

THE HISTORY OF SALVATION IN THE COVENANTS OF GOD (continued)

- 5) **GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL** - This is commonly known as the *Mosaic Covenant*, or even more widely as the "*old covenant*" when compared with the "*new covenant*" in Jesus Christ - 2 Corinthians 3:14 - "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away." It is also called the "*first covenant*" when contrasted with the later covenant in Christ in terms of *sequence* - Hebrews 9:15 - "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant."

We will continue to study the covenants in terms of their *five main elements*: PARTIES, PROMISES, OBLIGATIONS, RATIFICATION, and FULFILLMENT.

- a) **Parties involved** - The parties are God and Israel (Israel being the direct descendants of Abraham). The covenant was first made after the *escape from Egypt*, at the foot of Mount Sinai - Exodus 19:3-6 - "...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."

It was confirmed, *one generation later*, with their children as they were about to enter the promised land - Deuteronomy 5:2-3 - "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. [3] Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today."

- b) **Promises made** - Two main promises were made:

FIRST, Israel was to be "God's own possession among all the nations" - Exodus 19:5 - "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." The purpose of this is made clear in remembering God's initial covenant to *Abraham* - that through his seed "*all the earth would be blessed*." Israel was God's own possession *not for her own sake, but for the world's*.

SECOND, Israel would be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" - Exodus 19:6 - "...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." The nation would be a *visible demonstration* of the holiness of God to the surrounding nations. They would be a light in a fallen world.

- c) **Obligations given** - The covenant with Israel is most clearly marked out as a *covenant of LAW* - Exodus 19:8 - "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." This covenant was initiated immediately before the giving of the Ten Commandments. In fact, the *Ten Commandments are actually said to be IDENTICAL with the content of the covenant itself* - Exodus 34:28 - "So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." The righteousness of this covenant is clearly a *righteousness of WORKS* - 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."

TWO IMPORTANT LESSONS STAND OUT: While we are not all recipients of this same exact covenant, the revelation of God's *character* revealed in this covenant is badly needed in today's world: **FIRST**, the covenant is established with Israel **totally out of God's LOVE and GRACE** - Deut. 7:7-8 - "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, [8] but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

But, **SECOND**, the requirements of the law clearly illustrated that God's love in no way cancelled out His **HOLINESS and HATRED OF SIN** (Deut. 4:23-24).

- d) **Ratification** - The ratification of this covenant is by *blood* (clearly pictured in Exodus 24:1-8). Notice the lesson here: No sooner had the people promised to obey all the commands of God (Exodus 24:3), when Moses began to apply the blood (later to be called the "*blood of Atonement*") to their own bodies. *They were totally ignorant of HOW SOON THEY WOULD BE TURNING FROM GOD'S WORD IN DISOBEDIENCE*. Soon there would be the creation of an *entire sacrificial system* just to point out the sinfulness of man's very best efforts to live life on his own terms (*a very important verse in understanding the Old Testament sacrificial system is Hebrews 10:3* - "But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year."

- e) **Fulfilment of the covenant** - Clearly, Israel's history was one of a continued breaking of God's covenant with them - **Jeremiah 11:10** - "They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers." God, however, would remain faithful in spite of their sinfulness - **Leviticus 26:44-45** - "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. [45] But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."

God will yet do a work with the nation of Israel - **Romans 11:22-26** - "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. [23] And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. [24] For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. [25] Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. [26] And in this way all Israel will be saved...."

Also, you and I are part of the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham, as Paul reveals the church, the new Israel of God through faith in Christ Jesus - **Ephesians 2:12** - "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Also, see **Galatians 3:14** - "....so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

- 6) **GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID** - God made this covenant with David shortly after David became king over all Israel. Nathan the prophet delivered the message - **2 Samuel 7:12-13** - "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."
- a) **The parties of the covenant** - are God and David (including his offspring - Solomon, etc.). Both David himself (**2 Samuel 23:5**) and the prophet Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 33:21**) recognize that the covenant was specifically made with David.
- b) **The promises made** - The promise is very direct. David will be the progenitor of an everlasting kingship over Israel. This is spelled out even more sharply in **Psalms 89:28-29** - "My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. [29] I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens."
- c) **The obligations given** - the obligations are assumed by God Himself. David does nothing to earn this treatment from God. This promise would hold true even through the reigns of ungodly offspring (like **Ahaz** - **2 Chron. 28:21**, or even **Manasseh** - **2 Chron. 33:9**). True, there would be a break in the line of earthly kings of David's line (the last being **Zedekiah** in 597-587 BC), but the line of David would continue to be established and maintained.
- d) **The fulfilment** - Isaiah prophetically writes of the coming "**Prince of Peace**" who would rule on the "**throne of David**" in an unending kingship (see **Isaiah 9:6-7**). See also the announcement of Christ's fulfilment of this in **Luke 1:32-33** - "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."