

# Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 6, The Mosaic Covenant, Part 1

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This is Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus in his teaching on Biblical Theology. This is session 6, The Mosaic Covenant, Part 1.

We move on from the Abrahamic covenant, which as we said, anticipated the Mosaic in certain ways, and in particular, with regard to the conquest, and we turn now to the Mosaic Covenant.

It's important before we discuss the details of that covenant to talk about the purpose of it. That purpose is really made clearest in the New Testament, and that clarification begins with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. So, in that sermon, he makes it clear that the law has to be understood more deeply than it has been.

So, in that sermon, he addresses two aspects or two parts of the law, or put another way, two types of laws that the Lord gave in the Mosaic Covenant. The apodictic law, which is thou shalt not, and the casuistic law, which is if a man wants to divorce his wife, he gives her a bill of divorce, and so on. We know very well what Jesus says here.

You know, for instance, that murder, if you're even angry with your brother, you have to give account for it. Adultery: if you even lust after a woman in your heart, you're guilty of it, even if you never commit it physically. There is thinking abroad that Jesus here is actually addressing the way the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were interpreting the law and making it stricter than it really was.

But there's absolutely nothing in the Sermon on the Mount that would tell us that. And I think it's looking to the context to interpret the passage, that is, the historical-cultural context, to interpret the passage in a way that the passage itself doesn't give us warrant to do. Jesus makes what he's talking about clear.

The people of old were told. Well, who were those? That was through Moses. He's basically saying, this is what Moses told you, but I'm telling you it goes deeper than that.

So, in doing that, of course, Jesus actually is suggesting that he is an authority equal to and higher than Moses because he's telling you more now than Moses told you. And indeed, that's indicated ultimately by his claim that he has come to fulfill the law and the prophets. And as we will suggest, Jesus does that in three ways.

He fulfills the law by obeying it perfectly. He fulfills the law by accomplishing all that it had to do, that it gave for him. And he fulfills the law by himself, becoming the new covenant, which is prophesied by it.

He also fulfills all the sacrificial requirements of the law. So, he fulfills the law in every possible way. And by now, Israel must know that they cannot fulfill the law.

And that points to the pedagogical purpose of the law. It may be hard for us to accept, but the point is here that the Lord gave them a law, which was fine as far as it went. But as Hebrews 8 points out, there was something wrong with it.

Well, what was wrong with it? Well, as we'll see, what was wrong with it was that it gave them the standards but not the power to live up to the standards. They lacked the Holy Spirit, which comes through the new covenant. And so the law was given to them as a standard they couldn't live up to.

They had to learn that they couldn't live up to it. And they learned a very hard lesson because what did it mean? It meant the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, which went into exile due to the terrible conquest that Babylon wrought on them. And so, we might look at that and say, well, that's a pretty hard school to put people to, to go through all that just to realize they couldn't live up to this standard.

But this is one of many areas, I think, where we have to trust the justice of God. As Abraham says in Genesis 18, will not the judge of all the earth do what's right? He'll do what's right. We might not see it now, but when we're with him, I think we'll be agreeing with him that he was right to do this.

But so the Lord gave the law partly, not only to constitute a people and bless them in many ways but as a pedagogue. Paul makes this point in Galatians 3, where he asks what the purpose of the law was then. And it was added because of transgressions. And we'll talk about that until the seed to whom the promise referred, and we know that's the Abrahamic promise, had come.

The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. Let's drop down to verse 21 here. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not.

For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin so that what was promised being given through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

So, the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we're no longer under the supervision of the law. That last statement is one of several that Paul makes that make it very clear that the Mosaic Covenant no longer functions as a covenant.

And that's important to understand, too. The Mosaic Covenant was given to constitute a certain form of the kingdom, the Old Testament, the nation-state of Israel, as it developed. And it was sort of the constitution for that kingdom if you will.

It had types of laws that no longer apply in the church. So, it had a whole priestly body of legislation, which we know is done away with. And we now have our great high priest Christ instead of that Levitical priesthood.

And by analogy to Christ, we ourselves are made a kingdom of priests, but we don't have a Levitical priesthood. If you and I sin, we don't take a bull to the priest, to the temple, and so on. The social legislation was made for an agrarian state and for as long as it existed.

Those laws we don't have now. No place in the world has them. The church doesn't have them.

The Mosaic Covenant, as we looked at when we talked about the Noahic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant entails a death penalty for certain things. The form of the kingdom is now the church. The church doesn't have a death penalty.

That's not part of our prerogative. That's not to do with the form of the kingdom that now exists. So, social legislation and priestly legislation no longer apply.

The things that still matter are what you might call the moral legislation. And one thinks, of course, of the Ten Commandments. And those things are always true.

And you should always worship only the Lord. You should never commit adultery. You should never bear false witness, and so on.

And those are things that are taken up in the New Covenant. And by the power of the Spirit, we have the ability to fulfill them. But the Mosaic Covenant itself, as a functioning covenant, no longer functions.

In Colossians 2, Paul makes this very clear. He says he canceled this law. He canceled this legal bill that stood against us and nailed it to the cross.

