



The Mosaic Covenant...Pt. 1

Exodus 19-24

Last week, I introduced the Mosaic Covenant in a very cursory sort of the way. I made the point in that introduction that the Mosaic Covenant is far and away the most difficult element in all of covenant theology. You would think that the most difficult element would be infant baptism or trying to reconcile the presence of unbelievers in the covenant community or maybe even something like how the sign of the covenant changed from circumcision to baptism. But those elements...those issues aren't really all that complex. They are important and in some circles they can be quite controversial but they are not really all that difficult to understand.

In fact, as our study develops you may wind up disagreeing with some or all of the conclusions that I draw regarding those particular issues. But if you do, it probably won't be because you don't understand what I'm saying or how I'm interpreting the text or even how I derive my arguments. Now, you may think I'm wrong about how I go about those things or how I come to draw the conclusions I draw. You may even think that my theological rice is not quite done. But you probably won't think I'm unclear about anything...except possibly the Mosaic Covenant. And I want you to know up front that should that happen

there might be a really good reason for it. That reason would be that the Mosaic Covenant is a difficult subject and produces a number of knotty problems. That doesn't mean that the Mosaic Covenant and how it relates to the Covenant of Grace is beyond understanding; it's far from that. Still, it is complex and it will require a real measure of careful, diligent study on all our parts as we consider together where some of the answers might lead.

Now, I don't think I'm overstating things when I say that coming to grips with the Mosaic Covenant is difficult and fraught with all sorts of potential problems. Let me illustrate what I mean historically. The famous Westminster Assembly that ran from 1643-1649 and was made up of most the best and brightest English and Scottish pastors and theologians available. It was an august assembly commissioned by Parliament to produce a comprehensive and biblically suitable confession of faith for the English people. And it did just that. It wound up producing an extraordinarily valuable body of work including the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and a Directory of Worship. Now at that great assembly where so much in common was held by the commissioners...there were no less than four views regarding the nature and place of the Mosaic Covenant. Some of the commissioners viewed it as a covenant of works. Some viewed as a mixed covenant of works and grace. Some viewed it as a subservient covenant to the Covenant of Grace and some simply viewed it as the Covenant of Grace itself.

Listen to this quote from the book *The Law if Not of Faith* which writer J.V. Fesko attributes to the seventeenth century Puritan Anthony Burgess:

I do not find in any point of divinity, learned men so confused and perplexed (being like Abraham's ram, hung is bush of briars and brambles by the head) as here.¹

He is talking about the Mosaic Covenant and his point is true. Let me explain why that is the case.

It is hard to reconcile, to place, to see the connection between the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant and the Covenant of Grace because the Mosaic Covenant seems to be a different kind of covenant than all of the other covenants before it. Let me say that another way. The Mosaic Covenant is difficult to mesh with Covenant of Grace because it contains a number of elements that the other administrations of the Covenant of Grace do not. Its constituent parts look different that say the parts of the Abrahamic or the Noahic Covenants. And there is a reason for that. The reason for that is that the Mosaic Covenant is based on an all together different type or form of covenant.²

Michael Horton puts it like this:

As I pointed out in the introduction, two different types of covenants form distinct riverbeds cutting synchronically through the same biblical history: a purely promissory oath on God's part and a conditional suzerainty-vassal relationship on the other. As the story of Israel unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear (especially from the New Testament looking back) that this distinction can be generally replied to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants respectively.³

You see what Horton says is quite true. The Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant are based on different forms or types of covenants. That is quite true even though I have been making the point along the way that all of the various covenants after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden are really just continuing

episodes in the one Covenant of Grace. It is quite true even though I have been arguing that the various administrations of the one Covenant of Grace are more like scenes in one, long continuous story than they are like individual or free-standing covenants. And I know that must be confusing. So let me hasten to say that Horton and I are really focusing on two different things.

I am talking about all the covenants of the Bible after the fall and their connection to each other in God's overall redemptive plan⁴ and he is talking about the forms covenants took in ancient culture. You see in the ancient world where covenants were a common part of life there were a number of different covenant forms.⁵ Covenants, in and of themselves, were almost as common as two men shaking hands and doing a deal.

