

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**B0846 – December 14, 2008 – Mount Sinai**

I had a question about angels, the bodies of angels when they materialize and how that relates to the resurrection body, I've been out of town and so I want to get to that next week.

Today I'm going to just show a few slides at the beginning here and then we'll move on to a new event in the Book of Exodus, Mt Sinai and the giving of the Law. This is an artist's conception of the Noahic Flood and it's the day when it happened, it's just to get in your mind's eye that we're talking about a major catastrophe. This gives an idea of a Christian's imagination of what that event must have looked like if you were there. The dimensions of the ark, this is one of those details of the text of the word of God that unless you look carefully at the text you miss it, but this is a 2D program simulating sea conditions and the ark using buoyancy physics, you can download this on the internet, someone has very cleverly done all the math and written a program. You can go in and change the sea conditions and buoyancy factors of the ark, center of gravity and so forth, it's quite fascinating because you begin to realize there is a tremendous stability to the ark given the biblical dimensions. This is important because if you take the same dimensions from the fables, from the myths of the floods in the ancient world and you try the same task, compute the center of gravity and tip it and see when they roll over, you'll find they roll over very easily. For example, the dimensions of the ark in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic is cubical, a cube is very unstable. But the biblical dimensions are extremely stable, so it's one of those realistic details of Scripture that shouts "We've got real data here!"

This is a scale model built by Answers in Genesis. It was used in our VBS curriculum last summer and I grabbed one of them after it was over. This is a helpful tool; I use it with my kids. I suggest you get something like this if you

have kids or grandkids. You can get these in batches for a couple of dollars each. If you're into carpentry, there are plans to build these to scale. You notice the shape is not the traditional one you find in the Sunday school literature which resembles a bathtub with animals falling out of it. That's a wrong image. To counter that I keep a number of books on the Ark that follow this model. This is to scale. This is God's design and if you can imagine taking over 500 standard railroad boxcars and fitting them inside this model, that's the size we're talking about. This was not a little pet carrier you take down to the veterinarian. This was a gigantic time capsule that forms a genetic bridge from the antediluvian world to the postdiluvian world. Every thing that lives in our world today is genetically derived from what got off that boat. So seeing a tangible model helps you, in your mind's eye to visualize the enormity of this vessel God designed.

Now a little introduction to Mount Sinai. This map gives an idea of how strategically located Israel was in the ancient world. All the major trade routes went through Israel, the King's Highway, the Via Maris and other Levantine trade routes. Now if you think about where God located this new nation that was born in the Exodus, just visualize this in the light of a world map. What continent is to the northeast? Asia. What continent is to the northwest? Europe. What continent is to the south? Africa. Now isn't it striking that God chose His people to set up a nation of testimony on the crossroads of trade in the world. This is something that people don't think about when they read about Israel in the OT, they just think, oh well, it's just another country in the old world. Well, it was more than a country in the old world. It was a strategically located country on the lines of communication between the continents. This was no accident because God is going to do something with His people and He wants the word of God to go forth and so where does He put them? Right smack dab at the center of the world. Sinai is this little area of land; this is a modern map of the region. Here's Egypt, to the north is the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea is here, the Red Sea is to the south, it has two fingers, the Gulf of Aqaba in the east and the Suez Canal in the west. Basically this area is shaped like a triangle and you want to visualize this because the event we're going to study happened in here. The Exodus happened somewhere in here, the people came out of Egypt, across the Sinai, there are roads there from ancient times, a lot of them are covered in sand but there are roads out there, they were used by Israeli tanks in the 67' war with Egypt in blast furnace conditions. All of the roads are along here. And in particular, this

is an area that is very, very flat and maneuverable and in the ancient world, the armies would move rapidly through here on horses and chariots.

And in the modern day, armies moved in the same exact roads with mechanized infantry and armor division. We want to visualize the Jews coming across in the Exodus and they had to go somewhere and God did not have them go along the coastal road because of reasons, which if you read the book of Exodus you'll see there's a little comment in there, don't do that Moses, take them down here into the wilderness. So this whole area is wilderness and down here is the traditional site of Mount Sinai, Jabal Musa, or the mountain of the discipline, or the mountain of the teaching. This is the Gulf of Aqaba, this is the Sinai Peninsula, Mount Sinai is probably either here or over in Saudi Arabia, some people say Jabal al Lawz. But in any case when you read the book of Numbers it says there were about two million Jews wandering around out in this stuff; and obviously that creates a little logistics problem. So don't forget that the Exodus from Egypt wasn't the only miracle these people saw. The very fact that *day in day out* God had to feed and water ~two million people in that terrain is a fantastic miracle.