Paul in Romans 6 makes the same point. He says sin doesn't have to be your master because you're not under the law but under grace. And we'll talk more about that dynamic, which is a huge difference between the Old Covenant and the New.

But we use the term pedagogue, and that's the term in the Greek that actually shows up here. The law was a paidagogos, a child driver, literally, was given to lead us to Christ. It led us to Christ.

It was meant to lead us to Christ by helping us to realize that we couldn't fulfill the law ourselves, which is, again, the purpose or the point of the Sermon on the Mount. So, the law had a pedagogical purpose. The law also fulfilled Abraham's promises.

That is to say, the Mosaic Covenant also fulfilled the promises to Abraham at a certain level for some of the things. So, there's the promise of seed. And in Genesis 15, now let's remember, you know, that in Genesis 12, before the Abrahamic Covenant, the Lord promised that through Abraham's seed, all the nations, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

That promise is taken up and repeated in the body of the Abrahamic Covenant narrative material in Genesis 22, where the Lord repeats it. And so, it was a promise before the covenant was cut. It's reaffirmed after the covenant exists as part of the deal.

So, the promise of the seed through whom everyone is going to be blessed is one of the promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant. And we know that that's fulfilled by Christ. And Paul makes this very clear in Galatians.

So, there's that. But on an earlier level, just on the historical plane with Israel, the promise of many offspring is fulfilled, too. Abraham is told by the Lord to count the stars.

If indeed you can count them, so shall your offspring be. Moses can say in Deuteronomy on the plains of Moab, before they're going to go over and conquer the land, the Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars in the sky. So, there's one level of fulfillment of that Abrahamic promise of many descendants.

And it happens just numerically, biologically with all the people of Israel who have descended from Abraham. There's also the promise implicitly, as we noted in the Abrahamic Covenant, of judgment on Egypt. Your descendants will be strangers in a country, not their own.

They'll be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years, but I'll punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward, you'll come out with great possessions. And that's the promise in the Abrahamic Covenant. And then, of course, that gets fulfilled when the Lord hears their groaning in Egypt and remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

One covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because they're all in the same covenant. And incidentally, that term was remembered, and that's important to understand. It's not as though the Lord's attention happened to be on the Andromeda Galaxy, and something was going on there, but then he suddenly remembered.

The term means to remember, but it's used with the sense that he now turns his attention to something. He never forgot it, but he's actively engaging it now. And in Exodus 6, we read, I've heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are enslaving.

I remember my covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs. So therefore, say to the Israelites, he instructs Moses, this is on Sinai, I'm the Lord. I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

I will free you from being slaves, exactly what he promised to Abraham. I'll redeem you with an outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgment, just what he promised. Take you as my own people by the Mosaic Covenant, which they will enter together and so on.

So that promise also gets fulfilled. And there's a promise of the land. The Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would come back and inherit the land.

And in Exodus 6, the Lord tells Moses, I'm now setting this in motion. I'll bring you to the land I swore with an uplifted hand to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I'll give it to you as a possession, and I'm the Lord.

So, we've looked at the purpose of the law, the ultimate, the most important purpose, the pedagogical purpose to lead people to Christ and show them their need for Christ. And we've talked about how the law of the Mosaic Law Covenant is fulfilling Abrahamic promises. Let's now look at the prophet himself.

You may recall we've talked about two types of prophets: covenant mediator prophets and covenant lawsuit prophets. The covenant mediator prophets are those through whom the Lord imparted a covenant to people under and after him. We've argued that Adam is the first of these.

Noah is next for the common grace covenants under which everybody still lives. And then there's Abraham. When the Lord knew the time was right, and the person was right, whom he had formed for this and chosen for it, he chose Abraham.

He called him away from his homeland, and he made this covenant with him, which was the first special grace covenant. And that covenant, as we were talking here, has

foreshadowed the Mosaic Covenant. And since there's a Mosaic Covenant, there's a covenant mediator for the covenant, and that's Moses.

And so, Moses is the mediator. And it's worth looking at. I think it's interesting to look at Moses' prophetic call.

First of all, there's the divine initiation with the theophany. And it's important to understand that these encounters are always initiated by the Lord. It's the Lord who decides to show up and do something with someone.

And then he has a commission to rescue Egypt out of Canaan. Well, what is Moses' response? It's important to remember that as great as Moses was as a mediator and as the lawgiver, as he was sometimes called, he was a man. And he had his own doubts and trepidations.

And so, he starts objecting. Basically, he makes all these objections. Who am I? Who am I to do this? And then he asks, well, who are you? Who shall I tell them if you send me? Who shall I say sent me? And the Lord answers these questions.

Then what if they don't believe? And so, the Lord gives him signs that he can perform so they will believe. And then he says, well, I'm not an eloquent man. And then so the Lord addresses that too.

He says Aaron will help you out. And finally, the truth comes out. Moses says, look, just send someone else.

Basically, I don't want to do this. And the Lord is not too pleased with that. But he still uses Moses.

