

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 21 – OTHER MOSAIC COVENANT QUESTIONS]

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***Last time we learned a few very important principles we need to keep in mind when we study the Mosaic or Old Covenant.***

- 1) When we read the Old Testament, we need to view everything through the prism of Jesus Christ as He is the fulfilment of all the Old Covenant pointed to.
  - ◆ He was the one who came to fulfil all that the Law, Prophets and Psalms pointed to - the sacrifices, the priesthood, the temple – all pointed to Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:17).
  - ◆ He also fulfilled the law in that he obeyed it perfectly.
  - ◆ The focus was never intended to be on the law, but on Jesus Christ.
- 2) Even though some aspects of the Ten Commandments were set aside, they did not cancel the higher law of love which are a reflection of God's holy character and nature.
  - ◆ These exist throughout eternity.
- 3) The Mosaic Covenant although glorious had serious limitations in developing holiness in God's people, so it was replaced with a more glorious Covenant that addressed this shortcoming.
- 4) As we saw with the Sabbath rules, we need to be very careful focusing on the details doesn't side track us and miss the higher spiritual intent.
  - ◆ This is the advice Jesus gave the Pharisees when he criticised them for their hypocrisy for tithing of their herbs and missing the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23).
  - ◆ It wasn't just with herbs where the Pharisees missed the point. They had endless regulations on what was lawful on the Sabbath while standing in front of them was the One offering them "spiritual rest."

***Before we leave the Mosaic Covenant and move on to the New Covenant, we need to clear up a few loose ends regarding the Old Covenant.***

### ***Changing Dietary Laws.***

- ◆ One of the peculiar aspects of the various covenants we looked at earlier is the change to the dietary laws depending on the particular covenant.
- ◆ Under the covenants with Noah and Abraham, all foods are allowed while under the Mosaic covenant the Israelites are restricted to only "clean foods."
- ◆ And the question has to be asked, "Why would God find it necessary to change this law"?
- ◆ Prior to the Mosaic Covenant, we read as part of the Covenant with Noah that there was no restriction on food.
- ◆ ***Genesis 9:3 Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.***
- ◆ Yet we read two separate sets of animals were taken onto the ark, both clean and unclean animals.
- ◆ ***Genesis 7:1-2 The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. <sup>2</sup> Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate.***
- ◆ There was no way Noah had the resources to round up all these creatures and herd them onto the ark, so God caused the animals to come. (Genesis 7:7-9).
- ◆ We need to remember Moses who was very much aware of clean and unclean animals wrote Genesis in hindsight.
- ◆ Whether or not Noah knew any distinction prior to the animals showing up to the ark is unknown, but if he didn't he must have been quite curious as to why.

***This is another of those instances where we see the hand of God working behind the scenes of history to bring about His intended purpose.***

- ◆ And again this is another of these instances where we can get side tracked on issues of health or get caught up in the specifics and miss the higher spiritual intent behind the event.
- ◆ We already know about God's dietary instructions to the Israelites at Sinai, to eat only clean animals (Leviticus 11).
- ◆ However if we jump ahead nearly 1000 years to the New Testament, what story do we find associated with clean/unclean animals there? Peter's dream about the sheet full of unclean creatures (Acts 11:1-18).
- ◆ What did those unclean creatures represent? Gentiles
- ◆ So if the unclean animals represented Gentiles, who do you, think clean animals represent? Israelites.

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- ◆ So is it so surprising that God instructed the Israelites at Sinai to eat only “clean” foods?
- ◆ Now if we go back to the story of the ark, what did the ark represent for Noah and his family? Salvation – it saved them from destruction.
- ◆ So what we see here with the story of the animals on the ark centuries before it became a reality is another shadow representing God’s ultimate plan of offering salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.

### ***Another analogy in this regard concerns the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).***

- ◆ At Babel, God used tongues to divide people.
- ◆ However on the Day of Pentecost in the New Testament, tongues are used as a gift to bring all peoples of the earth together for salvation (Acts 2:1-12).
- ◆ This was the start of the times of the Gentiles. No longer would there be this distinction between Jew and Gentile as far as salvation was concerned.
- ◆ ***Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***
- ◆ Peter in his famous sermon in Acts 2:17 quotes the prophet Joel, ***‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;***
- ◆ And of course it was only a short time later after this sermon that Peter had his dream about the unclean animals in the sheet.
- ◆ So it shouldn’t surprise us that as the times of the Gentiles begins, the dietary restrictions which applied only to the Jews are removed.
- ◆ ***Romans 14:14, I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.***
- ◆ ***Romans 14:20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.***
- ◆ The changing aspects of the dietary law revolved around who God was offering salvation to at the time, the Israelites in Moses’ time and the Gentiles in Peter’s time.
- ◆ Clean foods represented Israel and unclean foods represented Gentiles.
- ◆ However the primary message is not about food, but rather how God is offering salvation to both Jew and Gentile alike especially as viewed from the perspective of the two sets of animals going onto Noah’s ark.