An example, when Desert Storm took over, we had 450,000 troops in the desert. People forget, it's not the weaponry ultimately that determines the war. What really determines the outcome of the war is the logistics, and if you stop to think what a mess it is to serve 450,000 soldiers, three meals a day, plus all their water, plus all the gas and oil for the vehicles. Now you figure out the kind of a problem that you've got. Now multiply that three to four times. That's the problem God had in keeping the Jews together in this wilderness area. So don't think of the Exodus as an isolated miracle. It was one of a whole series of miracles that happened.

Let's read Exodus 19:2. "When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain." So Israel's camping out in this wilderness region right in front of the mountain. You'll also notice in v. 17, "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup>Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke descended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. <sup>19</sup>When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder, <sup>20</sup>And the LORD came down

on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. <sup>21</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ‘Go down, warn the people, lest when they break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.’” And he sanctified that mountain so that they would not come up there. Then God speaks the Ten Commandments, skip down to Exod 20:18, “And all the people perceived the thunder and lightening flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and they stood at a distance.” Then they told Moses “you go up to it...you talk to God,” these people were afraid. V 21, “So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.” Moses later describes the scene in another book Deut 4:10, we’re getting a vision of what this must have been like. “Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words, so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children. <sup>11</sup>And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens, darkness, cloud, and thick gloom. <sup>12</sup>Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice. <sup>13</sup>So He declared to you His covenant...” So what you have here is two million people assembled out here hearing the voice of God. That’s the image here, this barren wilderness wasteland and this awesome storm on the top of Mt Sinai. Now ask yourself why, to a people who were busy in Egypt building pyramids, carrying out Pharaoh’s building program, stomping mud bricks day after day, “Why did He take them out here?” Because He could get their attention. I think there’s something very powerful about this that when the word of God was actually spoken into space time history in Hebrew, you could take your recording device and capture the very voice of God. That happened, people heard it, lots of people. When that happened, it was done in a total wilderness where there were no distractions, no iPods, no TV’s. And I think if this is the way God teaches, He wants our attention and I think this is an interesting classroom because what you’re seeing here is the perfect teacher’s classroom, no distractions.

Now we want to look at the text and with that we can get the idea that we’re looking at a real event, it happened in a real place, under real conditions with real people who heard a real voice. We want to connect this event with the previous events. As we’re moving on now through the OT all these events are like beads on a necklace. They are all logically interrelated so let’s connect.

“Previous lessons developed the progressive intervention of God’s plan into the pagan Noahic civilization.” The key word, at this point in OT history, God is disrupting, He is interrupting. Paganism is solidifying like concrete, but before the concrete hardens and you get a total paganization of the human race, God decided to Call out Abraham and start a new work in a separate people, they grow in Egypt and are brought out by God, that’s the story of the Exodus. Man’s proper response to these divine works had to be by faith. The next key event... is the giving of the law to Israel at Mt. Sinai.” So that’s the thing we want to look at. We’re in Exodus; let’s go back to Exodus 4. We want to catch the flow of what’s going on here and the reason we’re doing it this way is because you’ll notice on the right hand side of this chart, I list the three areas of doctrine, the three areas of truth that we’re going to be looking at and we’re going basically get an idea of what revelation is, what inspiration is, and what canonicity is, basic doctrines. We’ve looked at all these other doctrines. You can build a view of the Christian faith just be looking at these events and just rehearsing them in your mind. One of the things that is not on this chart that Mount Sinai and the Exodus together show is the issue of salvation and what sanctification is that follows that, and what the issue of Lordship is. In evangelical circles right now, and for the last 25 years, a big debate has been going on between one camp called Free Grace people vs. the Lordship Salvation people and they’ve been arguing about the terms of the gospel. These events, the Exodus and Mount Sinai speak to this matter. So that’s one thing we want to look at.

