

COVENANT RENEWAL

Genesis 1:26-28

Matthew 28:18-20

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MOSES IN CHRIST

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W. Zimmerli in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (pp. 89-122), has clarified . . . topological interpretation by his scheme of "promise and fulfillment." He distinguishes between "prediction" and "promise." Prediction is the illumination of future events, but promise is the understanding that God has determined to accomplish his purposes, and is already working towards the completion of this goal. It is not just a word about something that is to come; it speaks of a future already in progress of fulfillment. Zimmerli stresses that the Old Testament depicts God's actions in history as a series of promises (not predictions) and fulfillments, with each fulfillment giving rise to the expectation of a greater fulfillment in the future. This is because the promises of God were never exhausted by one fulfillment. So the promise of rest in the promised land (Deut. 12:9; 25:19) was apparently fulfilled in the conquest under Joshua (Josh. 21:45), but this was not meant to imply a final fulfillment, as Joshua 23:15-16 indicates when it looks to the possibility of the destruction of that rest. And this same movement can be seen throughout the Old Testament. In the latter prophets the final fulfillment of the promise becomes eschatological, showing that the fulfillments in Israel were only the beginning phase of God's plan. The propheta found a topological significance in the historical events which enabled them to speak **relevantly** about God's next acts in history. So when Christ came and "actualized" the promises, he ensured the **validity** of the Old Testament by showing that it is part of the same divine program. Thus, the Old Testament is valuable for the church, because here we can see our own situation before God, **since** we are still on the road to the **final** fulfillment, and so can live in trust that God fulfills his promises.¹

The quote above is one of those rare, succinct statements that captures in one paragraph what others spend volumes attempting to convey. In his use of Zimmerli, a 20th Century New Testament Greek scholar, Laurin articulates a promise/fulfillment hermeneutic. He describes Scripture as a series of promises and fulfillments. The significance of this view of Scripture is quite profound.

As Laurin points out, on the surface a promise/fulfillment view means the prophecies of the Bible are not simply random predictions. They do predict the future but only because they are part of a continuum of prophecies and fulfillments that go back to the beginning of Scripture, which are like a long covenantal chain. Remove one link in the pregression of promises and fulfillments and the entire chain is broken.

In other words, Laurin lays the foundation for a wholistic view of Scripture. It is a unity. Take away one part and the rest falls with it.

What Laurin's promise/fulfillment view of Scripture actually means, **although** he may not **have intended** it to go this far, is that every aspect of Holy **Writ** is promissory. Not just the explicit "I promise" statements are promises. But if everything God's Word says points beyond itself to some greater purpose, to wit, the coming of Christ, then it must be promissory in nature, even down to the narrative sections. I would go so far as to say that every statement is promissory in character. Moreover, every aspect is not only promissory but it fulfills some previous statement. Because every verse of Scripture fulfills, it becomes part of the continuing promise.

Laurin and Covenantal Theology

Beyond this, Laurin's views have important **ramifications** for covenantal theology. If Scripture is one continuum of promise and fulfillment, then everything **in** the Old Testament is fulfilled in everything in the New **Testament**. At face value this statement might sound rather obvious, but consider precisely what is meant by "everything fulfilled by everything."

On the one hand, Christ is **progressively fulfilled** at **every** point in the Old and New Testament, if the warp and woof of the text is promissory. Whether a simple story, a dietary law, a psalm, a proverb, a prophecy, parable, discourse, or epistle, the ultimate theme **being developed** is Christ. Each one of these types of literature is not just literature. It is a fulfillment of the great promise that stands at the **beginning** of Scripture:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Genesis 3:15).

And if every thread of Scripture fulfills this great prophecy, and it does, then the student of the Bible ought to be looking first and foremost for Christ.

Moreover, not only does the Old Testament speak of Christ who will come but it describes a new bride, the Church. If everything is fulfilled by everything and part of that which fulfills the Old Testament is the Church, then the Church has to be present in the Old Testament. Or, it at least has to be referenced. Why? Remember, the great promise at the beginning of Scripture not only speaks of the Seed to come but it refers to a conflict that rages between the mother of the Seed and the serpent.

