

What was the Purpose of the Mosaic Covenant?

Lesson # 2

The Bi-lateral Agreement to a National Covenant: Exodus 19:

The Summary Contract is found in the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20:

The Terms and Conditions of the Covenant: Exodus 21-23

Over 400 years after God's covenant with Abraham, God established a covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai nearly fifteen hundred years before Christ. The Mosaic Covenant is a conditional covenant made between God and the **nation of Israel** at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24). It is sometimes called the **Sinai Covenant** but is more often referred to as **the Mosaic Covenant** since Moses was God's chosen leader of Israel at that time. It is not called the Old Covenant until the New Covenant abolished it (**Hebrews 10:9-10, Hebrews 8:6-7, Hebrews 7:19**).

The Mosaic Covenant is a significant covenant in both God's redemptive history and in the history of the nation of Israel through whom God would sovereignly choose to bless the world with both His written Word and the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Why should we study it and understand it? ***It is central to understanding redemptive history*** and why men need a Savior. That we might see Christ. Christ met all of the Mosaic Covenants legal demands, and fulfilled all the types and shadows in the ceremonies and sacrifices. ***It was an interim covenant*** (Hebrews 8:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:15). ***Its job was to guide the nation to Christ.***

Romans 10:4 (HCSB) ***For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*** The law was ended, set aside as law, for all who believe in Christ.

It was Bi-Lateral Covenant that must be held together by both parties involved. For this reason there was blessings with obedience, and punishment for disobedience. The sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant did not take away sins (**Hebrews 10:1-4**). The law was only a shadow of the good things that came—not the realities themselves.

The Law of Moses was given to Israel

The foundation and basis of the Mosaic Law is the covenant God made with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A question we will address later is “How is the Mosaic Law in relation to the New Testament believer?” But, first we need to understand its use and purpose under the Old Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant consisted of *365 negative commands* and *248 positive* for a total of *613 commands*. Many divide them into three parts or sections: the **moral**, the **civil/social**, and the **ceremonial**. *This is a manmade division* not found in scripture, but as such, it covered every possible area of the life of Israel. It should be stressed that the moral principles embodied in the Mosaic Law given at Sinai was codified and given to Israel to govern her life as a nation in order to experience God’s blessing under the Abrahamic covenant.

So, what was the Purpose of the Mosaic Covenant?

I. Preservation of Seed

Galatians 3:19, Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the **seed** should come to whom the **promise** was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Galatians 3:24-25, “Wherefore the law was our **schoolmaster** to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Schoolmaster: Guardian, Guide, or Leader

Faith: the Promise to Abraham. (Galatians 3:6-14)

II. Prophetic Role:

Exodus 19:5-6 “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

1 Peter 2:9 “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light..”

A. Prophetic in that Christ fulfilled the Ten Commandments by living a perfect and sinless life. Thus, when man trusts in Christ, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to that individual so we have justification. We have Christ’s righteousness so the Law can’t condemn us (Rom. 8:1; 7:1-6; Rom. 5:1; 4:4-8).

B. Prophetic in that Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place. This showed that God was also perfect justice and sin must be judged, but God provided His Son, the precious Lamb of God. The penalty which the Law exercised was paid. Again there is no condemnation because the believer is “in Christ” (Col. 2:14; Rom. 3:24-25)

C. Prophetic in that Christ also fulfilled the Social Law, but now He replaces it with a new way of living fitting to our new salvation. He gives provision for the inner man—the indwelling Holy Spirit—who enables us to experience true sanctification so that we may experience also the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:2-4).

III. Purposeful Identity

The Law showed this nation to be distinct in character, and to display that Israel was His unique people.

To the Infant Nation:

Deuteronomy 5:1-5, “ And Moses called all Israel, and **said unto them, Hear, O Israel**, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. 2 **The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.** 3 **The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.** 4 The Lord **talked with you face to face** in the mount out of the midst of the fire, 5 (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount...”

Given to Israel the Sabbath:

Deuteronomy 5:12-15, “Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy **God hath commanded thee**. 13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: 14 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. 15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore **the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day**. (There is no hint any of the Patriarchs kept the Sabbath Day.)

Nehemiah 9:13-14, “Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:¹⁴ *And **madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant...***”

Jesus said the Law was given to you Israel:

John 7:19, “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?”

John 8:17, “*It is also written in your law*, that the testimony of two men is true.”

Paul says the law belonged to the Jewish Nation:

Romans 9:4, “Who are Israelites; **to whom pertaineth** (apply to) the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises...”