So let’s get in our mind what’s happened with Israel. Israel now has been saved, the nation has been born out of the womb of Egypt and what is the next step. In Exodus 4:22 God calls Israel by an interesting name and that name here, the common noun that he uses defines the relationship of this newborn nation to God. You notice he says, “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is My son, My first-born.’”<sup>23</sup> So I said to you, ‘Let My son go, that he may serve me; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.’” This defines something and we want to watch this very, very carefully. If we don’t get this down, we’re going to lose it when it comes to understanding the role of the law in the OT. The problem is, most of us don’t read the OT, we’ve only heard NT, NT, and NT. And we’ve heard the contrast, law & grace, law & grace, law & grace, to the point that we almost kind of demean law. The problem is that in the NT times, the Law had been misinterpreted, so you have Jesus against the Pharisees, Paul against the

Pharisees, and law kind of has a bad connotation in the pages of the NT. But obviously God gave the Law so the Law itself can't be bad. So we want to understand and interpret what's going on here, and the key to interpreting it is this word "son," that's a name for the nation Israel, Israel is God's son. Now later on it's going to be obvious that the son of God refers to the King of Israel, David, Solomon and so forth, and then later on the Son of God is going to be Jesus Christ. So the term Son of God is a term that begins here, and started out as a reference to the whole nation because there's no king yet, there's no Messiah yet, but this is the nation from which He will come, and that relationship between God and Israel is described in familial terms, God and Israel share a Father-son relationship. This explains the format of God's law at Mt Sinai.

We want to notice something at this point. If this is the Exodus event and this is Mount Sinai, let's see if we can draw some conclusions here, just preliminary. If God saved and created the nation here and over here He told the nation what His will was for them, how He wanted them to behave, then did the law save Israel? No. Israel had already been saved before Sinai. Now watch this. This is how you can learn from the OT. Powerful stuff here, very simple to understand. Which came first? Mount Sinai or the Exodus? God didn't come to Israel inside Egypt and tell them what He wanted them to do. All He told them He wanted them to do in Exodus was get out. That was the message. Get out of the world. I'm going to save you; I'm going to deliver you, out of the world system, out of this kingdom of man, out of Egypt. Now after I do that, *after* I do that, then I'll tell you what I want you to do. So watch the sequence of events because history is a divine pedagogy, so in the Exodus the nation is born, that's the establishment of the Father-son relationship, then they march to Mt Sinai and the Father tells the Son, "This is what I want you to do." But the basis of everything He tells them to do is the fact that they already have this relationship. So we want to understand that the law comes after salvation, after the nation's been born. So how are we going to interpret the law? We want to understand it comes after salvation, after the nation's been created.

I quote Dr. Kaiser, one of our contemporary evangelical OT scholars and he points out that "son" is the technical word that is going to come to mean Jesus as history goes on. He says, "*Eventually, 'My Son' was connected with the coming scion of the house of David (2 Sam. 7:14)... This designation, 'My Son,' became a technical term and an appellation that could be applied either*

*collectively to the nation as the object of God's love and election or specifically to that final representative person who was to come in Christ.*" So right here we have a set up going on, very subtly, very slowly, but here it is. It's taking place and this is the maneuver that's going on that will eventually culminate in the person of Christ, He's the son *par excellence*.

Now we want to look at something else. If you turn to Exodus 22, we want to look at the law, just a little section of the law here. Exod 22:10-13 and if I were to ask you, "What kind of laws are these? How are they laid out? What's the format? What's the structure you see verse after verse?" Let's look at v 10 "If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep *for him*, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, <sup>11</sup>an oath before the Lord shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept *it*, and he shall not make restitution. <sup>12</sup>"But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. <sup>13</sup>"If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces." etc. etc. etc. Obviously this is law code and it's written in an "if- then", just watch the text. If this happens then do this but if that happens do that. That's the way the law code is written. That's the way many laws are written.