The mother of the Seed is both Mary and the Church. Mary, herself, teaches this dual role. She was the mother of Jesus. Yet, while Christ hangs on the cross, He says

1. Robert B. Laurin, "Topological interpretation of the Old Testament," *Hermeneutics*, Ed. by Bernard Ramm (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), pp. 122-123.

to Mary, "Woman, behold your son," referring to John. And to John He said, "Behold your mother" (John 19:26-27). Mary could only be mother to John if John were being brought into Jesus' spiritual family, and if she were being considered the personification of the Church.

We can look at the dual role of the Church as mother and son another way. The Church is called the Body of Christ. It is the friend of Jesus, the younger brother of the elder firstborn brother. Yet, the Church evangelizes and produces, by the Grace of God, children. This is a mothering role, to which one of the early Church fathers referred when he said, "if you will not have the Church as your mother then you cannot have God as your father." Thus, the Church is part of the fulfillment of the great prophecy at the beginning of Scripture.

For covenant theology, the promise/fulfillment of Christ and of the Church is at the heart of the system. What Laurin describes, I have been attempting to demonstrate the specific covenantal fulfillment of each major Old Testament covenantal head. In the previous newsletter, I began a study of Moses. Since he has become so controversial in the 20th Century Church, I spent the first part on the covenant in Moses. Now I will attempt to show Moses in Christ.

Christ: The New Moses

Christ became a new Moses by leading the people of God into an even greater Exodus. The parallels are clear. At Christ's birth, the wicked king Herod called for the extermination of the infant boys in hope that he would kill Jesus. He forced Mary and Joseph to flee with Jesus into Egypt, provoking an exodus. At Moses' birth, pharaoh called for the extermination of all Hebrew males, which led to the dilemma between the Egyptians and the Israelites that resulted in an Exodus. Beyond the obvious associations, however, the parallel between Christ and Moses is best understood in terms of the Biblical covenant.

Transcendence

The distinctive transcendent feature of the Mosaic covenant is the glory manifestation of God. Men had been brought near before Moses but none were drawn so near that the glory of God marked them. Not even Adam is characterized as having been so close to God. He walked with His creator but he did not bear the scorch of glory on his face. Noah had spoken directly with God when he received the directions for building the ark; never was he allowed so close as to be drawn into the glory of God. Abraham was allowed to climb many mountains and sit under many trees where God dwelled. The Lord God directly halted the sacrifice of his son. Yet, nowhere is Abraham described as bearing the mark of glory like the one who was saved in the Nile.

Moses was permitted the unique privilege of the presence of God. When he met God at the burning bush, the glory of the Lord covered Moses' face. Granted, it was a short-lived glow of light for the incarnational glory had not yet come. In other words, there was no way that the glory could go with Moses on any permanent basis. The light went out on Moses' face as time passed because the Lord was on the mountain or in the Temple. The Living God had to be veiled from man to protect His creation from the purity of this light. Nevertheless, glory manifestation was the distinct transcendent feature of the Mosaic covenant.

This Mosaic characteristic of glory manifestation appears in its fullness with Christ, who is specifically called the glory of God. The wondrous words of the Apostle John come to mind, which are clearly a reference to the relationship to and distinction from the Mosaic covenant:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,

and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried out saying, "This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (John 1:14-18).

Christ is the glory of God that so marked Moses' face but was unable to remain with the great leader as he travelled away from the mountain. When Christ came among men, however, the manifestation of glory could go with them. Grace was not only on the mountain but throughout the earth, "Grace upon grace" that "all received."