Moses does obey. And this prophetic reluctance, though, is a good thing to note. Later on, we can note it with regard to Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Both of them show reluctance to take on the prophetic role the Lord calls. Moses, the covenant mediator prophet. Isaiah and Jeremiah were the covenant lawsuit prophets under the Mosaic covenant, but they still had the same sort of response.

I think that's very wholesome to consider because people sometimes feel ambitious for a certain kind of work for the Lord. It's very good to have the sort of even self-doubt, humility, and recognition that without, as Jesus says, without me, you can do nothing. Recognition that, hey, there's no way I can do this.

But the Lord, if he calls us to do it, he'll see to it. And he's able to enable us to do it. Any work he's called us to.

But that reluctance, in a sense, there's something good about it. Well, anyway, the prophet is to give the Lord's Torah, his instruction, and he's going to wage warfare by signs and wonders. And in fact, Exodus 7:3 is the first time that phrase shows up, signs and wonders what the Lord's going to do against Egypt.

And that is an interesting combination of terms and an interesting combination of ideas. Signs and wonders occur first in Exodus. Those are going to occur as an act of judgment or as acts of judgment, but they're also acts of salvation.

And just thinking ahead to the new covenant, you know, Jesus does signs and wonders. And if we look at the signs and wonders that Moses did and the signs and wonders that Jesus did, at first glance, they look very different. Moses signs and wonders what Pharaoh's courtiers say to him? Don't you know that Egypt is destroyed? They are destructive.

Whereas Jesus signs and wonders, of course, he heals. He sets people free from evil spirits. So, there's quite a difference, apparently, but fundamentally, they're the same.

And here's the deal. In both cases, the Lord is destroying something evil or the result of evil, even sickness. It's not that you're sick because you sinned, but you're sick because, like all of us, we live in a fallen, sinful condition in a world in which one can get sick.

And so when Jesus heals, he's dealing with, he's undoing the consequences of that sinful environment, that sinful reality. And so, and he's setting the person free from the sickness, or certainly if it's an evil spirit, he's setting the person free from that. And so that's very much like what the Lord does through Moses.

He's destroying, wearing down, beating down an evil power, namely Pharaoh and his intentions and his forces, and he's using that destruction to set his people free. So, there are always two sides of the coin, I think, when there are signs and wonders, or just about certainly where there's healing or deliverance involved. There's the destruction of evil so that his people or his person can be set free.

But that's an important part of the ministry of Moses. And this judgment on Egypt, it is warfare, and how's the Lord going to bring it about? Well, he says, I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I'll lay my hand on Egypt, and with mighty acts of judgment, I'll bring out my divisions, my people, the Israelites.

The hardening of the heart is important. I've written about this in volume two quite a bit, but it's important to note there's a sequence of things here. And you find the

Lord saying he'll harden their hearts, but repeatedly, then you read that Pharaoh hardened his heart, and even his army, his followers hardened their hearts.

And then, finally, the Lord hardens their hearts. So, there's a dynamic here, and it's a mystery because if you read Romans 9, Paul makes it clear that for this reason, I raised you up, Pharaoh. And the Lord makes some vessels for honor and some for dishonor.

Therefore, the Pharaoh is a vessel made for dishonor. So somehow, the Lord made Pharaoh to be what he was, and yet somehow, Pharaoh also is accountable. And that's a mystery we can't solve in this life, I think.

When we're with the Lord, we'll understand it. But there is a dynamic here anyway, that Pharaoh is resisting the Lord, and the Lord confirms him in it. And that's, I think, if one were ever preaching on this, that would be a good thing to note.

It's a sermon on this that helped bring me to the Lord, the realization that a person can continue to say no to God, and God can confirm the person in that. So that's not a road that we want to go down, but it's an interesting dynamic. The judgment here is not only on a nation or a ruler but on the gods of Egypt.

And, of course, Pharaoh himself, according to Egyptian thinking, was the incarnation of the sun god. Very Christological, in fact. So the sun god, of course, was the chief god of Egypt, and there were other gods too.

But the Lord makes it clear here on the night of the Passover, on that same night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn, both men and animals, and I'll bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I'm the Lord. Well, all the plagues culminate in this one, but it's worth noting, and we'll have a chart here in a moment of the different gods but it's worth noting that the last two, the plague of darkness and the judgment on the firstborn, the plague of darkness blots out the sun, and the sun was the chief god of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was supposed to be the incarnation of the sun. And Pharaoh's son, his firstborn son, was supposed to be the next incarnation of the sun god. So, when the Lord strikes down the firstborn of everybody, and the point is made in the warning here that it'll be the firstborn of everyone from the, or when it happens it's fulfilled, the point is made that it was the firstborn of everyone from the person in prison to Pharaoh's household.

Well, the Lord then, with the plague of darkness, judged the sun god in heaven and showed he was superior. And with the plague on the firstborn, he judged the supposed incarnation of the sun god on earth, the firstborn of Pharaoh, showing he was superior there too. So, this is a judgment, a wholesale judgment on those gods.