In that sense, these sections of the Mosaic Law are identical to modern law codes. And we call this format casuistic law. That means they are cases. When you go to law school one of the things you read a lot is all these cases. Cases related to property taxes, cases related to the environment, case after case after case. So God is giving a set of case law to His people. God says if this happens, then you do this, if that happens, you do that and so forth. So it's casuistic law. There were a lot of law codes that were casuistic in format. Hammurabi's code, the Lipit-Ishtar Lawcode, the Laws of Eshnunna, there are all kinds of ancient documents that had this casuistic format, our laws have this, but we want to observe that God, when He gave the law, didn't exclusively use the casuistic format. As, for example, Exodus 23:1-3, "You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. <sup>2</sup>"You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert *justice*; <sup>3</sup>nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute." Now there's no if- then there, is there? That's also a part of the law and that part of the law we call by another form, personal address. It's not addressing public action, its addressing private thoughts. So

you have these two different forms of law. What's striking is that ancient formal law codes have case law but they don't have personal address. The OT law is unique in that it not only has case law but it also has this personal address. It addresses stuff done in secret, nobody knows about it. What we're getting at is there are commands that could in no way be enforced by the police. What are they going to do, read your mind, read your motives, tape record them? They can enforce the case law but what do you do with this? It just isn't practical to try to enforce this.

We want to think about what does this mean as far as quote, "the law" in the OT. What is this thing called the law? Is it really the same thing as what we call by the word l-a-w, a law code formally passed in a legislature and codified, etc. for the courts? Is it the same? Turn to Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy the law has expanded into all the commandments of Moses. Deut 15 is in the thick of it, v 7. "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother;" Now how are you going to police that, you going to measure the strength of the heartbeat? Do you see what I'm getting at that there's a component to the OT law that goes beyond what you and I would normally think of as Law. Deut 10:16, "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. Get real. Is a policeman going to come along and arrest you because you haven't circumcised your heart? Are you going to have a public trial over the circumcision of your heart? Think about this. What is the law getting at here? How do we explain this? This is a challenging question. That's the question we want to look at because I want to impress upon you how an OT person in Moses' day at Mount Sinai instructed by the priest should have understood what he was listening to and he should have understood it in a different way than the pagan would have understood Hammurabi's law code. This is not a regular law code. Can anybody hazard a guess, because I want to work through this? We'll eventually come to a nice neat way of looking at this, but I want to exercise your thinking a little bit. What is this telling about God's relationship to this nation? He's the ruler; He's laying forth as king His law code. But what do you observe about the law code that is different from a pagan law code? There's a personal relationship between lawgiver and lawkeeper. Remember what we said when we started this whole thing. It's a Father-son relationship and the evidence that there's a personal relationship going on are these things. I mean, you go from a casuistic law to personal exhortation, back to casuistic law, over to personal exhortation.



How do you explain those two mixed together like that? It's because something is happening in the OT law that doesn't happen in normal law. If you can grasp this, you're going to see something very, very powerful about righteousness in the gospel sense of righteousness vs. self-righteousness and quote, "being humanly good." We want to sharpen our understanding of this because it's essential to the gospel if we think we're going to be humanly good, we're going to work up all this righteousness by being good so we don't really need a savior. So there's something here with our whole idea of social good, good behavior and the gospel.

So let's move on to the four parts of the covenant. We've said, the biblical covenants all have four parts, we've seen the New World Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant and now we come to the Mosaic Covenant.

Each of these have four parts. The first is there are **Parties** to the contract. Who are the parties to this contract? God and the nation of Israel. Different than the New World Contract, that was made with God and all flesh, you, your wife, your pagan brother-in-law, your dog, your cat. This is narrowed down, not the same as the New World Contract. Second, each contract is **Signed**. How did God sign the Noahic contract? The rainbow. Every time you see the rainbow, is that just optical phenomena? Is that all it is? Or is there something more? Is that pointing back to his rainbow enshrouded throne? Is that pointing back to the essence of God and His guarantee that He rules nature, therefore, no global flood? It's not going to happen. Can't happen. He controls every molecule by the word in the contract. What was the sign of the Abrahamic Contract? It was something different? Circumcision. What did Jewish circumcision show us? It shows us four things. For one the Jews did it differently than other cultures, others circumcised the kid in his adolescent years. When did the Jews do it? At infancy. Why did they do it so early? To show that the sin nature is there from birth, to show that we're born sinners, we don't become sinners when we commit our first conscious sin, we're born that way. Second, why did this organ need to have surgery, what was wrong with it such that it needed to be modified right from the start? It was the means of sexual propagation and the male sperm was the carrier of the sin of Adam. So we trace that back to him. There are implications for the virgin birth there. Third, what's another implication? If we're fallen flesh from birth then obviously we're not regenerate. So they carried out the ritual but that didn't guarantee regeneration. And finally, it served as an analogy between the physical surgery on the organ and the need for spiritual surgery of the heart.