But John adds an interesting statement to explain the ethical significance of the glory transcendence. He says the "Law was given through Moses but grace and truth are realized through Jesus Christ." Notice carefully that Christ is not in conflict with Moses. What Moses had to say was truth no less than the Incarnation of Christ. Rather, as the NASV correctly translates, "Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." Through the Incarnation, Grace and Truth come off the mountain and dwell among men. The glory can go with them and never go out, which becomes an important theme for the Church as we shall see.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy in the Mosaic covenant has to do with exodus. The original Book of Exodus frames the presentation of the great deliverance as the result of the defeat of the pagan Egyptian hierarchy of pharaoh and the gods. The kingdom was restructured. Moses became the head and not Pharaoh, the gentile common grace head.

As we turn to the gospels, the kingdom of God is once again restructured. Christ becomes the head. For this reason, Christ's ministry is called an Exodus in the original Greek (Luke 9:31), translated by "departure" in many translations. This explains quite explicitly why there are so many parallels between Christ's and Moses' ministries. Both ministries begin and involve wilderness experiences. Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness and fed five thousand in a wilderness context. The food He gave them is even compared to manna (John 6).

Christ performed signs and wonders to authenticate who He was. Moses did the same. In fact, the only other time where such mighty signs and wonders were performed was in Moses' time.

Ethical

How about the Mosaic laws? Christ even confirmed instead of abolished the Mosaic law, explicitly saying that He did not come to abolish (Matthew 5:17-19). He illustrated this with the woman caught in adultery. He calls for the witnesses to come forth, according to the Mosaic laws of witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). They don't throw the first stone because they cannot or will not testify against her. There are no witnesses so there can be no stoning. Christ did not change the law, He made sure that it was fulfilled. Thus, we have to be careful when examining how the Mosaic law is carried over to the New Testament.

On the one hand, the laws of Moses are extended into the New Testament. Many precise Mosaic statements, formulas, are carried over. The Apostle Paul speaks of "worthy of death" crimes, which was a specific phrase used by Moses (Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:6, 21:22, and 22:26). He even uses the avenger language of the Old Testament in regard to the civil magistrate (Romans 13:4). The Ten Commandments are also referred to in Romans (13:9).

On the other hand, the laws of Moses are transformed in the New Covenant. Divorce becomes harder because the father is no longer the one who grants the divorce; the elders of the Church would have to make a ruling (Matthew 18:15ff.). The Ten Commandments are effected in their application, the most notable being the change in the fourth commandment from sabbath to a day of rest in Christ (Hebrews 4:9). The avenger of God's covenant is no longer only the head of the family but even includes a pagan civil magistrate such as Nero, who was Caesar at the time that the Apostle revealed this Scripture (Romans 13:4). So, the laws of Moses not only are not abrogated, they are extended in greater force and intensity into the New Covenant, the principle being that where there is greater redemption manifested there is also greater demand for righteousness.

But, there are changes in the Mosaic law: priesthood, sacrifice, dietary laws and so forth. How are the changes to be understood? Is there a controlling principle(s)? Some have said that the Mosaic law is completely done away with. I think we have enough evidence to prove that such an approach is not fair to the New Testament.

Others have argued that the law is divided into moral, civil, and ceremonial. The moral continues but the other two are abrogated. The problem with this view is that we have already seen in other studies that the Apostle Paul uses the Mosaic civil code formula in the New Testament. This approach is not satisfactory either.

A third approach that I find helpful is to understand the changes in terms of the changes in the signs and seals of the covenant: baptism and communion. In the Old Testament, the signs and seals of the covenant were circumcision and passover. The changes reflected in this change of sacraments provide an explanation of what stays essentially the same and what changes. First, circumcision had to do with the shedding of blood and so did the passover. Since Christ's death, anything having to do with the shedding of blood, especially sacrifices, has been transformed by the sacrament of baptism such that no more sacrifices have to be offered.

Second, **circumcision** and passover in part represent Jewish identity. Circumcision set a male apart as a Jew and passover confirmed their identity in the Promised Land. They represented the *boundary* between Jew and Gentile, in other words. Once they were removed, however, they signified the removal of all Jew/Gentile boundary distinctions: dietary laws, cleansing laws, and so forth. This explains why the New Testament writers address these areas when speaking of that which the New Testament believer has freedom to keep or not to keep (Romans 14-15; Colossians 2:16-23). Thus, we can generally conclude that anything to do with blood and boundary between Jew and Gentile is so effected by the death of Christ that it is no longer binding on the New Covenant person.

