

The Mosaic Administration of the Covenant of Grace

“Covenant always supersedes law.” O. Palmer Robertson

Recap:

- A failed Covenant of Works in the Garden because of Adam’s disobedience.
- A pre-existing Covenant of Redemption agreed upon between the persons of the Trinity in eternity past.
- A substantially unified Covenant of Grace carried out under various administrations.
 - Past Examples: Adamic Administration of the Covenant, Noahic Administration of the Covenant, Abrahamic Administration of the Covenant
 - Today: the Mosaic Administration of the Covenant of Grace.

Notice the growing enmity of the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman, God’s people and the people of the world.

- Seth and Cain, sons of God and the daughters of men, Noah and the rest of the world, Abram and those at the tower of Babel.

Notice the growing clarity of the “seed [offspring] of the woman” who’s going to crush the head of the serpent.

- He will be called a Shemite. Shem means “name.” God will make a name for Himself.
- He will be of the family of Abraham. “Kings will come from you”. . . Blessings on the nations of the world from the offspring of Abraham. (Galatians 3:8)

Where we could go:

- Promises prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, other types and ordinances (WCF 7.5)
- Threefold Division of the Law: civil aspects, ceremonial laws, moral law
- Threefold Use of the (Moral) Law: the magistrate use (to restrain evil), pedagogical (teaching) use, the rule for Christian living
- Exposition of Ten Commandments
- Centrality of Leviticus 16 (the Day of Atonement) to the Pentateuch and to Scripture as a whole
- How the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace is superseded by the new covenant.

Where we are going this morning:

- This week: the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace is *substantially gracious*.
- Next week: What the Mosaic Administration of the Covenant of Grace advances in our understanding of the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15).

Is the Mosaic Administration of the Covenant of Grace substantially *gracious*?

- Romans 7:6 “But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”
- Galatians 3:10 – 11 “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for ‘the righteous shall live by faith.’”

- Deuteronomy 4:1 “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.”
- Leviticus 18:4 – 5 “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”
- Romans 6:13 “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

Exodus 20

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ”
(Exodus 20:2)

- These words serve as an introduction to the Ten Commandments and to the Law as a whole.
- In Deuteronomy and Exodus 20 the aspects of a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty are being carried out. One feature is a prologue which explains the history of two peoples who are “cutting a covenant” with each other.
- God’s words in verse 2 are a “world of grace” spoken to Israel. . .God’s initiative making His covenant with His people.

Two complementary pictures of covenants:

- Genesis 15: God “cuts” a covenant with Abra(ha)m.
- Exodus 20:1ff: God’s Suzerain-Vassal Treaty with Israel

The context of the covenant at Mount Sinai:

- “God heard their groaning . . . God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel – and God knew,” (Exodus 2:23 – 25). There’s continuity with what God has done before, and what God is about to do for His people in Egypt. Remember: their deliverance from slavery in Egypt was a part of the Abrahamic Covenant itself (Genesis 15:12 – 16).
- YHWH (Exodus 3:14ff) “I AM WHO I AM.” This covenant name was revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai when the LORD called to him out of the burning bush. “Say to this people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’”
- “Israel is my firstborn son,” (Exodus 4:21 – 23) In Luke 3:38, Adam is called the son of God in the genealogy of Christ. Those who called on the name of the Lord in Genesis 6:2 are also called “sons of God.” Familial theme: God’s people are God’s family ever since the Garden of Eden. Now, God is treating the whole as “my child.”
- Ten Plagues (Exodus 7:4 – 12:32)
 - “I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.” When God made His covenant with Abraham He said, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. . .”
 - God’s grace: God delivers His people from the Angel of Death by the gracious provision of blood sacrifice of the Passover lamb. God’s grace in Genesis 3: through sacrifice, God provides clothing for Adam and Eve. In Genesis 8, on mount Ararat Noah sacrifices. In Genesis 15, we see sacrifice in the “cutting of the covenant.”
- Egyptians Plundered (Exodus 12:33 – 36) “The LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked (silver, gold jewelry, clothing, etc.). Thus they plundered the Egyptians.”

- Egyptians Defeated (Exodus 14 “Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and his servant Moses,” (Exodus 14:30, 31). Not by horses, not by chariots, they trusted in the name of the Lord.
- Before arriving at Mount Sinai, God had already rained manna from heaven (Exodus 16). He had produced water from a rock (Exodus 17).

Consider the order of these events in Exodus . . .

Consider the state of Israel when they arrive at the foot of Sinai. . .

- How should Israel have heard the Law being given? (Participants’ responses: “To trust the Lord with their lives;” “with gratitude.”)
- How many times had they seen miraculous provision, miraculous deliverance, supernatural occurrences, the “finger of God” descending on the most powerful nation of the world at that time?
- Israelites’ question: How can God ask me to keep all these things in the Law? In one sense, the Law was a burden, if it was approached as “If I do all of these things perfectly, then I’ll be right with God. Maybe God be pleased with me and will consider me as one of His family members.”
- But that’s not the order we see in Exodus: God remembers His covenant. He works over the course of nineteen chapters wrenching His people graciously, supernaturally from the hands of Pharaoh. Then He says: “I am the LORD your God.” I am the covenant God. There is a pre-existing relationship. “. . . who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,” (Exodus 20:1, 2). You are already my people. You can call on me at your worst moment, and I will remember my words. I will keep my covenant promises to you.

Uses of the Mosaic Administration of the Covenant of Grace

- Properly situates obedience in the Christian life. Why should we obey God? Are we trying to earn His favor?
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 - When God gives His law in Scripture (both in the Old and New Testaments), He is giving commands to His people . . . those with whom He has an existing relationship because of covenant.
 - We obey God’s words out of gratitude for all the things He has already done for us in Christ.
 - Repeatedly in the Old Testament, when God’s people are being called back to the Lord, they are reminded of the exodus out of Egypt. “Remember what God did for our fathers, remember the covenant. . .remember how He heard us . . .”
- Properly frames a large, often misunderstood portion of Scripture. What was it actually meant to do?
 - The law itself was good, given for the good of God’s people. “This is how you are to live in a fallen world. This is how you’re to be distinct from the nations. This is how I’ll separate you and keep you holy. . . I didn’t give my laws to the nations. I’ve given my laws to my people.”
 - God was not harsh with His people. He was gracious, He was kind to His people.
- Underscores God’s steadfast love (*hesed*) – God’s covenant faithfulness.
 - He has made promises, and He will keep them, as in Exodus 1 and 2. God hears, God remembers His covenants, and God works.
 - This provides great stability for God’s people. Israel is not striving to keep the law. . . to try to say: “I’m going to fall out of God’s favor if I don’t do this.” (Nuances to this: Later we see

Israel slide into gross, pagan idolatry, and they are punished for it, but God's covenants remain.)

- God says: "I have made promises. I will bear the consequences when you do not uphold your side of the covenant."
- In response, God's people praise Him for His steadfast love. For example in Exodus 15, The Song of Moses, God's people sang: "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed. . ." (Exodus 15:13). That is what results when we see God's faithfulness over centuries, over millennia; He's not switching up plans every hundred years. . . No. . . He's keeping His one Covenant of Grace. It's becoming clearer what God's doing with His people in history.