Pharaoh was thought to be the son of Re or Ra, the sun god. Ramses II has some interesting claims in his inscriptional record. And here's one that is supposedly put in the mouths of his court, testifying to his miracles, just as an example.

You are like the sun god, Re, in all that you do. That which your heart wishes comes to pass. If you desire something at night, in the morning, it quickly comes to pass.

We've seen a multitude of your miracles. We have not heard nor have our eyes seen, yet they come to pass. If you say to the water, come upon the mountain, the flood comes forth quickly after your word.

For you are, excuse me, you are Re in your limbs. In other words, you are the sun god, Re, Ra incarnate. So, this is remarkably Christological.

And one might wonder, how in the world did Egyptians ever think of this stuff? Because this really is later than what Jesus does in effect. And without getting into it too much, I will just mention the Bible because the Bible is mostly about God's kingdom. It's not about the enemy's kingdom.

But the Bible does tell us in a few places that there are evil powers, supernatural powers behind idolatry, false religion, and even false theology, or can be. So, in Deuteronomy 32:16 and following, the Lord foretells that when they get over in the promised land, they're going to forget where their blessings came from, namely the Lord, and they're going to offer sacrifices to demons, gods they had not known. In 1 Corinthians 10:20, Paul makes the point that the pagans offer their sacrifices to demons.

And even in 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul warns the church against the doctrine of demons in the church. So demonic influence can be there where there is idolatry or false religion. And that's worth thinking about in terms, perhaps, of many religions that there are now in the world.

But the point here is, how could the Egyptians come up with this? Well, we don't know how much the enemy knew about God and what he was going to do. We think we can say for sure that the enemy knew whatever God let him know. But this kind of thing suggests to me that the enemy knew that God was a miracle worker.

He may even have known something about the forecast or understood the forecast of the Messiah more fully. He certainly knew what God said to Eve in Genesis 3.15. And so, we don't know, but it's a mystery. We'll know it when we're with the Lord, but it's interesting to think about.

But anyway, Pharaoh was seen as the incarnation of the sun god and as a miracle worker. But of course, that was all false. We have a number of judgments on the gods of Egypt here.

So, each one of these plagues, as this chart indicates, has to do with some deity of Egypt. And as we said, they culminate in the plagues of darkness and the death of the firstborn, both of which strike directly at the sun god. Well, God's judgment on Egypt, of course, and her gods means salvation for Israel.

And his warfare against Egypt and her gods means salvation for Israel. We made this point when we talked about the Noahic covenant. But whenever the Lord is bringing a judgment, he is in effect waging war against the object of the judgment because the object of the judgment is opposed to him.

And so it is warfare. The Red Sea Crossing or the Reed Sea Crossing, which is really a better translation since it's Yam Suph, is a judgment, and it could be called a water judgment ordeal. There was this thinking in the ancient world that water could be used as a judgment instrument.

And in the Ugaritic inscriptions, for instance, you have the idea that one of the epithets of the sea god was also Judge River. And that epithet was there because, shall we say, two people had some legal disagreement about property or something. They might be thrown in the river, and they'd have to fight it out.

And the one who survived, the conclusion would be, well, the river judged that person to be in the right. So, water is a judgment instrument. I think in pagan thinking, this actually goes back to the flood.

But water then becomes associated with judgment and death in the ancient Near East. And there's an ancient Near Eastern background to the death aspect too, or the hostility aspect. In Babylon, the sea dragon goddess Tiamat decides with her host of demon subordinates that she's going to overthrow the divine order and bring chaos and her own rule.

Marduk offers to fight her on behalf of the gods. He does. He kills her.

And out of her carcass, he makes the world. And then he makes the city Babylon and the temple for himself. So, this pattern is present in the ancient world of conflict between the god of the sky and the god of the sea, and then there is a temple building.

And so, you have the sea characterized as a chaotic entity, a force of death. And I think this goes back to the flood, too, because the flood brought death. Egypt is sometimes characterized as Rahab.

This is not the same Rahab as you read about in Joshua 2. That is to say, it's a completely different word. The Hebrew root for this Rahab means to act stormily or contentiously or chaotically. The Rahab in Joshua 2 means something different.

So, the Rahab in Joshua 2 actually means to spread wide. So here you've got a prostitute with this name. And I'm not quite sure how that came about.

But anyway, they're two different words. But not much is known about Rahab. But she seems to have been a monster like Tiamat, who brought chaos and disorder.

It's very interesting that even as late as Revelation 17:15, you have the forces, the peoples, the language groups, the forces opposed to God characterized as the many waters or the mighty waters, as the many waters in Greek. But so, this symbolism goes all the way through the Bible. Well, so what? When the Lord leads Israel through the Red Sea or the Reed Sea, there are some scholars who think, well, this is really just a story.

It's a play on this motif that God has power over the waters. He's victorious over the waters and so on. It's worth remembering that the Lord in Exodus 14 and 15 has no warfare with the waters.

He just divides them. That's all. There's never any contest.

And that's important to understand. So, this does not draw on ancient Near Eastern mythology. It's just showing that the Lord is the creator of heaven and earth.