### ***Misconceptions around Sacrifices.***

- ◆ Because of the way pagan religions view sacrifices, it’s easy for Christians to view the sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant in the same light.
- ◆ Pagan superstitious sacrifices are offered as a way to manipulate or influence the gods to gain some positive benefit from them – rain, crops, good health, etc.
- ◆ So sacrifices of goods, animals, and sometimes humans are offered to manipulate or appease the gods.
- ◆ But the sacrifices commanded by the God of Israel had a totally different aim.
- ◆ They were made not to appease or manipulate God but to remind the people of the source of the grace, mercy and forgiveness which was extended towards them (Exodus 34:5-7).
- ◆ It was to remind them of their gracious and merciful God who led them out of Egypt and forgave all their sins.
- ◆ The various sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant are carefully linked to the word, “atonement” (Leviticus 5-6).
- ◆ Over and over again the word “atonement” is linked with the various sacrifices signifying God’s willingness to be reconciled with his people despite their sins.
- ◆ And He is the one who makes “atonement” possible.
- ◆ The annual Day of Atonement is a good example of this process (Leviticus 16).
- ◆ Each year the high priest had to go through a carefully prescribed ritual in order to enter the holies of holies in the tabernacle where God resided.
- ◆ Animals were sacrificed for both himself and the people and the blood carefully laid on the mercy seat signifying God was the one who provided the means of forgiveness and reconciliation.
- ◆ The blood of the sacrificed goat placed on the mercy seat signified the people’s sins were blotted out by a sacrifice presented on their behalf (They did not have to personally pay the penalty for their sins, the goat did).

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- ◆ The other goat on who's head the sins of the people were laid was then led out into the wilderness signifying God's willingness to forget the people's sins.  
*Psalms 103:7-12 He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*
- ◆ Of course the deep significance of this whole process was revealed in all its glory with the "once for all" sacrifice of Jesus Christ where not the blood of a goat but the blood of the Lamb of God was shed on behalf of the sins of the world.
- ◆ Again, the price was paid for us; we did not have to personally pay the penalty for our sins.
- ◆ And the same promise of God no longer remembering our sins is made as part of the New Covenant.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 10:16-17 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."<sup>17</sup> Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.***
- ◆ So once again we are reminded of the need to view everything through the prism of Jesus Christ.  
***However there is an important lesson in this principle today and that is not to think we can manipulate God by "our sacrifices" and "our good works" to do our bidding..***
- ◆ This principle is as true today in the church age as it was back in Moses' day
- ◆ Our forgiveness is solely a result of God's graciousness and the willingness of Jesus Christ to sacrifice Himself on our behalf.
- ◆ It would be a huge affront to our Saviour to take anything away from the horrific sacrifice He suffered on our behalf on the cross.
- ◆ He wants us to have faith in "His" saving work and not on "our" saving work.
- ◆ The emphasis should always be on Jesus Christ's work.
- ◆ So the various rituals we perform today, worship, baptism, Lord's Supper, giving, etc. are not done to gain some favour from God, but to remind us of how merciful are God's gracious acts towards us.
- ◆ Unfortunately it is a failure to remember this principle that has led too much of the confusion surrounding the "Health and Wealth" debate.
- ◆ God is not an ATM machine to be manipulated by pressing the right buttons.
- ◆ It's true, God does bless his children, but don't make the mistake of thinking God is obliged to act because of our long and fervent prayers or our generous donations to the church.
- ◆ Our "righteousness" or our "good works" has little to do with God's decision as we learned with the story of Job (Job 1:1,8).
- ◆ If God does decide to bless us with a "yes" answer to our prayers, it is only after evaluating what is best for us spiritually.
- ◆ God's graciousness and generosity flows from the fact He is a loving Father who wants to develop spiritual maturity and holiness in His children.
- ◆ So the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant and the Lamb of God's sacrifice of the New Covenant are reminders for us to worship the One who is gracious, faithful, and merciful and has redeemed us from our sins.
- ◆ He is not to be regarded and worshipped as a god who can be influenced by manipulative human beings.
- ◆ The object of true worship is to focus on God and His graciousness (Exodus 20:2-3; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25).