Oath/Sanctions

Moses issued several curses that would befall Israel should it ever reverse its covenantal loyalty. These sanctions are listed in the retributive section of Deuteronomy. The Gospels are a virtual catalogue of the fulfillment of the Deuteronomical curses. Christ, however, consistently shows that He is the one who can reverse the curse.

Moses spoke of unusual diseases and fevers that would overcome the people. There are specific reasons why these diseases manifest the curse of the covenant, but for now, I will only show the fulfillment pattern of the Deuteronomical curses in the Gospels. Moses says,

The Lord will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with

the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they shall pursue you until you perish . . . The Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable chronic sicknesses. And He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the Lord will bring on you until you are destroyed. . . and among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul (Deuteronomy 28:20-22, 59-62; 65).

If the Gospels are read with these promissory curses in mind, the emphasis on healing becomes clear. Virtually all of the diseases and ailments confronted by Christ's ministry are the result of covenant breaking. Recall the number of instances where fever, leprosy, blindness, lameness, demonic possession that creates insanity, and so forth are mentioned. They are covenant witnesses to the fact that Israel has been placed under the Deuteronomical curse.

Christ reverses the curse. He is the one emphasized by the Gospels, however, as the only one who has the power to do so. When He overcomes the curse, the people are supposed to see that they can be restored in their covenant with God through Him. Just as their sin brought the curse, so Christ can bring them back to the blessings of the covenant.

This powerful covenantal message is often overlooked because the Gospels are not viewed in terms of the precise covenant that the people were under. As a result, the fulfillment of the Mosaic oath sanctions in Christ's ministry is missed.

All of the Mosaic curses of Deuteronomy can be found in Israel at the time of Christ's ministry. All of them are reversed by Christ in representative form. By this I mean that He does not necessarily make all of the blind to see but He heals enough blind people to make them covenantal representatives of His covenantal reversal.

Significantly, the large curse section in Deuteronomy about an army that would come and surround Israel has multiple fulfillment. This promissory curse was fulfilled by Assyria and Babylon. But, it was to be fulfilled one final time by Rome. Of this, Christ warned Israel in His famous Olivet Discourse. The nation did not take His warning, renew their covenant with God through Him, and avoid the inevitable. In 70 A.D. the curses of the Deuteronomical curse were fulfilled on Israel.

As a result of this study, it occurs to me that the ministry of Christ and the evangelism of the Church used the curses of Deuteronomy as an interpretative guide. Christ and the Apostles interpreted the problems of Israel, and the gentiles for that matter, in terms of the specific Mosaic description of curses that befall people who break covenant with God. It seems that evangelism needs to be rethought in light of this.

Succession

Perhaps the most telling parallel between Christ and Moses is the way in which Christ reveals Himself at the end of the Markan account of the Resurrection as a New Moses (Mark 16). This is clearly a succession from Christ to the Apostles. Their belief in and loyalty to the Resurrection makes them the new heirs. The scene begins at the grave, perhaps one of the most familiar places of succession in Scripture. Except, the heirs are established not only by the death of the predecessor but by His life! Consider the successional parallels.

First, the chapter opens with three women gathered to save the body of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Salome, and

Mary the mother of James (16:1ff.). By comparison, the salvation of Moses occurs when *three* women apply themselves to this end, Moses' mother, his sister (Miriam), and Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:1ff.). The number *three* is significant in both passages, pointing to the *resurrection* that happened on the *third* day. In the Exodus account, it says of Moses' mother that she hid the baby for *three* months. So, three women were involved in preserving Moses, one of which protected him for a three month period. And, in similar fashion, *three* women were waiting on the *third* day to preserve Jesus' body, only to discover that he had been raised.

