

# THE KING'S STORY (7)<sup>1</sup>

## The King Commands

### A. Introduction

1. The Bible is a story.

It is the story of a King, God, who makes His glory known in His Son Jesus Christ.

Two prominent themes in this story are that this King:

a) saves His people through judgment.

b) establishes kingdoms and rules over them by means of covenants.

2. In the first part of the story, God the King creates the kingdom of creation<sup>2</sup>.

The kingdom of creation was established through the covenant of works and the Noahic covenant.

In the covenant of works, God gave responsibility of ruling over creation to Adam and his descendants, promising eternal life for obedience.

When Adam broke the covenant, so did all humanity with him, and the covenant of works condemned and cursed everyone.

No longer is eternal life possible through obedience to this covenant.

However, before God cursed Adam and Eve, driving them from His presence, He preached the gospel to them, promising salvation through a Saviour who would be an offspring of the woman.

Because Adam's sinful nature was inherited by all his descendants, the majority of them sided with the serpent and brought God's judgment upon the earth.

Yet by saving Noah and his family, the promise of a Saviour remains alive.

With Noah carrying the seeds of sin into the new world, the offspring of the serpent would soon thrive again, so God made another covenant.

The Noahic covenant ensured that the world would not be destroyed again before the Saviour's arrival.

After the people rebelled against God at Babel, we are left wondering how the promise will be kept.

3. In the next part of the story, God the King creates a new kingdom within the kingdom of creation, the kingdom of Israel, out of which the Saviour will come.

The kingdom of Israel began with God blessing Abram/Abraham and making a covenant with him.

Abraham is promised a great nation and a great blessing.

The great nation was a promise of both numerous descendants and possession of the Promised Land of Canaan.

The great blessing was not only that Abraham's name would be great and that he and his descendants would be a blessing to others, it was also that the whole world will be blessed through him.

The promised offspring of the woman will be an offspring of Abraham.

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<sup>1</sup> The titles for this series are taken from Biblical Theology by Nick Roark & Robert Cline

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this series I will refer to 3 kingdoms, the kingdom of creation, Israel, Christ, which is an idea taken from The Mystery of Christ by Samuel Renihan.

Whilst God will ensure that His promise to Abraham of a great nation and a great blessing will be kept, within the covenant He made with him, He demands that Abraham and his descendants are loyal to Him.

This loyalty in the first instance was to be shown by practicing circumcision, and it should have been a great joy and delight for them to obey God who had graciously chosen to bless them.

An even greater reason for loyalty to God was given after He showed His incredible power, might, and majesty, by rescuing His suffering people from slavery in Egypt. The basis of this rescue was His promises to Abraham, passed on to Isaac and Jacob.

After rescuing His people, God brought them to Mount Sinai, and there made another covenant with the entire nation.

This Mosaic covenant builds on and expands the Abrahamic covenant.

## **B. Israel is given commands to obey**

### 1. God gives commands in the Mosaic covenant to the people of Israel whom He had rescued.

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." (Exodus 19:4)

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery." (Exodus 20:2)

These commands explained in much more detail what it meant for Abraham's descendants to walk before God in obedience.

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him, saying, "I am God Almighty. Live in my presence and be blameless. I will set up my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you greatly." (Genesis 17:1-2)

With Israel about to possess the land of Canaan which God had promised to them, they were now able to have a more specific set of laws to mark them out as His people, in contrast to the seed of the serpent; and to establish them as a kingdom. [No longer were they nomadic wanderer or slaves in Egypt].

"Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live, enter, and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, so that you may keep the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you." (Deuteronomy 4:1-2)

As Israel kept the covenant and lived as a holy nation, the surrounding nations would be drawn to God.

"Now if you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession out of all the peoples, although the whole earth is mine, and you will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation.' These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:5-6)

"But you who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today. Look, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to possess. Carefully follow them, for this will show your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples. When they hear about all these statutes, they will say, 'This great nation is indeed a wise and understanding people.'" (Deuteronomy 4:4-6)

### 2. Attached to these commands given to Israel was the promise of blessing for obedience and the threat of cursing for disobedience.