In Old Testament and New Testament Passages the Mosaic Law was always described as belonging to Israel. This should be no more difficult to understand than the fact that a citizen of the United States is not under the laws of Canada, even though the moral principles underlying the laws of the two countries are the same. When a citizen of the United States

becomes a citizen of Canada he does not remain under ten of the best laws of the United States. Nor does the fact that some of the laws of the United States are quite similar to some of the laws of Canada confuse or compromise his new exclusive responsibility to Canada. So the believing Jew of the first century moved entirely from the Mosaic economy of law into the new economy of grace instituted by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).¹⁴

IV. Produces an Awareness of Sin

Galatians 3:19, Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions (To show the people they were sinners!), till the **seed** should come to whom the **promise** was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Galatians 3:24-25,” Wherefore the law was our **schoolmaster** to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Schoolmaster: Guardian, Guide, or Leader

The Gr. word denotes a slave whose duty it was to take care of a child until adulthood. The “Guide or leader” escorted the children to and from school and watched over their behavior at home. Schoolmasters were often strict disciplinarians, causing those under their care to yearn for the day when they would be free from their tutor’s custody. The law was our tutor which, by showing us our sins, was escorting us to Christ. Believers, through faith in Jesus Christ, have come of age as God’s children. Thus, they are not under the tutelage of the law (Rom. 6:14).

Romans 5:20, “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound...”

HCSB “The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more.

ESV: “Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

Legacy Standard Bible: Now the Law came in so that the transgression would increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...”

The Mosaic Law was to increase the awareness of sin, but never is it taught in scriptures that it was to restrain sin.

Stuart Brogden, “Romans 7:7 (HCSB) *What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet.*

Many claim the law was given to restrain sin - I find that taught nowhere in Scripture. It provides the basis for punishing law-breakers, ***For the law produces wrath. And where there is no law, there is no transgression.*** Romans 4:15 (HCSB).”

Galatians 3:19, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

J. MacArthur “Paul’s persuasive argument that the promise (*Abrahamic Covenant*) is superior to the law raises an obvious question: What was the purpose of the law? “Wherefore then serveth the law?”

Paul’s answer is that the law reveals man’s utter sinfulness, inability to save himself, and desperate need of a Savior—it was never intended to be the way of salvation.”

In the **NASB, Galatians 3:22-23**, “But scripture **confined all things under the power of sin**, that through faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe. **23 Before faith came**, we were held in **custody under law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed.**

In verse **22**, **J. MacArthur** says, The Gr. verb translated “confined” means “to enclose on all sides.” Paul portrays all mankind as hopelessly trapped in sin, like a school of fish caught in a net. That all people are sinners is the express teaching of Scripture.....

Verse **23**, “before faith came”, From the viewpoints of both the history of redemption and through all times in the area of individual salvation only saving faith unlocks the door of the prison where the law keeps men bound. Kept under custody, guarded by the law. **Paul personifies the**

law as a jailer of guilty, condemned sinners, on death row awaiting God's judgment (Rom. 6:23). The faith which would afterward be revealed. Again Paul was looking at the coming of Christ, historically and at each believer's salvation, individually. Faith in Christ alone releases people from bondage to law, whether the Mosaic law, or the law written on the hearts of Gentiles (Rom. 2:14–16).

Recap:

1. The Law served to “Preserve the Descendants” of Abraham until the promised Seed arrived (Galatians 3:16-19)

2. The Law served a “Prophetic Role”

A. By pointing to Christ meeting the Mosaic Laws negative and positive demands.

B. Prophetic in that Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances that were shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place. *By this Christ fulfilled the just penalty for the Laws demand.* This showed that God's perfect justice was met and sin punished, by God's provision of His Son, the precious Lamb of God. The penalty which the Law exercised was paid.

C. Prophetic in that Christ also fulfilled the “Civil or Social Law”:

He replaces the Old Covenant with a New Covenant and a new way of living fitting to our new salvation. He gives provision for the inner man—the indwelling Holy Spirit—who enables us to experience true sanctification so that we may experience also the righteousness of the Law.

Romans 8:2-4 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

HCSB “Because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ **What the law could not do since it was**

limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering, **4 in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

3. The Law served to "Purposefully Identity" God's distinct and chosen people from all other nations for His purpose and glory.

4. The Law Served to Produce an Awareness of Sin". The law reveals man's utter sinfulness, inability to save himself, and desperate need of a Savior—it was never intended to be the way of salvation."