Second, Moses' sister, who is described as "standing at a distance" (Exodus 2:4), is the first to see Moses drawn from the water, hence his name means, "drawn out of," literally, *resurrected from*. We know from later Scriptures that Moses' sister's name was Miriam. The Greek translation of this name is *Mary*. Not coincidentally, the first person to whom Christ revealed His resurrection was another "Miriam," who is described in John's account as "standing a far off" (John 20:11), just like the first Miriam.

As part of this second parallel, it *should* be mentioned in passing that Mary Magdalene is described as having been delivered from "seven demons" (Mark 16:9). In the Exodus accounts around the birth of Moses, the word "midwife" is used seven times in the first chapter of Exodus and the word "*child*" is referred to seven times as well in the second chapter. The point seems to be that the number *seven* indicates completion. When Satan's attack had *come* to completion at the time of the Exodus, God raised a son from the waters of the Nile. So, in the life of Jesus' ministry, when Satan's work had apparently been *completed* in the life of *Mary* Magdalene, the Lord delivered her and made her the *first* one to see His Resurrection. The work of Satan was undone at precisely the point when the devil thought his work was the most complete.

Third, the people are *still* weeping after Mary tells them that Christ is raised from the dead (Mark 16:10-11). So the *people* of Israel still wept even after God had sent them a *deliverer* (Exodus 2:23).

Fourth, after Christ was raised from the dead, Mark *tells* us that He went to *two* disciples on the road (to Emmaus as is told in Luke's Gospel). They rejected His witness to them, the greatest *Bible* study in the history of man (Mark 16:12). So, after Moses grows up and becomes the deliverer, *two* Hebrews reject him as their judge and *redeemer* (Exodus 2:13).

Then, the final and most profound of the parallels between the Exodus of Moses and the Resurrection of Jesus

Christ are the signs and wonders of both. God gave Moses *ten* signs and wonders to call down on Pharaoh. Jesus gave similar ones to the disciples, *five*. Consider the similarities between the miracles accompanying Moses and those given to the disciples. Jesus told the disciples that they would speak in "new tongues" (Mark 16:17). Moses was not able to speak and God gave him a "new tongue" through Aaron, who went to speak for him.

Jesus told the disciples that they would pick up serpents and that they would not be hurt, fulfilled on the island of Malta in the Apostle Paul's ministry (Acts 28:3). When the magicians of Pharaoh turned their staves into snakes, Moses' ate theirs up. Satan would be crushed and prevented from stopping the advance of the people of God.

Jesus told the disciples that they would "drink any deadly thing and it would not hurt them" (Mark 16:18). Moses turned the Nile River and all the water of Egypt into blood. If the Jews drank of this water, they were not hurt. At least, there is some sort of allusion back to the Exodus events.

At last, Jesus tells the disciples that they will have the power to heal (Mark 16:18). This is a reference to the last of the plagues on Egypt that took the firstborn. God struck them with the Angel of Death. Jesus gives the disciples power to raise up the sick, even the dead.

Thus, Christ most definitely takes the reader back to the Exodus. Amazingly, He gives the disciples the power to overcome the plagues of the Egyptians. He only gives them five signs and wonders, whereas Moses had been given ten. But this is the difference between the power of the Old and New Covenant: it only takes five signs and wonders of the New Covenant to overcome the ten of the Old Covenant. Nevertheless, Christ appears as a New Moses, sending the disciples into a new Exodus.

The applications are significant. Christ is the Son and we are the slaves set free by His Resurrection. We become sons, small "s". More importantly, however, He makes the disciples into *Moseses*, giving them the signs and wonders in similar fashion to what Moses had been given. We are all *Moseses* in the New Covenant, the evidence of which is that we all walk around with our own personal copies of the Law-Word of God, just as Moses had done.

In summary, Christ presented Himself as the New Moses at His Incarnation and Resurrection. He called us all into this Mosaic ministry without placing us under the Mosaic law. Rather, He put us in obedience to the law of Moses by its transformation into the Law of Christ.