In the ancient world, men often made covenants in their business dealings and political dealings with other and when they did the covenants they made often had deeply religious overtones. And there were different kinds of covenants depending upon the nature of the relationship between the two parties making the covenant. For example, the covenant between two equal heads of state or two equal businessmen would have been lot different than the covenant between a wealthy king and a peasant. You see in the ancient world there were two different kinds of covenants: one was called a royal grant covenant and the other was called a suzerain/vassal covenant. The royal grant form of covenant was unconditional or almost unconditional and the suzerain-vassal covenant was highly structured and filled with all kinds of conditions.

Most of the covenants of the Old Testament are of the royal grant form. In other words, they are based on a form of the covenant in which a superior graciously

gives to an inferior some sort of grant, gift or kindness. There are no conditions associated with this sort of covenant, at least not upfront. It is based on an extraordinary act of condescension, or generosity on the part of a king or ruler or wealthy person to an undeserving subject or social or political inferior.

It was the form of covenant used in both the Noahic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant. Now I should add that this sort of covenantal grant more or less demanded a response of gratitude on the part of the person receiving the grant. The promises weren't contingent upon the recipient's gratitude or obedience but the nature of the kindness shown in such covenants was often so extraordinary that a recipient would have had to have been an idiot to have responded in any fashion other than gratitude, or loyalty and obedience. In that regard, it is perfectly acceptable to talk about such covenants are unconditional.

That's why when God makes His covenant with Abraham and then later tells him to walk before Him it feels more like grace than law. God's kindness is so extravagant that the only possible response is grateful obedience. There is no hint that God's promises are dependent upon Abraham's obedience even though Abraham's obedience is assumed.

You'll remember God's kindness to Abraham in Genesis 15.

^{ESV} **Genesis 15:1**...After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ² But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵ And he brought him outside

and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

You see the first promise God makes to Abraham is that He is going to bless him, He doesn't ask him to do anything. He simply promises and Abraham believes. Then in chapter 17, God tells Abraham to walk before Him and be blameless. Still Abraham's gratitude is what drives him to obey...not his fear. And at that point God tells Abraham to circumcise his offspring. Still it doesn't sound like legalism.

^{ESV} **Genesis 17:1**...When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." ³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." ⁹ And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

You see at that point circumcision was a sign of identification as heirs of promise. It is a badge of connection to God. It is a sign that God had chosen Abraham and his offspring and that He would never forget them or forsake them. And later on when the children of Israel remove to the land of Egypt in the days of Joseph,

God remembers His covenant with Abraham and watches out for Joseph and blesses him and his seed in an extraordinary way and He does so in order to fulfill his royal grant to Abraham. And years later when Pharaoh mistreats the Israelites, God remembers his covenant...His covenant of grace with Abraham and determines to deliver his people⁶.

^{ESV} **Exodus 2:23**...During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel--and God knew.

And you have exactly the same thing in Exodus 6, where God reminds the Israelites that He is delivering them on the basis of His covenant with Abraham.

^{ESV} **Exodus 6:2**...God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶ Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

You see that is why I made the point that even God's kindness to Moses and the children of Israel at the beginning of Exodus is tied to God's gracious covenant with Abraham. His dealings with Moses are not based on a separate covenant but on the original covenant with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. But then in

Exodus 19, after God has delivered the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh and destroyed Pharaoh's army in the sea God has Moses take them to the backside of Sinai and there he makes adds something to the covenant He had with Abraham. I think you might want to think of it as an overlay on top of the covenant with Abraham. It's not a replacement covenant...Galatians make that clear enough. It's something else...it is a national covenant. It's not just a covenant for a family. It's a covenant for a nation. And that is where the confusion comes in. You see the covenant in Exodus 19 has a different form than the Noahic or Abrahamic covenants. It isn't a royal grant covenant at all. Instead, it has the form of a covenant called a suzerain-vassal covenant and unlike the royal grant form of covenant it is quite conditional and is tied to the obedience of the subject.