He can divide the waters if he wants to. The Lord's warfare is against Egypt, which is characterized as a sea monster, just poetically later in the Psalms and in Isaiah. So, there's an important distinction there.

Well, you have a prophet, you have Moses as a prophet, and you have this warfare. And, but then there's another prophet who is promised, prophesied in Deuteronomy, which is the document that renews the Sinai covenant. And again, that's important to understand.

I think we've mentioned this before, but I'll repeat it because it probably won't hurt to be repeated. The Lord cut a covenant with Israel in Sinai. Remember that under that covenant, the people were supposed to go over and conquer the promised land.

But when we come to Numbers 13 and 14, we read that Moses very prudently, it would seem, sent spies to check out the land. And they brought back fruit, which made things look very promising. But they also brought back a report that while

there are giants there, and they have these, the cities have walls that reach to heaven.

How can we possibly do this? And, of course, the answer is that they couldn't do it, but with the Lord, they could do it. The Lord could do it. And later he does, because at the end of Joshua 10, you read that Joshua and Israel conquered all these people because the Lord fought for Israel.

But Israel balked at this report of the spies. And the Lord's rebuke in Numbers 14 is that, well, you didn't believe me. You didn't believe I could do this.

So, you're going to wander in the wilderness, and your children are going to conquer the land. And so that's what happens. Well, let's think back a moment to the idea.

We discussed this with regard to the Adamic and Noahic covenants, a covenant, and its renewal. And this follows a pattern that we saw with the Hittites. The Hittite emperor, Suzerain, has a vassal.

The vassal dies. The vassal's son ascends the throne. The emperor, the Hittite king, renews the treaty with the son and renews with the son the treaty he'd had with the father.

And the way the Hittites said this was, the deal that your father had with me, you now have with me. So, there were treaties, there were renewal treaties. And that's what Deuteronomy is.

The Lord on the plains of Moab, Deuteronomy 1, is renewing with Israel the treaty that he had with them, that he had made with them at Sinai, or the covenant he'd made with them. Deuteronomy 29.1, that's what it means. This is the covenant that I made, you know, in addition to the one that I made at Horeb.

And so, we have a renewal covenant here in Deuteronomy. Later in that covenant, in Deuteronomy 18, we have the promise of another prophet like Moses. And so, we've said before, there's a difference between a covenant and a promise.

A covenant can contain a promise, but a promise is not a covenant. And so that was true with regard to the promise of the seed in Genesis 12 and 22. And it's true with regard to this promise, too.

The Lord promises a prophet like Moses in Deuteronomy 18. The reason he gave for it was that Israel was afraid. At Horeb, they were afraid, and the Lord approves of that.

So, they were right to be afraid. They say to Moses, Moses, we can't stand in the presence of this holy fire. You go up and talk with the Lord.

And the Lord thinks that's right. They've seen how things really are. And so, I am holy, and they are not.

And so, the Lord makes his covenant nonetheless. He deals with Moses for them. But then he promises this new prophet.

And the reason is given in Deuteronomy. Look how they were afraid at Sinai. So I'm going to raise up another prophet like you.

Now, let's be clear about this. For a prophet to be like Moses, the prophet can't simply be someone who hears from the Lord. Any prophet does that.

Isaiah did that. Micaiah did that. Even doing a miracle is not enough.

Elijah and Elisha did miracles. And they resemble Christ to that extent. But to be truly a prophet like Moses, you'd have to be a mediator of a covenant.

And David's a mediator of a covenant, right? He mediates the Davidic covenant. But even that isn't enough because he's a mediator of a covenant for the royal line. But to be a prophet like Moses, you have to mediate a covenant, a covenant with a new Torah, a new deal for all the people of God.

And that, of course, the only one who does that is Christ. And that's why Peter in Acts 3 takes up this prophecy and says this is fulfilled in Christ. Well, having said that, this prophetic passage in Deuteronomy 18 does address the issue that Israel has been under prophetic leadership with Moses now for, say, 40 years.

There will arise a need for further communication from God. And the question is, how will this happen? Well, this is now addressed in its fullest form in Deuteronomy. Remember that Deuteronomy now being the renewal covenant, the Lord is preparing this new generation that has grown up to enter into the promised land.

And so, they're going to need some things, information from the Lord, instruction from the Lord. And that's why, for one thing, Deuteronomy has so much polemic against idolatry because they are going over into an idolatrous context. And they're going to need that.

They need to hear that again. When you get over there, Deuteronomy 12, you don't do the way they do. You destroy all their idolatrous apparatus.

You only worship me in the place that I decide. There's a lot of that sort of thing. But there's also this.

Deuteronomy 13 and this passage also talk about, among other things, when a prophet comes, yes, I will provide prophets for you. But when a prophet comes, how will you know it's really a prophet from the Lord? But this prophecy, this passage here, most fully addresses the issues involved. So, the first part of this passage makes it clear what is proscribed and what is not to be done.

When you come into the land which Yahweh, your God, is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or daughter as an offering. Of course, they end up doing this anyway, as Jeremiah later rebukes them.

