

Study 24: Moses, Part 11 Exodus 23-24

We return now to Exodus 23, where we read last week that God was going to send His “angel” ahead of the Israelites, “to bring you,” God said, “to the place I have prepared.” The Hebrew word *malak* (מַלְאָךְ) means “messenger.”¹ God promised that if the people would listen to what this “messenger” said, He would “be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.” This “angel” would go ahead of them and bring them into the land of Canaan, wiping out its inhabitants. God commanded the people to “break their sacred stones,” cautioning them not to worship the Canaanite “gods.” In v 25, He said: Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, 26 and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

27 “I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. 28 I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. 29 But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

31 “I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines [*Mediterranean Sea*] and from the desert to the Euphrates River [Dispensationalists assume that this has never been fulfilled, but the Word of God says it has: Josh 21:43-45²; 1 Kings 4:21³; 1 Kings 8:56⁴; Nehemiah 9:7-8⁵. Of course, the promised land was only a type, a foreshadowing of what was given to Christ (the Seed of Abraham: Gal 3:16⁶) – the *world* (Rom 4:13⁷), not just Palestine]. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. 32 Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. 33 Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.”

Ex 24 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu [Aaron’s sons], and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, 2 but Moses alone is to approach the Lord; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him.”

3 When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, “Everything the Lord has said we will do.” 4 Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said. [Gal 3:18-26 says that the inheritance promised to Abraham was not to be obtained through following the Law. In v 19, Paul asks, “Why, then, was the law given at all?” The NIV says, “It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.” The J. B. Phillips New Testament puts it this way: “It was an addition made to underline the existence and extent of sin until the arrival of the ‘seed’ to whom the promise referred.” Paul continues in v 22: But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. 23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our **guardian** [KJV **schoolmaster**; Greek: *παιδαγωγός*, from

¹ Vowels are assumed based on tradition. Sometime around AD 600, a group of scribes in Tiberias called the Masoretes (*mesora* means “tradition”) began developing a system of vowel marks (called *nequdot*) to indicate how the text was traditionally read. Since they didn’t want to alter the consonantal text, they placed these markings under, to the left, and above the Hebrew letters. Beside these vowel marks, the scribes also added “cantillation” marks (in Hebrew, *ta’amim*) to indicate how the text was to be chanted or sung. (Adapted from the *Hebrew for Christians* website, Introduction to Hebrew Vowels page:

http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_Two/Introduction/introduction.html).

² **Joshua 21:43-45** – So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. 44 The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. 45 Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

³ **1 Kings 4:21** – And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life.

⁴ **1 Kings 8:56** – [Solomon said,] “Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”

⁵ **Nehemiah 9:7-8** – [The Levites said,] “You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. 8 You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Gergashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.”

⁶ **Galatians 3:16** – The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

⁷ **Romans 4:13** – It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of **the world**, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

which we get the word *pedagogue*, meaning “teacher”] until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Now, back to Exodus 24:4:]

He [Moses] got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent young Israelite men, and **they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord.** [Here is the “kingdom of priests”] 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. 7 Then he took the **Book of the Covenant** and read it to the people. [The “Book of the Covenant” is usually taken to refer to Ex 19 through Ex 23. The later Rabbis came up with 613 as the number of laws in the Torah]. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”

8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

[So, what is going on here? According to Scripture, God was involved in *another* creation! Look at **Isa 51**:

1 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the Rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; 2 look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many.

....

10 Was it not you who **dried up the sea**, the waters of the great deep, who made a **road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?**

....

15 For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord Almighty is his name. 16 I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand—I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, ‘You are my people.’” The NIV’s handling of verses 15 and 16 is very bad. The text literally says, “For I am the Lord your God, who **splits apart the sea**, whose waves roar, the Lord of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in your mouth, and I have **covered you in the shadow of My hand, so that I may plant the heavens** and lay the foundations of the **earth**, and say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’” Oftentimes in Scripture, when we see the terms “heaven and earth,” they refer to the physical creation. However, there are times, such as here in Isaiah, where they are used to refer to the *covenantal* order. So, when we come across these words, we’ve got to ask ourselves, “Is this talking about the physical creation or the covenantal creation? An example that’s come up before in our discussion time is Matt 5:18 – “...**until** heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law **until** everything is accomplished.” How do we know whether or not to take this as the physical heavens and earth? We might kind of “work backwards” to determine how to take it. We know that all the Law has been fulfilled. We also know that it is no longer possible to practice the Law, and the Mosaic covenant has passed away since the temple has been destroyed. Therefore, all the “jots & tittles” of the Law have passed away, and *therefore*, the “heaven & earth” spoken of by Jesus, must refer to the covenantal order, not the physical creation! How about Matt 24:35: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”?]

[When God made His covenant with Israel, that nation was to be a microcosmic representation of all creation! The tabernacle (and later, the temple) that was to be built in her midst was to represent heaven, while the land represented the earth.]