Now when you come to the Sinaitic Covenant, it's a little more difficult to find the sign. The best thing scholars have come up with here, Exodus 20, when He gave the Ten Commandments there's something very strange in there I wonder if you've ever noticed. There are commandments and sometimes you get a minor comment tacked on but which commandment gets the largest comment? Which one has a big addition tacked right on the end of the commandment? vv 8-11. V 8, the commandment "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy;" there's the commandment and then vv 9, 10 and 11 are this big long explanation where God argues back from creation that I did this work in seven days, I worked six days I rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. Why is He going into all this? Why is He harking back to creation? Because that's when the work week was established. It's interesting, cultures have tried at various times to change the work week. We had a group about a year ago from North Carolina trying to lobby for 3 days of labor and 4 days of rest, it didn't pass, but this kind of thing has been attempted by people trying to make some change to the work week and it never works, they always revert back to seven. So, this is built into the structure of the universe, it's built into who we are and in the Ten Commandments, precisely in the middle vv 9-11 you have a major explanation from the character of God and it says in v. 10, "But the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant," etc. Then v. 11, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them," by the way, this is the divine interpretation of Genesis. People are always arguing about the days of Genesis. Well, I don't think anybody that was at Mt Sinai that heard this had a problem with God creating the world in six days. I mean, here's God speaking in Hebrew from the top of Mt Sinai and He doesn't say six ages, He says six days. Now if I'm sitting there and I'm listening to God say that He made it in six days, "Okay, fine, You did it in six days." I'm not going to sit there and argue with God. He was there, I wasn't and He says six days. Now that is believed to be the sign of the Mosaic Covenant. The keeping of the Sabbath, the seventh day, the keeping of the Sabbath, identifies the God over Israel, the king of Israel, as the Creator of all.

Dr. Meredith Kline again says, "*It is tempting to see in the sabbath sign presented in the midst of the ten words the equivalent of the [ancient lord-kings] dynastic seal found in the midst ... international treaty documents.*" We'll get into international treaties later. The point that Kline is making there is that under certain treaty formats there would be a seal actually embedded, either a

saying or actual picture or seal, and it's at this point where the seal of the Creator is embedded upon the structure of His kingdom. Right in the middle of that structure He puts His mark, "I am the Creator." So the signing of the covenant is the Sabbath rest, the Sabbath day.

Now we come to the third part of every covenant, the fact that every covenant God enters into with fallen man, requires the shedding of blood, a **Founding Sacrifice**. And here, when this covenant is enacted...Exodus 24:4, "Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain..."<sup>5</sup>"And he sent young men ... and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD."<sup>6</sup>And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar.<sup>7</sup>"Then he took the Book of the Covenant and he read it in the hearing of the people," and that's when they swore obedience; [and they said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"] Then v. 8, "So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people". So the covenant is enacted with shed blood; see the consistency. Once you see this consistency, the NT just falls into place. The things in the NT aren't new. Very little of the NT is new. Very little, once you know the old.

Finally, the fourth thing is the **Legal Terms** of the contract, this is the fine print, what nobody reads, and it's here with the Mosaic Contract that we have a significant departure from the previous contracts. In the previous cases God said in effect, "I am sovereignly going to do this, no matter what you do there will be no global flood, no matter what you do I will give you the land, seed and worldwide blessing," you don't read any qualifiers, but in the Mosaic there are qualifiers, "If you do what I saw then I'll bless you but if you disobey what I say then I'll curse you." And so clearly we're in a relationship, a Father-son relationship. This is opening up something that has only been discovered in the last 80 years, scholars have discovered a very, very interesting thing. Back in the days of the old liberals this was not known. Back in the days of the old liberals they thought, well, the Mosaic code is just like code of Hammurabi or something. They're finding out that, lo and behold, in the ancient world you had treaties made between two countries. These treaties were documents that defined a relationship between kings, say Assyria and Egypt, and one of these was the superpower, the other was a lesser power and so the king of the superpower, he was the suzerain king and the king of the lesser power was the vassal king and the great king, the suzerain, he would enter into a treaty with

