of the nation- the Golden Calf incident (Exod. 32 – 34).***

***You know the story- while Moses was receiving the covenant commands, the Israelites were breaking them*** – ***Exodus 32:7-10***

[***7***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/32-7.htm)***Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.***[***8***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/32-8.htm)***“They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’”***[***9***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/32-9.htm)***The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.***[***10***](http://biblehub.com/exodus/32-10.htm)***“Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”***

This incident represents a serious breach of the covenant. *What is clear is that Israel deserved to forfeit their privileged status as the people of God*. The covenant was broken even before the final stage of its formal establishment, ***before the covenant code was deposited in the ark of the covenant***.

***Moses’s Entreaty- The Abrahamic Covenant- Slide 21***

What is significant however, is that God desists from annihilating the Israelites when Moses makes a very important appeal/entreaty- Exodus 32: 11-14

***Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12“Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. 13“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” 14So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.***

***And here we see the Abrahamic Covenant resurface once again- we see God’s unwavering commitment to keep his promise to Abraham- and God therefore spares the nation, at least in part.***

***The Covenant Re-Established- Slide 22***

***And this represents*** a change of heart that, at the end of the day is bound up with God’s own gracious character. And because of God’s covenant with Abraham and the grace of God, the covenant is re-established, and we see that taking place in Exodus 34. 8-10-

***Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 9He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession. Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.***

God’s grace, nevertheless, still demands covenant obedience on the part of Israel. Hence the very next verse- ***Exodus 34.11- Obey what I command you today.***

***The Solution- The Lord’s Himself- Slide 23***

*At this point we make ask ourselves- What is the solution to Israel’s moral frailty and inability? Even within the covenant itself we see an indispensable truth surface emerging- this holiness that God demands can only come about by means of the Lord’s presence* *bringing about that holiness*. Moses says-

***Exodus 33.16- “For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?”***

*If they are going to function as kingdom of priests and a holy nation, thereby distinguishing themselves from the pagan nations surrounding them, God would have to be present with them causing them to be holy and sanctified in every way, both positionally and practically.*

***Sanctification- Positional and Practical Slide 24***

*We see this reality in Leviticus-*

***Leviticus 20: 7-8* *You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. 8‘You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you (makes you holy).***

***Leviticus 21: 8*** *in reference to the priest*- ***‘You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the food of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the LORD, who sanctifies you (who makes you holy), am holy.***

***Leviticus 22:31-33*** ***“So you shall keep My commandments and do them; I am the LORD. 32“You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the LORD who sanctifies you (who make you holy), 33 who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the LORD.”***

***Covenants- Terms and Conditions Apply- Slide 25***

Every covenant has its conditions. This is especially true of the Mosaic Covenant. This is true even of the Abrahamic covenant. Conditionally, the patriarch must “go” to the land and there “be a blessing”. (Gen 12:1–3). For the Lord to confirm the covenant with Abraham, the patriarch must “walk before” God and “be blameless” (17:1–2).

These conditions associated with covenants can create this tension in our mind. Is the covenant conditional, is it unconditional, those kinds of questions. And despite the conditions that we may see attached to the various covenants, we actually see each of God’s covenant partners, in some ways failing to uphold their end of the bargain. Which draws our attention to Christ, and his success as the faithful covenant mediator and partner.

***Now as it pertains to the Abrahamic Covenant- despite the conditions, there is overwhelming certainty-*** the Lord making absolutely clear the certain fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, doing so as he makes this unilateral oath-bound promise (Gen 15:17–21)-

***17Now it came about, when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, a smoking oven and a flaming torch appeared which passed between these pieces. 18On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your [***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+15%3A17-21&version=NASB#fen-NASB-379a)***]descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19the land of the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, 20the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, 21the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.”***

***Therefore, we see in the Abrahamic Covenant God’s pledge that the covenant will certainly be fulfilled.*** There are conditions, but God makes it clear that the realities that His promises will come to pass.

***Pessimism and Poor Prognosis- Slide 26***

Over against the optimism, the faith, the certainty associated with the Abrahamic Covenant, is this pessimism that surrounds the Mosaic Covenant. The realization that Israel would somehow break God’s covenant, that they would be this unfaithful covenant partner.

*For instance, as you read* Deuteronomy, we see that the Mosaic covenant was shrouded with this clear pessimism from the outset. During the covenant renewal on the plain of Moab- Moses makes it clear that God still hadn’t granted Israel the ability to understand, see, and hear his word.

***Deuteronomy 29.4-Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. Clearly the people did not have the moral constitution, the wherewithal to live up to the demands of the covenant.***

The material devoted to the curses of the covenant are much longer than the blessings in both Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 26–28, suggesting that they would certainly become a reality.

In some instances, the certainty of the curses is considered a foregone conclusion. We read in Deuteronomy 28:45,

***“All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed.”***

The eventual experience of the curse is also apparent in ***Deuteronomy 30:1–3:***

***When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you.***

*And Israel’s forthcoming, impending rebellion is made abundantly clear in the last chapters of Deuteronomy.*

*Deuteronomy 31:16–17: Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them.*

***Moses says in Deuteronomy 31.29****, “For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands”.*

*Joshua says something very similar when the covenant is renewed in Joshua 24. And we might think that Joshua would have been optimistic about Israel’s future since they had just conquered the land Yahweh had promised them. Instead, Joshua is skeptical about Israel’s obedience, saying, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good” (Josh. 24:19–20).*

**Leviticus 18.5: Slide 27**

What’s going on here?