9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. [Most versions other than the NIV use the word, “sapphire” here. In Ex 28, it is one of the stones included in the breastplate of the High Priest, and Rev 21:19 says sapphire is one of the foundations of the walls of the New Jerusalem.] 11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the **tablets of stone** with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.” [God wrote His Law on 2 tablets of stone. Why two? Each tablet contained a complete copy of the Law. This was the custom of the time. When a covenant was made, the suzerain (king) would create one copy for himself, and one for the people with whom he was making his covenant. He would then keep one copy in his palace (or record house), and the people would keep their copy. That way, if there was

ever a dispute, the copies could be consulted. Note that these 2 tablets / copies of the Law were to act as *witnesses* against the people (Deut 31:26 – “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you”). Where else do we see “two witnesses” spoken of in Scripture? Rev 11.]

[From this statement (“the law and commandments”), the later Rabbis inferred that the “law” was the *written* law, while the “commandments” referred to their interpretation. This became known as the “Oral Torah” (Law), the *unwritten* portion, which, according to tradition, Moses taught to the 70 elders (judges) of Israel, and to Joshua, Eleazar (Aaron’s son), and Phinehas (Eleazar’s son). This was much later written down in what is called the Mishnah. This was a collection of “all the explanations and interpretations that had been heard from [Moses]...or had been deduced by the courts of all the generations in all matters of the Torah.”⁸ When Jesus condemned the Pharisees for holding the “traditions of men” in higher regard than the Word of God (Mark 7:8), this is what He was talking about. Also called “the traditions of the Elders” (Matt 15:2)].

13 Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. 14 He said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur [the son of Caleb and grandfather of Bezalel (primary artisan in the building of the Tabernacle)] are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.”

15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, 16 and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. 17 To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a **consuming fire** [Heb 12:29 “Our God is a consuming fire”] on top of the mountain. 18 Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain **forty days and forty nights**.

Discussion / Prayer requests

Last week, during our discussion time, a question came up regarding Chuck Missler, and I just wanted to clarify a couple of things. I cannot (and do not) claim to have listened to but a tiny part of the *massive* amount of material he has produced. The sheer volume of it is quite daunting! However, in what I *have* heard from him, I appreciate, for the most part, his scholarship and what appears to be a sincere desire to expound the Word of God in a true manner. However, I have also been disturbed by some positions he has taken, and some of the terminology he uses. For instance:

1. Using the term “Israelis” when referring to the Israelites of the Bible. This isn’t merely annoying. It shows that he *assumes* that the people currently living in the present-day Middle Eastern nation called “Israel” are the *same* people that were living there in Biblical times. That is akin to assuming that a family named Smith living a house in which Smiths have lived for hundreds of years, is related to the original Smiths. To *assume* that it’s the same family simply because they happen to have the same *name*, and because they occupy the same *place* would be presumptuous and foolish.

It is true that there is a country today called “Israel,” and that the people who occupy this land claim to be the same as in Biblical times. But, this in no way guarantees that they are related in any way to the Biblical Israelites, or their being descendants of Abraham. For a very interesting study regarding who these people really are, read a book called, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, by Arthur Koestler (his name is spelt with a “K” and it looks like “Ko-est-ler”). One of his conclusions, after much thorough research, is that the Eastern European Jews are actually an Arian people, *not* Semitic. The *Jewish Encyclopedia*⁹ says, “Khazars, a non-Semitic, Asiatic, Mongolian tribal nation who emigrated into Eastern Europe about the first century, who were converted as an entire nation to Judaism in the seventh century by the expanding Russian nation which absorbed the entire Khazar population, and who account for the presence in Eastern Europe of the great numbers of Yiddish-speaking Jews in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Galatia, Bessarabia and Rumania.” Makes the term “anti-Semitic” non-applicable, and it makes Hitler look like a fool for trying to exterminate his own “master race”!

2. His harping on the “land promise” given to Abraham in Gen 15. In his interpretation of this promise, he always applies it to “the Jews” (of today), whom he assumes are the “seed” referred to in the text. Not once have I heard him refer to the inspired interpretation of this passage given by Paul in the book of Galatians!

3. He calls the view that the Church is Israel, and Israel is the Church “replacement theology,” a favorite buzzword among Dispensationalists, and he always says it’s “heresy.” It is a misrepresentation to call this view “replacement theology,” since the

⁸ <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/p0000.htm> (v 14).

⁹ I was unable to find this reference in the 1906 edition.

Church does not *replace* Israel. Israel is, and always has been the Church! When Gentiles became Christians, they were “grafted in” to the “olive tree” of Israel (Rom 11). One does not replace the other. They are one and the same!

4. He calls Reformed Theology¹⁰ heresy. This is truly reprehensible. Calling fellow Christians *heretics* is not just *unkind*, it is *untrue*, and Mr. Missler should be ashamed to slander his brothers and sisters in Christ so blatantly.

5. As far as his prophetic teachings go (such as his insistence on a 3rd temple being built), I can’t agree with any of it. His interpretations are highly speculative, even if highly *imaginative*, but fail to take the **time statements** of Scripture seriously. The idea of another temple being built also deprecates the work of Christ. Any attempt to reinstitute a temple system (with or without sacrifices) would be an abomination to God, since He has sent His Son to be the “be-all-and-end-all” of sacrifices.

So, now that I’ve got that off my chest, let’s discuss.

¹⁰ Broadly speaking, Reformed theology includes any system of belief that traces its roots back to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, as opposed to more recent inventions such as Dispensationalism, which came into being when it was created by John Nelson Darby in the 1830s.