the lesser king. And obviously what was going on was the lesser king, he usually wanted military protection so the great king would guarantee protection if this lesser nation came under attack. In return the great king required all kinds of goods and services, free passage through the trade routes and so forth. So these treaties were covenants that formed a relationship between the two nations. The covenant was a yardstick of behavior; it outlined how both parties of that covenant ought to behave. Why do we mention this? Because from this point forward we want to stress that the way the Bible speaks of law is not the way society speaks of law, and the pagan mind and the Christian mind are at odds over what law is all about. What's interesting is that these international treaties uniformly had six parts, I've listed those on your handout. And what was discovered in the 1930's was that the same six parts you found in these ancient treaties are found in the Mosaic treaty. And obviously this shocked scholars and they said, "Hey, we better take a closer look at the Law," Because the old liberals said the whole thing was just pieced together by different Jewish sages, but if this structure is embedded in the contract then we're clearly looking at something more than a few fragments thrown together.

Now these six parts you see characterize suzerainty-vassal treaties or those great king vassal-king treaties. Now those in the Ancient Near East apparently, I believe they occurred after, I think the Mosaic is the original one, but some of the scholars say, "Well, God used a format that was pre-established by the nations, He just picked that up." Whatever, there's six parts to those treaties.

So let's look at the first one, Exod 20. This is the **Preamble**. This is where the great king would identify Himself. Verse 2, "I am the Lord your God," I am YHWH you're elohim, so he's identifying Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that's the Preamble.

Second, Exod 20:2-6, this is what we call the **Historical Prologue**. One of the things in the suzerainty vassal treaties was the great king had shown his superiority, he had always done something for the lesser king so the lesser king believed he could be protected by the greater king and he owed him something. When you come to the Ten Commandments what's the first thing you read? Does God just go into "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Or is there a preface? There's something up front. How does He begin? Verse 2, "I am the

Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” What’s God getting at? Hey look what I’ve already done for you, now, logically, shouldn’t you do what I ask. There’s a motive being laid down here and this gets back to the salvation-law question. You don’t read anything back in the Exodus account about “You obey Me, I know I haven’t done anything for you but you better obey Me because I’m the sovereign God.” God didn’t do that. He did something for them in advance. “I brought you out of Egypt, out of slavery, and now do this. And that’s the whole motive for obedience in the Christian life.

Third, the **Stipulations**, this is where the suzerain details the obligations, here’s what I want you to do. These are the Ten Commandments, really they’re the foundation for the rest of the law, every other law is just an extension of one of these basic categories. So the suzerain would outline the behavior he expected of the vassal and that’s what God did with Israel. He told them what He expected.

The fourth part of these suzerainty-vassal treaties was **Dual Copies**, both parties need a copy of the stipulations, it doesn’t do much good to be in a contract but not have a copy of the contract. So both parties needed a copy so they could measure the others behavior. Are they doing what they said? Am I doing what I said? So with Moses, he goes up on the mount and how many tablets does he come down with? Two. Now the way the two tablets are commonly portrayed is you have commandments 1-4 on one tablet and commandments 5-10 on the other. But we don’t think that’s correct. What Moses came down with was two complete copies of the ten commandments, so they were duplicates, one was God’s copy, he was the suzerain and one was Israel’s copy, they were the vassal, they were both kept in the Tabernacle, one was placed *inside* the ark of the covenant, that was God’s copy, the other was placed *beside* the ark, that was Israel’s copy so the high priest could go get the stipulations and read them to the people.