Anyone who practices divination is a soothsayer, an augur, a sorcerer, a charmer, a medium, a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh, and because of these abominable practices, Yahweh, your God, is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before Yahweh your God.

For these nations which you are about to dispossess, give heed to soothsayers and diviners, but as for you, Yahweh, your God has not allowed you to do so. Important things to understand here. Why would anyone want to do these things? Why would one want to consult such sources of revelation? I think the point is this.

After the fall, human beings are in a state of insecurity. We are fundamentally insecure. People throughout history, in our own day, we ourselves can be tempted to address that insecurity by getting power, by getting wealth, whatever.

But in the ancient world, they very much believed that they could get revelation from some heavenly source. They didn't know what. And that's what these things are.

And that's what the Lord is saying: you don't do that. You'll get it from me. There's a little more to this, too, though, because the term that is translated medium in this passage, it's a Hebrew term, it's *ov*, and it seems to come from a root that means to return. So, they see, and in a few places it's used in the Bible, it's clear that they had in the ancient world, just as people have had and have all over the world today, they have an idea of a ghost, the spirit of a departed person who has returned.

And a medium is somebody who supposedly is in touch with one of these spirits. And the spirit, being at a higher plane, can now give you advice, can tell you things, and so on. And so, I think this still applies today.

This is for real. If you go to a, please don't go to a medium, but if you were to go to one, I went to one before I knew the Lord. And in my case, the woman just was,

these are always women, I don't know why, even the Witch of Endor, I don't know why that is.

But anyway, she, I realized even at the time, she could read people well. She knew she figured out what I wanted to hear, so she said it. And, of course, most of it didn't come true.

But that's one thing. But let's say you go to a medium or to a seance, and the medium says that they're in touch with, they're hearing from your Uncle Joe, who's died. And you start hearing things, and you're hearing things that Uncle Joe knew, and that you knew, but nobody else knew.

You think, well, this is a real deal. I'm really hearing from Uncle Joe here. I very much doubt it.

What's more likely to be going on is you're hearing from an evil spirit. There are evil spirits around. Uncle Joe may have had some evil spirits, but there were evil spirits around him, and they knew all that stuff.

Revelation 27, no, Revelation, Leviticus 27:20 really makes it clear what these things are, because there it says, a man or a woman in whom there is an oath, which I think is very revealing because we know that what kind of spirit can be in a person? Well, you and I have our own spirit. Paul says, may the Lord preserve your body, soul, and spirit until the day of his coming. We have our own spirit, which incidentally is why, as Jesus says about food, it's what comes out of a person that makes him unclean, not what goes into him.

You're not going to be made unclean by having pork. I had a pork chop for breakfast today. So, you know, I'm not unclean, but it's what comes out because what comes out shows the spirit of the person.

So, you have your own spirit. If you're a believer, you have the Holy Spirit. There's only one other kind of spirit, as far as the Bible is concerned, that can be in a person.

You never get any hint in the Bible that the spirit of a dead person can enter another person, but you do know that evil spirits can enter a person. And Jesus, of course, casts them out. Paul casts them out.

The early church casts them out. People cast them out today. So that's the picture here, I think.

A medium is involved with an evil spirit, and the Lord doesn't make that clear to them now. There are a lot of things he doesn't make clear at this stage of revelation,

but that's one. He's saying, I don't want you involved, though, with that kind of revelation.

The second part makes it clear that the Lord will raise up a like Moses, and this is what we were talking about. And you're going to have to pay attention to him and remember, and he reminds them of how they were, it's just what we talked about, how they said, you go talk with this God, and we can't stand in the presence of this God and great fire anymore. And the Lord says, they've rightly said all that, and therefore, I will raise up a prophet like you from among their brethren, put my words in his mouth.

Whoever will not give heed to my words, which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. So, this is the prophet like Moses, the covenant mediator. And Deuteronomy 34:10 does make it clear that there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses.

We don't know when Deuteronomy 34.10 was written, but clearly later at some point. And no other prophet like him did arise until Christ, who was uniquely like Moses, a covenant mediator. Incidentally, you may have heard the argument somewhere.

I've heard it in this country. I've heard it in England. You hear it from time to time.

Well, Deuteronomy 34. Deuteronomy couldn't have been written by Moses because he predicted his own death. And sometimes evangelicals will reply by saying, well, Moses was a prophet, so he could have prophesied his death.

And I'm saying, no, you don't need to do that. No. The very critical German scholar Martin Noth noted that Deuteronomy has the easiest Hebrew that we have.

You learn Hebrew well enough; you could write in the style of Deuteronomy. So, somebody wrote Deuteronomy 34 as an appendix, as a final word on the whole picture. Who knows? It could have been Joshua.

It could have been someone just before the exile. We don't know. But you don't need to, you know.

That's no counterargument against the authorship of Moses. And so, no other prophet like him did arise until Christ, the uniquely Moses-like covenant mediator. But the passage does offer an archetypal description of a prophet of God.

And so, in that aspect, it can be taken as a standard by which prophets are to be measured. Okay, so what about the standards? Well, I've penciled or penned in the



word prescription here because it's nice to have things alliterative, right? So, you've got prescribed, you've got promise. So, let's call this prescription instead of standard.