If Israel was faithful to the Mosaic covenant by obeying the laws given, they would continue to enjoy the blessing of fellowship with God (who was present with them in the Tabernacle) in the Promised Land of Canaan.

If Israel was unfaithful to the Mosaic covenant by disobeying the laws given, they would be cursed by God, and would lose His presence and be exiled from the Promised Land of Canaan.

"Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12)

"Listen to the words of this covenant and tell them to the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem. Tell them, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "Let a curse be on the man who does not obey the words of this covenant, which I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace." I declared, "Obey me, and do everything that I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God," in order to establish the oath I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is today.'" (Jeremiah 11:2-5)

3. God gave two basic types of commands in the Mosaic covenant to the people whom He had rescued.

The moral laws which were the boundaries that God had set for humans at creation and known to them by nature.

These were expressed in 10 words or commandments.

The additional laws (which have a moral aspect to them) are usually divided into two groups:

a) Civil laws – which govern the daily lives of the people.

b) Ceremonial laws – which concern the priesthood and sacrificial system.

Why were the ceremonial laws needed?

### **C. Israel is given commands they cannot obey**

1. Both before and after the giving of the law, the people of Israel made a pledge to obey everything God had commanded them.

"After Moses came back, he summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. Then all the people responded together, "We will do all that the LORD has spoken." So Moses brought the people's words back to the LORD." (Exodus 19:7-8)

"Moses came and told the people all the commands of the LORD and all the ordinances. Then all the people responded with a single voice, "We will do everything that the LORD has commanded." (Exodus 24:3)

But just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they were soon unfaithful and broke the covenant.

They committed idolatry by asking Aaron to make a golden calf for them to worship.

2. Does that mean Israel should be cut off and exiled?

It is important to understand that with both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant now governing the kingdom of Israel, there is now both a corporate and individual aspect.

It is possible for unfaithful individuals to be cut off without the promised blessings to the nation as a whole being lost.

After the golden calf incident, individual Israelites were killed for their disloyalty, but nation was preserved because of the Abrahamic covenant and the intercession of Moses.

"Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you swore to them by yourself and declared, 'I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.'" (Exodus 32:13)

After the people did not trust God to give them the Promised Land, a whole generation of Israelites died in the wilderness, but the next generation entered and possessed Canaan as the covenant was renewed with them.

“Look, today I set before you a blessing and a curse: there will be a blessing, if you obey the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you today, and a curse, if you do not obey the commands of the LORD your God and you turn aside from the path I command you today by following other gods you have not known.” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28)

“See, today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity. For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and multiply, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not listen and you are led astray to bow in worship to other gods and serve them, I tell you today that you will certainly perish and will not prolong your days in the land you are entering to possess across the Jordan. I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, love the LORD your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For he is your life, and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

3. The ceremonial laws were given because Israel would continue to sin and disobey the commands God gave them.

“When I bring them into the land I swore to give their ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey, they will eat their fill and prosper. They will turn to other gods and worship them, despising me and breaking my covenant. And when many troubles and afflictions come to them, this song will testify against them, because their descendants will not have forgotten it. For I know what they are prone to do, even before I bring them into the land I swore to give them.” (Deuteronomy 31:20-21)

“For I know that after my death you will become completely corrupt and turn from the path I have commanded you. Disaster will come to you in the future, because you will do what is evil in the LORD’s sight, angering him with what your hands have made.” (Deuteronomy 31:29)

Unless their sins could be forgiven, God would not be able to dwell among them in the Tabernacle.

The system of daily, weekly, monthly, and most importantly yearly sacrifices on the Day of Atonement made that possible.

4. The Mosaic covenant was able to give Israel life in the land of Canaan, but like the Abrahamic covenant, it could not give to them eternal life.

It did not change the hearts of the people.

The Mosaic covenant, therefore, showed Israel’s need for a Saviour and what this Saviour would do for them.

“The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:24-26)

He would make them righteous, because without righteousness there can be no blessing.

He would be a High Priest, because without a High Priest there can be no sacrifice.

He would offer up a sacrifice on their behalf, because without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins.