

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 5 "if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant"

Text Under Consideration: Exodus 20-40

Scriptural & Historical Context:

The Lord "remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" when He delivered Israel out of their slavery in Egypt. Significantly, the Lord instructed Moses that when he brought Israel out of Egypt he was to bring them to the same mountain where the Lord had appeared to him (Exodus 3.12). Moses obeyed the Lord and when Israel arrived at the mountain, He had this message for the people: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 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; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:4–6, ESV)

The focus of this lesson is the covenant the Lord formed with Israel. This covenant was formed almost immediately following the Exodus (circa 1440 B.C.), but would determine the course of Israel's history throughout the remainder of the Old Testament.

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Ten Commandments are given, the preamble to the entire Law (Exodus 20).
- 📖 Israel enters into a covenant relationship with the Lord (Exodus 24).
- 📖 Israel violates the covenant by worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 32).
- 📖 A tabernacle is constructed according to God's specifications. The Lord's presence fills the tabernacle (Exodus 40).

Creation
Genesis 1–2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6–9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12–25 · c. 2000–1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406–1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010–970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605–539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538–432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

The Story

1. Covenants are God's method of _____. A covenant is a binding agreement through which God establishes a relationship with humanity, requiring both parties to fulfill their obligations.
2. The Mosaic covenant was grounded in _____, not _____. A common misunderstanding is that the Sinai covenant was purely about law. In reality, its foundation was God's grace — what He had already done for Israel (deliverance from Egypt) and what He promised to do for them going forward.
3. The heart of God's grace was _____. The greatest blessing of the covenant wasn't physical prosperity but that Israel would be God's people, His holy nation, His priests — symbolized by God's presence dwelling in the tabernacle among them.
4. Obedience to the _____ was Israel's covenant obligation. The Law — including moral, distinctive, and cultic categories — was not about obedience for its own sake, but about Israel reflecting God's holiness: "Be holy, for I am holy."
5. _____ was essential under the Mosaic covenant, not just the New. Israel's failures (like refusing to enter Canaan) were failures of faith. Faith has always been required to please God (Hebrews 11.6).
6. Covenants are _____ with blood. Both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were sealed with animal blood, serving as a serious warning against covenant unfaithfulness.
7. The Mosaic covenant was never intended to be the final means of _____. Its limitations were built in: it applied only to Israel, its sacrifices couldn't truly forgive sin, and the tabernacle's design signified ongoing separation between God and humanity.
8. Israel's consistent covenant-breaking did not _____ God's plan. Despite Israel's faithlessness, God promised a new covenant (Jeremiah 31.31-34) — one written on hearts, available to all, and offering genuine forgiveness of sins.
9. The gospel story is the story of this _____. The entire arc of Scripture points toward how humanity can enter into a true, lasting covenant relationship with God.

For Further Consideration

1. According to Hebrews 8.6, Jesus mediates a better covenant, one based on better promises. How does understanding God's covenant with Israel help us to appreciate the covenant relationship we enjoy through Christ?
2. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He said that the cup "is my blood of the covenant" (Matthew 26.28). How should our understanding of covenant impact our observance of the Supper?