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Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

Teacher: Joshua Kirstine

February 28, 2024

**HANDOUT NOTES**

* **Introduction**

A divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him.

* **The Mosaic Covenant**
* **A development and a conditioning**

The Old Covenant was conditioned by the Mosaic Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant:

- is a development and a conditioning of the same covenantal relationship that God had initiated with Abraham and Abraham’s decedents.

- builds on, expands, and conditions the Abrahamic Covenant.

- expresses the majority of the law required to be obeyed in the Old Covenant.

* **History that gets us to the Mosaic Covenant**

In the early chapters of Exodus, we see God’s singling out of Moses, and we see God begin to interact with him on behalf of Abraham’s line—the Israelites. In this we can see that God chose to give Moses a significant role, in which Moses was to speak God’s words to the people, lead the people, and act as a mediator between God and His covenantal people.

God repeatedly identifies Himself to Moses, and therefore the people of the Old Covenant, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

God was committed to fulfill His covenantal promises. God delivered them.

God promised to Abraham that this would happen, and this is the context for the Mosaic Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant is a development and a conditioning of the same covenantal relationship God initiated with Abraham and Abraham’s decedents.

* **Mosaic Covenant comes into view**

In Exodus 19, we find the people of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. Deliverance from bondage happened, but the full inheritance of the land of Canaan had not taken place. Mosaic Covenant terms begin to come into view.

* **Old Covenant law**

The verses following this describe God declaring laws required in the Mosaic Covenant. Many more laws would be issued to the people of Israel after this first Mosaic declaration for the Old Covenant, but this interaction is the most foundational. The giving of law is the conditioning of the Old Covenant brought in by the Mosaic Covenant.

* **Two types of law**

There were two **types (kinds/categories)** of law given in the Mosaic Covenant, **Universal Moral Law** & **Positive Law**.

God, first and foremost, gave to them the Ten Commandments, which are a summary expression of the eternal **Universal Moral Law**.

In addition to this eternal moral law, God saw fit to give many other laws to them—these are of the **Positive Law** category, which in the Old Covenant are often called **ceremonial** and **judicial** laws.

The **Universal Moral Law** expressed through the Ten Commandments gave important clarity as to how to honor God and honor others in a moral respect.

The **judicial laws** gave clarity on what God expected for the governing of the people—judicially what this people must do in the Old Covenant.

The **ceremonial laws** gave commands regarding things like proper ways of worship and temporary sin atonement sacrifices.

This Mosaic Covenant—the laws God gave through the covenant—condition and govern:

- the people of the Old Covenant,

- the prophets of the Old Covenant,

- the priesthood of the Old Covenant,

- the kingship of the Old Covenant,

- and the curses and blessings of the Old Covenant.

As Exodus 23 closes we see God expand on the covenantal terms.

* **“A” covenant of works**

After these things were declared, Moses went down to the people to deliver the law and details and we see their response, once again affirming their understanding of the work-reward covenant terms.

They heard the Universal Moral Law, and many positive laws. They understood that they were committing to do **all** that God required of them.

**Exodus 24:7** …“All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”

What we have here is a covenant of works.

It was for their good that God initiated this covenant. But they had to obey correctly and perpetually to fully and continually enjoy the covenant benefits.

In addition to the Exodus portions, there are other significant passages in the Old Covenant time period that make these terms explicitly clear.

* **Covenant rewards/blessings**

The covenant rewards at stake for them were the same as in the Abrahamic Covenant. These were strictly temporary/natural/physical rewards.

The people of both the Mosaic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant are the same and the offers of blessed earthy life in the land of Canaan of both the Mosaic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant are the same.

If you obey my commands, it will go well with you in the promised land of Canaan—it will go well in this physical life on this physical creation—ongoing and prosperous life on this creation will be your wage; but if you disobey my commands curse unto death will be your wage.

* **Not eternal life and eternal blessing**

The rewards of the Old Covenant are not eternal life and eternal blessing. God is interacting with the Israelites based on the covenant they are in for temporary, earthly benefits.

The three covenants that make up the Old Covenant only administer temporary, earthly life and prosperity.

Any people of the Old Covenant were only saved eternally by faith in the promise of the Messiah—by Jesus’ Covenant of Grace to come in the future.

Eternal life is only given to the chosen ones of the Covenant of Redemption as God effectually calls them into a different covenant, the New Covenant.

The Israelites knew their covenantal relationship with God was for earthly blessings or curses based on their obedience to God’s law.

* **Goodness of God**

While the best kind of benefits (eternal benefits) were not offered in this covenant, see that the laws that God expressed to them were for their good.

How fitting are these laws for a people seeking to settle in a land specifically marked out for them.

* **Israel’s unfaithfulness**

Sinful depraved human nature is so consuming and wicked. Fallen man is so feeble. Despite their pledge of upright obedience, Abraham’s descendants floundered and failed early and often.

Israel was unfaithful to God—unfaithful to the covenant they were in with God. They disregarded the laws—they broke the terms. It was just for God to issue the covenant curses.  And curses were issued, but not yet to the fullest extent.

* **Sacrificial system**

In the Mosaic Covenant, God saw fit to issue a system of temporal forgiveness for when the people of the Old Covenant sinned against God.

The Old Covenant sacrificial system of purification and forgiveness was, like the Old Covenant itself, not about eternal purification and forgiveness. It only provided a temporary, earthy, fleshly type of purification and forgiveness.

It was not spiritual cleansing, it was not new birth, it was not a new heart, it was not eternal purification and forgiveness.

The Old Covenant Positive Laws do not apply any longer because the Old Covenant has been abrogated (abolished), and Jesus established a New Covenant with its own Positive Laws for us to follow.

As we read, we need to be very careful in determining Universal Moral Law from Positive Law in the Old Testament.