Now in the ancient world a "suzerain" was a powerful ruler or king. A "vassal" was a subject...really any subject...of the suzerain. The suzerain-vassal form of covenant was first popularly explained by a marvelous biblical archaeologist named George Mendenhall. He discovered its importance in reviewing a vast number of ancient Hittite legal documents. Of course, the suzerain vassal form of the covenant wasn't strictly limited to the Hittites.⁷ Its underlying form permeated much of the ancient world. But Mendenhall was a Hittite scholar and he was the one to make the connection to the parallel use of the form in the Bible.

Now the suzerain-vassal form of the covenant was made up on some very distinct parts and possessed a fairly standardized form and if you don't mind I want to take a few minutes to explain the form.⁸ It almost always had, for example, something called a preamble which identified who the suzerain was. Sometimes it also identified the other parties involved as well.

After the preamble, there was often something called an historical prologue. The historical prologue often reviewed the history of the relationship between the suzerain and the vassal. It often focused on whatever aid the suzerain had provided the vassal and how the vassal as a result was indebted to the suzerain because of the aid or protection he had received.

After the prologue, the stipulations of the covenant were spelled out. In other words, the stipulations spelled out what the suzerain expected of the vassal. This was often the longest portion of the covenant document with a lengthy list of everything the vassal was expected to do or respect including things like boundaries, taxes, military service, marriages, etc.

After the stipulations or requirements were spelled out, the benefits or blessing associated with obedience were described and the penalties for disobedience were explained. The section is sometimes referred to as the sanctions section. In our day, the word "sanctions" almost always has a negative connotation but the word itself is neutral meaning sanctions can be good or bad.

After the stipulations and sanctions were explained, the covenant would be read aloud in the hearing of both parties so that parties would know exactly what was being agreed to. It was also read publically so that neither party could later on add anything that might benefit or deny anything that might hurt them.

After the covenant was read out loud or even as it was being read out loud, witnesses were often called upon to bear witness of all that was promised. In the ancient pagan world, the gods or deities of that land were often called on the witness what was promised.

After the witnesses were satisfied, there would be a solemn ratification ceremony...oftentimes a blood covenant in which the parties would seal their covenant with each other explaining by means of self-maledictory oaths what would happen to them should they break their covenant.

Finally, after everything was done a written copy of the covenant would be deposited away in a safe place so that should it ever be necessary, either party might be able to ask for the covenant to be brought out so that breaches or violations could be spelled out...when that happened it was sometimes referred to as a covenant lawsuit.⁹

Now what I would like to do in our remaining time is to simply remind you of the basic events of the Book of Exodus and then try to demonstrate how and why the Mosaic Covenant that is given starting in Exodus 19 is a perfect example of a suzerain-vassal covenant and why that matters.

Alright then, let's look at the structure of Exodus.

- Ch. 1...The harsh treatment of God's covenant people
- Chs. 2-4...The preparation and calling of Moses
- Chs. 5-11...The struggle with Pharaoh
- Chs. 12-13...The Passover/Exodus
- Chs. 14-15...The Chase/Red Sea
- Chs. 16-18...The journey to Sinai
- Chs. 19-40...The Covenant

Now starting in Exodus 19, God establishes His special national covenant with Israel in which He lays out for them the conditions of His special theocratic rule and establishment of the nation of Israel.

^{ESV} **Exodus 19:1**...On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." ⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

Now I mentioned earlier that suzerain vassal treaty usually starts with a preamble in which the suzerain identifies Himself. Well you can see that in Exodus 20:1-2.

^{ESV} **Exodus 20:1**...And God spoke all these words, saying, ² "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

I mentioned after the preamble there is something called the historical prologue in which the suzerain relates the history of the relationship between the suzerain and the vassal. You can see that both in the previous verse and in Exodus 19

^{ESV} **Exodus 19:4**...You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

After the historical prologue, come the stipulations of requirements of the covenant. Those are given in chapters 20-23. In chapter twenty of Exodus you have, of course, the Ten Commandments but after that you have a detailing of many other important commands for God's theocratic rule of the nation. We'll go into detail with those later.