But anyway, the prescription here is what is prescribed? Looking at these three parts of this passage now all together, we started out with what you, in the near future, must not do. Then the passage goes way forward to this prophet-like Moses, which we know now is long in the future. That's Christ.

But now it comes back again to the present day for Israel, what's going to be happening soon, what they will be facing soon. And that is, well, what about a prophet who comes along now? Well, the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name, which I've not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, how may we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken? Well, when a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which Yahweh has not spoken.

The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not fear him. Fear in the sense of respect or revere, just as that's sometimes used with the Lord.

Fearing the Lord, being a God-fearing person, doesn't mean you're scared stiff of God. It means you properly reverence him. This terminology was used in the ancient Near East, too.

Well, if we put all this together, what do we learn then? What about any prophet that might come along? Well, the prophet must be an Israelite of your brethren. That's, of course, said of the prophet like Moses, but the fact is that the Lord raised up Jonah to go to Assyria, to Nineveh, but he never brought anyone from Nineveh to prophesy to Israel. He didn't bring foreigners to prophesy to Israel.

So, you know, it's going to be an Israelite. And a true prophet will speak the words the Lord commands him. He'll never speak in the name of other gods.

And this was also indicated in Deuteronomy 13. Supernatural knowledge of the future prediction could be a sign of the prophet's authenticity. So, Christ then in the flesh is God's answer to the problem of theophanic fear in the Old Testament.

I've written about this in God at Sinai, but this is the whole point of the Sinai experience. As we read earlier in this passage, Sinai and Horeb are the same mountains, places that often had two different names in the ancient Near East. They were afraid because of the glory of God.

They couldn't stand in the presence of that holy fire. And so, the Lord, this is incidentally, this is the human condition after the fall. As I've argued, this is the way God showed up in Genesis 3. We talked about this.

If you imagine the way things looked at Sinai, I think it must have been similar to Genesis 3. God appears in the wind of the storm. It's a storm theophany.

Once human beings are in sin, the Lord cannot reveal his full glory. It would not be because of the power but because of the holiness. It would just destroy people.

In fact, John, while on Patmos, when the Lord appears in something of his glory, even though then we're talking about someone who was close to Jesus, a disciple who had the Holy Spirit in him, still, in the presence of that glory, he falls down like a dead man. And if the Lord showed up where you are, where I am today, the reaction would be the same if he showed up that way. But the incarnation is the beginning of the solution to that problem.

So, Jesus can say, he who sees me sees the Father. The full solution to that problem, of course, will come at the end of all things when we'll be with him and we'll see him, we'll be like him because sin is done away with, and we'll see him as he is and we'll be reflecting his glory. So, God in the flesh, Christ, is the answer to the problem of theophanic fear in the Old Testament.

His prophets had always been a partial remedy because here they are. What are the prophets doing? Well, they are representing God. They're mediating his words to people as part of his kingdom administration.

But Christ the prophet par excellence is going to be the final remedy. Okay, so it's entirely appropriate to talk about Christ and the law and the gospel sort of proleptically with all this because it all does form the background to it, and it's important for you to understand the old if you want to understand the new. If we look then at the covenant institution, just as with the Abrahamic covenant, we had an engagement in Genesis 12; we have an engagement here, too.

The Lord offers the covenant relationship. He brings the offer to the people. The people agree with it, and Moses reports their agreement, and so then the Lord commands Moses to prepare the people, including a warning about approaching the mountain, and he prepares them, and so then he descends on Sinai and summons Moses, and then you get several warnings of these approach warnings just because the people need to understand, you know, this you can't, the Lord is holy, and you just can't come too close.

And so somehow, of course, in Exodus 3, the Lord appeared to Moses and told him to take off his sandals because it's holy ground, but he was pretty close to the Lord,

and he is on the mountain too now. But somehow, I guess we reckon the Lord protected him, protected anyone whom he allowed to have access to that degree, but the people have to understand that that's not what they're permitted to do. It's for their own good.

He keeps them at a distance. And that's, of course, another great difference here again with Christ, you know, in the incarnate Christ they can see the Father, and you and I have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us so that remoteness is removed because of what Christ has done to some considerable extent at least. Well, then come the stipulations.

You get the ten commands, which are the basic stipulations of the covenant, and then later you get the detailed stipulations. Other important things that happen here are the blessings and the conquest mandate and provisions. So, this is a covenant just as the Abrahamic covenant included what I think has erroneously been called a grant, which included indeed a gift of land but land to conquer, so it's really a conquest mandate.

So now, too, the Mosaic covenant takes that up and gives the conquest mandate. You're going to go in and conquer the land. If you read this passage in Exodus 23, it's very interesting because the Lord says there, I will send my angel ahead of you, and you have to obey everything he says.

He will not forgive if you don't obey. And as Jesus is later challenged and asked well who can forgive sins but God alone? And he is God, of course, so he can forgive sins. And so the implication here seems to be that this angel is, in fact, God.