The fifth part and one of the strangest parts is the **Invocation of Witnesses**. Deut 31. Someone’s got to serve as witnesses of the contract. This is legal document and if both parties have responsibilities to fulfill then who’s going to be a witness? Certain parts of the creation serve as the witness. V 16 they’re going to break the covenant so in v 19 God is going to teach Moses a song, the song is in chapter 32, and that song, called the Song of Moses is a prophetic

sketch of Israel's history. This is what is going to happen. This has bothered people because, obviously the Bible couldn't possibly be a supernatural book, so this was written much later, after these events took place, we can't have a God who controls history, we don't like that. But that's in fact exactly what you have. And so this song is going to be a witness. Verse 21, "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness..." So we have this song as the witness, but there's more. V 30, Moses is going to speak the words of the song to Israel and he starts in v 1, what do you notice about v 1? What's strange about that beginning? Who's he talking to when he addresses the "heavens?" Hey Moses, we're not in the heaven's, we're down here, who you talking to? Well, what this is is fascinating, it's a figure of speech, and what he's doing is calling the witnesses, heavens is the habitation of the angels. So the witnesses to this thing are angels. The angels, they don't die so down through the corridors of time they observe Israel's faithfulness to the stipulations. They also observe the church don't they. Turn over to Isa 1:2. They serve this legal function, this is one of the roles of angels that is not well understood, strange things Stephen says in his speech in Acts 7 about the angels being present at Mt Sinai with the giving of the Law. Why were they there? Because they were official witnesses of this treaty.

The reason I want you to look at Isa is how many times have you thought or been taught that the OT prophets were guys who were kind of like social reformers going around and preaching all about social ills, which they did. But what this does for Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and all the prophets is it makes them an Invocation to the Witnesses. Who is Isaiah calling on in verse 2, "Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the Lord speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me." He's invoking the angelic witnesses. What Isaiah is doing is calling upon the witnesses to the treaty and he's enforcing the treaty sections. He's like a prosecuting attorney calling witnesses. So what God is doing through the OT prophets is completely misinterpreted by people who don't look at the OT as a whole. The prophets of the OT are not social preachers.<sup>i</sup> They are prosecuting attorneys of the treaty! The treaty terms are now being applied to the nation and these prophets rise up, they are God's attorneys who are applying His code. They're not just saying this is bad. They're saying you have violated the ordinance of God and you were told back in Moses day that this would happen to you.

Now the sixth part of these treaties was the **Blessings and Cursings**. Two chapters of the OT are dedicated to outlining the blessings and the cursings of Israel. Anyone know what they are? Lev 26 and Deut 28. If you obey here's what I'm going to do for you, but if you disobey then I'm going to curse you. And so the prophets are like God's prosecuting attorney's. And one prophet comes along and says, "Stage one of Leviticus 26 cursings is starting in my day" and then another prophet will come along and say, you people have violated the treaty, now what I'm doing in my ministry is invoking stage two of Leviticus 26 and then another prophet would come along and he'd say I'm invoking stage three. So all these prophets that were raised up by God were actually His voice of prosecution. When you see that, it begins to tie the prophets to the law. Remember those three parts of the OT: the law, the prophets and the writings. What's the relationship of the prophets to the law? The prophets prosecute the nation on the basis of the Law. They are not people who were just raised up because the society was bad. Society was bad but why was society bad? Because the people were violating the Law treaty. So how is society going to get good? A return to the Law treaty. So these men stand in the stream of the enforcers of the treaty. Personally they may not have thought that, but the Spirit of God that was working in them was the actual enforcer who called the men up, Amos, Hosea, called those guys out of their lifestyles, made them do things that were just utterly unheard of in the ancient world. Nobody walked into a king; you didn't walk into Pharaoh and accuse him, like Nathan accused David. You didn't do that. If you did, you'd have your head severed from your body in about three seconds and some of them did.

When that treaty was made, it followed this format. It's a fascinating revelation about this Father-son thing, I hope that comes together for you next week when we get into this Father-son relationship. What is unique about the OT law code that stands over against pagan law code? And what is this deal about it being more like a treaty? So those are the things we're going to aim for and I think out of that we're going to have a really nice new appreciation for what we've got here, what a gift the OT law that is so rarely read, so rarely preached, so rarely understood.

---

<sup>i</sup> Rick Warren, Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Dan Kimball and the lot of Emergent Church leaders seem to interpret the OT prophets as mere social reformers and picture themselves as their modern day counterparts. It's nothing more than theological liberalism.



---

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2008