After the stipulations or requirements, a suzerain-vassal treaty will often pronounce the sanctions, both good and bad, of the covenant relationship. Now in the book of Exodus pretty much only the positive sanctions are included but both are included elsewhere as in Deuteronomy 27-28 and Leviticus 26.

^{ESV} **Leviticus 26:3**...If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴ then I will give...

^{ESV} **Leviticus 26:14**...But if you will not listen to me and will not do these commandments...¹⁶ then I will do this to you:

I then mentioned that after the sanctions are given in suzerain-vassal covenant comes the public reading of the covenant.

^{ESV} **Exodus 24:7**....Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

After that comes the appeal to witnesses and in this case that involved the setting up of a memorial.

^{ESV} **Exodus 24:4** ... And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

After the appeal to witnesses there was usually a ratification ceremony and in this case it forms one of the most dramatic parts of the whole narrative.

Follow along in you Bibles as I read from Exodus 24.

^{ESV} **Exodus 24:1**...Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. ² Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." ³ Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." ⁴ And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it¹⁰ on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." ⁹ Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. ¹¹ And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

Finally after that, a suzerain-vassal covenant usually ended with the putting away or storing away of the written covenant. That occurs in case of a violation of the covenant. It can then be called out to be used as a witness in a covenant lawsuit. The storing away of the covenant happens here in Exodus 25. It is placed into a golden ark...known appropriately enough as the Ark of the Covenant.

^{ESV} **Exodus 25:16**...And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you.

Now I have spent our time this morning going through these things in detail not simply to make you better bible students but to try to establish in your minds the fact that the Mosaic Covenant is built upon a works principle¹¹ as opposed to the other covenants that we have studied¹². In the weeks ahead I'll try to flesh out the implications of that and how the issue comes up over and over again in the New Testament as the stipulations of the national covenant are misinterpreted and misconstrued and turned into a works-righteousness that it was never intended to be.¹³

Let's pray.

¹ J.V. Fesko, "Calvin and Witsius on the Mosaic Covenant" in *The Law if Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan Estelle, J.V. Fesko and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Books, 2009), 25.

² A. W. Pink, *Divine Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1973), 142. " But what was the nature and design of that covenant? Did God mock His fallen creatures by formally renewing the (Adamic) covenant of works, which they had already broken, under the curse of which all by nature lay, and which He knew they could not keep for a single hour? Such a question answers itself. Or did God do with Israel then as He does with His people now: first redeem, and then put under law as a rule of life, a standard of conduct? But if that were the case, why enter into this formal "covenant"? Even Fairbairn virtually cuts the knot here by saying that the form of a covenant is of no consequence at all. But this covenant form at Sinai is the very thing which requires to be accounted for. Christians are not put under the law as a covenant, though they are as a rule. No help is to be obtained by dodging difficulties or by denying their existence; they must be fairly and prayerfully grappled with."

³ Michael Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 150.

⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 3...Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 222. Bavinck writes, "On the one hand, therefore, the law was subservient to the covenant of grace; it was not a covenant of works in disguise and did not intend that humans would obtain justification by their own works. On the other hand its purpose was to lay the groundwork for a higher and better dispensation of that same covenant of grace to come in the fullness of time. The impossibility of keeping the Sinaitic covenant and of meeting the demands of the law made another and better dispensation of the covenant of grace necessary. The eternal covenant of grace was provoked to a higher revelation of itself by the imperfection of the temporary form it had assumed in Israel. Sin increased that grace might abound, Christ could not immediately become human after the fall, and grace could not immediately reveal itself in all

its riches. There was a need for preparation and nurture. "It was not fitting for God to become incarnate at the beginning of the human race before sin. For medicine is given only to the sick. Nor was it fitting that God should become incarnate immediately after sin that man, having been humbled by sin, might see his own need of a deliverer. But what had been decreed from eternity occurred in the fullness of time."

⁵ Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found: the Covenant story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Books, 2005), 139. Williams refers to the the work done by

⁶ Bavinck, 220. He writes, "The covenant with Israel was essentially no other than that with Abraham."