*We will begin with the covenant itself.*

*In the Mosaic Covenant- there is this heightened focus on blessings in the land being bound up with covenant faithfulness on Israel’s part. The Lord’s gift of blessing and lasting life in the land appears to rest upon Israel’s obedience to God’s commands (Lev 18:5; Deut 4:1; 6:25; 8:1; 28:1–2). It had a conditional quality to it.*

*Leviticus 18.5 is certainly a key text in this regard.*

***You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.***

*In respect to its conditional nature, time and time again, God warned Israel that they would experience the curses of the covenant if they would not faithfully obey (Lev. 26:14–44; Deut. 27:15–26; 28:15–68). Faithful obedience was the condition. Blessing is contingent on obedience. The Mosaic covenant- for all its grace, exhibits the pattern of “do this and live”- and therefore contingent on the obedience of the nation. So the covenant commands and the people must do- if they are to retain the blessing.*

*I have heard it explained that in the old covenant, righteousness was the goal and not the ground –*

*Think of a text like Deuteronomy 6.25 And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.*

*Therefore, in the Old Covenant, though there is a principle of grace woven through, there is also this inbuilt tension that shows that the people were to act in order to obtain life. In the New Covenant, we act, to be sure, but the overwhelming feature of our obedience is that we act from life- already given, already secured, already a reality in our hearts, we act from life and not for life.*

Now is this to say that God’s agenda under the Old Covenant was a salvation by works?

Absolutely not. Salvation has always been by grace through faith.

But it is my opinion that there is an inherent principal of works articulated in Leviticus 18.5- this is what it means to stand for you to stand before me- designed to drive a *pious and honest* Israelite deeper into the gracious covenantal provisions which were to be embraced by faith. To cause them to cherish and believe God’s pledge to Abraham. Fostering a deeper more probing analysis of the holiness of God and nature of sin, as they contemplated the types and trajectories and hints of future covenant obsolescence, which would have had the effect of driving them to receive Jesus by faith once he appeared.

Is the Mosaic Law Covenant a covenant of works? No. It is gracious. But is there an implicit "hypothetical covenant of works"- inline with Hodge and Calvin- inbuilt and articulated for various reasons- not the least of which was to drive the people of God toward faith in God as he applies the gracious but shadowy provision for both their sin and His covenant presence. Unfortunately- most fell short in exercising this faith, underestimating their sin and His holiness.

***The Law’s Inability- Slide 28***

*Despite the Mosaic covenant’s inherent glory, its undeniable wisdom, its appropriateness, its righteous demands- there is something that it could not do, it could not transform the heart, it could not give spiritual life.*

*And it is this inability of the Mosaic Law Covenant is borne out in Israel’s history.* *Israel would go into exile, because they failed to do what the covenant at Sinai demanded.* *The prophets almost unceasingly denounce Israel because the nation violated the terms and conditions of the covenant- time and time again they had broken the covenant with the Lord.*

*The Law, in and of itself, proved incapable of rescuing people from the domain of sin and death.*

*But thanks be to God- For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh (Romans 8.3),- God would do though the New Covenant through Jesus Christ- (so you have promises of the New Covenant like Jeremiah 31:31–34), where God promises to establish a New Covenant through which he would enable His people to do his will.*

*Even though the Mosaic Law was unable to effect heart change in God’s people- it should not be criticized or dismissed altogether on that front- the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good- Paul tells us. We have touched on that already. And we as Christians have to wrestle with the implications of that reality.*

*Therefore- the question Israel’s history should prompt us to ask, in the first place, is not what is wrong with the Law, or the Mosaic Covenant- but what is it that is wrong with humanity that the Mosaic Covenant could not remedy or fix?*

***Israel’s Problem According to Deuteronomy- Slide 29***

*Drawing Upon the Text in Deuteronomy-*

*Israel’s problem was that were unrighteous.*

*Deuteronomy 9.6- Know, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people)*

*They were spiritually disabled/crippled-*

*Deuteronomy 29.4- Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.*

*They needed heart surgery.*

*Deuteronomy 10:16- So circumcise [*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+10.16&version=NASB#fen-NASB-5203a)*]your heart, and do not stiffen your neck any longer.*

*They were stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious.*

*Hope According to Deuteronomy- Slide 30*

*Context- Inevitable exile even to the uttermost parts of the earth because of sin*

*Deuteronomy 30. v 5-6*

*5The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will be good to you and make you more numerous than your fathers. 6 “Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your [f]descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live.*

*Abrahamic and New Covenant Realities Merge*

*Divine Human Relationship sustained by some miraculous inner change.*

*Themes that the prophets would take up-* promising that a new day was coming, a new covenant would be realized, and thus there would be a new and glorious Exodus that far exceeds the Exodus of old.

***In closing-***

The Mosaic Law Covenant functions in a multitude of ways-

It points forward to and anticipates, in diverse ways, the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the new covenant- it has a prophetic function through and through.

Its *institutions not only serve as a means by which Israel may dwell in the land and know God’s covenantal presence among a sinful people*- they also point beyond themselves to God’s greater provision of atonement in the person of Jesus- one who will fulfill and eclipse the role of any Levitical priest. To look for a prophet- a new Moses as it were. Foreshadowing a new temple, Christ himself, in whom we find the very presence of God. A new covenant where we experience full atonement for sin.

When evaluated from our New Covenant perspective- the Old Covenant’s purpose was to reveal and intensify sin, and thereby prepare us for the coming of Christ. Teaching us to look outside of ourselves, understanding something of God’s holiness, understanding and acknowledging our own sin, moral frailty and inability- thereby preparing us to embrace Christ and Christ alone once he is revealed. Teaching us that by works of the Law no one will be justified.