Well, how can that be? Well, the term angel is used; the basic meaning of the term angel in Greek, in Hebrew, comes from a word that means to go. And so an angel, a malak is the word, is a messenger. So, for instance, in 1 Kings 19, Jezebel sends a Malak, and she sends a messenger to threaten Elijah.

And then Elijah flees, and then a malak, an angel of the Lord, comes and ministers to him. So, a malak can be a human messenger or a created angelic messenger. Greek word angelos means the same thing, basically messenger.

The point is this: the fundamental sense is a messenger. Therefore, you could have a malak of the Lord who's not a created being but who is a messenger. In other words, the pre-incarnate son functions as a messenger.

And there are times when this, I think, is indicated. In the burning bush episode in Exodus 3, when you have the alternation of the terms the messenger, the Malak, the angel of the Lord, and the Lord, they're both saying they're used interchangeably.

That would suggest I think that maybe this malak is the pre-incarnate son on an errand doing this message.

And that seems to be indicated here, too, because this malak Yahweh, this messenger of the Lord, the Lord says my name is in him. Which means my essential nature is in him. So, it's pointing very much to the idea that this messenger of the Lord who's going to precede them into battle is, in fact, the son, the pre-incarnate son.

And that would be very appropriate because it's the incarnate son who has preceded us in the warfare of the kingdom, too. So that makes sense. Interesting passage.

Anyway, there is the cutting of the covenant, and there's a covenant ratification meal, which we'll talk about in a moment. But that's where Moses and Nadab and Abihu and the 70 elders go up and have a meal in the presence of the Lord. Then, Moses eventually came; he reported the stipulations of the people, and he built an altar and 12 pillars symbolic of the two parties.

The altar symbolizes the Lord and the pillars symbolize the tribes. And then there's the cutting of the covenant, the blood of the covenant the Lord has cut with you literally in accordance with all these words. The covenant ratification meal then.

Sometimes, apparently, this was done in the ancient Near East. When the covenant or the treaty was agreed to, there would be a meal. We have an example of this in Genesis 26, where Abimelech and Isaac have to make a treaty, a sworn agreement between us, a covenant. When they do that, we read that at the end of it, Isaac made a feast for them.

They ate and drank. They swore an oath to each other, and Isaac sent them on their way, and they left in peace. So interestingly, they have the cutting of the covenant meal, and they go in peace.

Well, this just anticipates what you see in the new covenant where Jesus says, Jesus here proleptically, that is in advance, he's proleptically going through the ritual of covenant cutting. The real cutting happens on the cross. But he's with the Eucharist; with the Last Supper, he's doing this symbolically.

Take and eat, and this is my body. Drink of this blood. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many and so on.

And so, what do we have here in both cases? Well, on Sinai in Exodus 24, we have God and the prophet Moses with the elders of Israel on the mountain. In the case of the upper room, we have Moses being the covenant mediator, right? So you have on Sinai you have God, you have the covenant mediator, you have the elders. In the

upper room, you have the covenant mediator, Jesus, who is also God in the flesh with his elders or disciples in an upper room, an elevated location.

You've got the blood of the covenant in both cases, and you've got the prospect of peace. You know, after the Passover meal, Jesus says, peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. So, this pattern replicates, and indeed, this was in the mind of God before he created the universe.

And in fact, of course, for him, it was already over before he created the universe. But marvelous correspondences. Also involved with all this is temple building.

We noted in what's called the major paradigm that the full-blown version of it is that God works by his spirit; now, we're looking at the Mosaic covenant situation, through the word or a prophet figure, to war against and defeat his foes. He establishes a covenant with his people, and that establishes them as his people. He then establishes a temple with his people because he wants to reside among them.

This is the first time since Eden that we've had a temple presence. This is the first time since the fall that God has had a people. And enough so that in the ancient world context, he could have a temple.

So, he does. And so, there's a temple building as part of this. We find this in the case of the temple as the tabernacle, of course, in Exodus and in the wilderness wanderings and for some time after that.

We find there, too, something we noted way back in Genesis 1, the command fulfillment pattern as it's been called or chain. And so if you're translating these things in Hebrew, you're going to find the translation gets easier from here on because it basically repeats the terms that you've already translated. The Lord gives commands for the construction of the tabernacle and for its furnishings.

And then we read how those things get done. They get fulfilled. The command fulfillment pattern is meant to indicate, and this is true in the ancient world; it's true in the Old Testament, true in the New.

It indicates the authority of the one giving the command. The authority is such that what that one commands has to be carried out in the very terms that were commanded. So that's the temple building pattern.

We understand that in the new covenant, we have a new temple getting built and inhabited, and that's us, and that's the church. And we'll talk more about that soon. But this is the pattern.

And up to this point, then, we've got the covenant establishment. There has been a warfare, a warfare to set the people free. And so, he could bring them out, establish them by covenant as his people, and have that temple presence.

Now, however, there's another warfare that is looming, and we'll talk about that and other aspects of it in the next lecture.

This is Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus in his teaching on Biblical Theology. This is session 6, The Mosaic Covenant, Part 1.