⁷ George E. Mendenhall, "Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Part 2" in *Biblical Archaeology* 17 (1954): 50-76. Mendenhall write, "It seems certain that the Hittites themselves did not originate the covenant form which we shall discuss. Rather, there is abundant indication that they themselves borrowed the form from the East, i.e., ultimately Mesopotamian sources, and consequently it must have been common property of any number of peoples and states in the second millennium B.C. It is by its very nature an international form."

⁸ O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 169. Robertson's list is quite similar. He writes, "Observing the basic outline of this treaty form, current scholarship has found a remarkable similarity in the pattern of the Mosaic covenant. Both the portion of Exodus dealing with covenant inauguration (Exod. 19–24) and the entire book of Deuteronomy have been studied in this regard."

⁹ Williams, 140-141. Williams' summary of Mendenhall.

¹⁰ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on Exodus*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 312. He writes, "And Moses took half of the blood of the sacrifices, and put it in basins, in order to throw it afterwards against the people or against the pillars that represented the people (v. 8), and half of the blood he threw against the altar. The throwing of half of the blood of the offerings against the altar, which represented the Lord, and half on the people, or that which represented them, signifies a joining together of the two contracting parties, and symbolized the execution of the deed of covenant between them."

¹¹ Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith G. Kline's Response to the Historical Development of Federal theology in Reformed Thought*, (New York: University Press of America, 1999), 232-3. Jeon has a nice discussion of the Kline's view as laid out in *By Oath Consigned*.

¹² Robertson, 175. Robertson definitely thinks Kline is wrong is using the wording "works principle". The following quote says that implicitly while the one after that says it explicitly. First he writes, "For this reason, the covenant of law as revealed at Sinai would best be divorced from "covenant of works" terminology. The "covenant of works" refers to legal requirements laid on man at the time of his innocency in creation. The "covenant of law" refers to a new stage in the process of God's unfolding the richness of the covenant of redemption. As such, the law which came through Moses did not in any way disannul or suspend the covenant of promise."

In a footnote at the bottom of page 174 he writes, “The language of Meredith Kline is misleading on this point. His desire to maintain the distinctive emphasis of the law-covenant may be appreciated. But his statements too easily could be understood in a legalistic fashion. He interprets Paul as saying that the Sinaitic covenant “made inheritance to be by law, not by promise—not by faith, but by works” (*By Oath Consigned*, p. 23).”

¹³ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), 127. Vos leads the way, “Only a moment’s reflection is necessary to prove that this is untenable, and that precisely from a broad historical standpoint Paul had far more accurately grasped the purport of the law than his opponents. The law was given after the redemption from Egypt had been accomplished, and the people had already entered upon the enjoyment of many of the blessings of the *berith*. Particularly their taking possession of the promised land could not have been made dependent on previous observance of the law, for during their journey in the wilderness many of its precepts could not be observed. It is plain, then, that law—keeping did not figure at that juncture as the meritorious ground of life—inheritance. The latter is based on grace alone, no less emphatically than Paul himself places salvation on that ground. But, while this is so, it might still be objected, that law—observance, if not the ground for receiving, is yet made the ground for retention of the privileges inherited. Here it can not, of course, be denied that a real connection exists. But the Judaizers went wrong in inferring that the connection must be *meritorious*, that, if Israel keeps the cherished gifts of Jehovah through observance of His law, this must be so, because in strict justice they had *earned* them. The connection is of a totally different kind. It belongs not to the legal sphere of merit, but to the symbolico-typical sphere of *appropriateness of expression*.”

As stated above, the abode of Israel in Canaan typified the heavenly, perfected state of God’s people. Under these circumstances the ideal of absolute conformity to God’s law of legal holiness had to be upheld. Even though they were not able to keep this law in the Pauline, spiritual sense, yea, even though they were unable to keep it externally and ritually, the requirement could not be lowered. When apostasy on a general scale took place, they could not remain in the promised land. When they disqualified themselves for typifying the state of holiness, they *ipso facto* disqualified themselves for typifying that of blessedness, and had to go into captivity.”