

Sonship The Covenant of Sonship

Studio Session 63

Sam Soleyn

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God entered into a different covenant on Mount Sinai with the Jewish fathers—the ones, as Moses said—who were present on the mountain that day, because God is pursuing his goal of having sons when the ones who were invited to come up were not worthy and rejected the offer. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. (At that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.)” – Deuteronomy 5:1-5a)**

God now goes and looks for those who might be his sons from among the nations, but He starts over, entering into a covenant with these fathers on the mountain. But this covenant is very different. The Jews at the mountain that day are parties of this covenant and God is the party of this covenant as well. So God is party number one, the Jews are party number two. Immediately you can see what the problem is: God is going to keep his agreement because God is God. If this covenant fails it will fail because of the Jews inability—or unwillingness—to keep it. And then the question will become: what are the consequences?

Before we get to that, there were four things God promised the Jews and they were: that God would make of them a nation, that God would protect their nation, that God would protect their economy and God would give them health care. These were the four things. By the law—that is, by the Mosaic code, the Ten Commandments and the 631 laws—by that, God made them into a nation. For almost 400 years prior to that time, they were slaves. They had been in Egypt and were made slaves for hundreds of years but as they came out of Egypt they were not a nation. They had a tribal connection but they were slaves. For example, who would be the judges, who would be the priests, who would be the nobles? If you are all reduced to slavery, who determines that? How would you judge disputes between members of the nation? All of these are the considerations.

So what does God do? He gives them laws that spread out all of these considerations and

brings order to them as a nation. The laws contain rules of accountability: “I am the Lord your God and I will hold you accountable.” “I will not hold him guiltless who takes my name in vain.” (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.’**” – **Exodus 20:7**) This is the language of accountability. Why? Because the Jews are to know that God is party of the first part and He is the one who intends to hold them accountable.

The law also contains issues of all forms of jurisprudence including such things as property law, contracts, family law, criminal law, and the rules of evidence. What do we suppose is meant by the commandment, or what motivates the commandment: “**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**” (Inserted – **Exodus 20:16** KJV) This is about the rules for the introduction of evidence—who might testify and what are the requirements of a witness—these are the rules of evidence. If you borrow your neighbor’s donkey and the donkey dies while you are using it, what do you do? How do you take care of that situation? Well, God tells them that you restore a donkey to your neighbor—give him another one or pay the price that he evaluates the donkey is worth. That’s property law. (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘If a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, he must make restitution.’**” – **Exodus 22:14**)

If somebody accidentally hurts or injures another and they suffer personal injuries or even death, what do you do? It is not intentional but it happened and harm has resulted to a person. The Scripture is laid out: tort law, how do you compensate for injury. Criminal law. If there is criminal intent and there are acts pursued in furtherance of that criminal intent what do you do? How do you address that harm or injury to persons and to the society? Well, there is criminal law. If a man strikes his neighbor in anger, how do you address that? There were cities of refuge that would later be developed with the intention of holding persons in abeyance, as it were, holding cases in abeyance until proper procedure could be brought about by which the person might be given or afforded a fair hearing. (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death.’**” – **Exodus 21:12-14**)

So all of these things were what the law is about—631 laws and the Ten Commandments are about how God made them into a nation. The law contained such issues as what they should eat or not eat in preservation of their health. They were a mobile people before the time of refrigeration, before the time where, for example, meats could be properly processed, or even just what kinds of meats would be acceptable to them, long before modern science understood the connection between animals that ate carrion or prey and the way that diseases could be transmitted and so on. And God gave them rules—dietary

rules—to govern all of this. This isn't because God was going to “love you better” if you ate some of these things versus if you didn't. It was that your life was going to be prolonged.

So the things that God promised, He delivered on. He made them into a nation by the law. He guarded them from their enemies. He protected their crops and He protected their health. Now in exchange, what did they have to do? Well they were required to keep the laws. They were required to observe the Sabbath. They were required to observe all of the laws spoken in the commandments—dietary laws. They were also required to pay a tithe because this was how the administration of spiritual values took place under the law—how it was funded. The tithe was taken to the priest; the tithe belonged to the priest and it was their sustenance. Now there was one tribe of twelve who became the priests—this was the tribe of Levi. So this was what the law was supposed to do and it did it.

The problem is, of course, whenever anyone is in a fellowship—in a covenantal relationship with God—God will always do what God has said He would do, and man can be counted on *not* to do what man has a duty to do. What that results in is indebtedness and this happened to the Jews as well. God kept his part of the bargain; the Jews did not. They became debtors because when you derive a benefit for which you have not paid and you have an obligation to pay, then someone is waiting on you to pay because you have incurred indebtedness. Now under the law, the indebtedness could only be satisfied in one of three ways: 1) Somebody else could pay your indebtedness for you to the one to whom you owe the indebtedness. But Jesus had not yet come, so there was no payment. 2) You could be forgiven. The one against whom you owed the indebtedness could simply forgive you, but there was no provision for forgiveness under the law. 3) Whatever assets you had remaining could be then taken and used to satisfy your indebtedness. Under the law, there was only one remaining asset to satisfy the indebtedness created by receiving a benefit from God for which the Jews did not pay. The only remaining asset was the Jew, himself.

This is the nature of being a debtor without other assets. The only asset you have remaining is you, and that asset then must be submitted for payment of the indebtedness. When that happens, the person changes from being a human to becoming property because you are changed from a human being into an asset to satisfy property. In the history of the United States we abolished debtor's prisons but the Europeans—in particular, the British, had debtor's prisons. It was when you owed more than you could pay, then you and your family were pressed into indentured servitude to the one to whom you owed the money. When that happens you change your status from a citizen to a slave because you are changed from a person to property.

Now, vis-à-vis someone to whom you are a slave, you have no rights. One may ask, “Why did Abraham not choose to make Ishmael his heir, although Ishmael was his

firstborn son.” He was his son and he was his firstborn son. Why was Ishmael not chosen to be Abraham’s heir? Why was Isaac the chosen heir? The answer is very simple: before Ishmael was Abraham’s son, Ishmael was Abraham’s slave. And vis-à-vis Abraham, Ishmael had no claim or right, for he was first his slave and then he was his son. How did Ishmael get to be Abraham’s slave? His mother was a slave in the household of Abraham therefore every offspring of Hagar—however many she would have had—would have all been slaves.

Let me put it in terms that are easier to understand. In the history of the United States, African slaves were part of the history. If a white slave owner impregnated a black female slave whom he owned and of this occurrence a son was born, what right would that son have against his mother’s master? He would have no rights. The law would not recognize the claim of a slave against his master even if the master of the slave was also his father because once you are a slave you cannot also be a son. Because what it means to be a son in this context is not biology alone; it is having legal rights that are enforceable as a matter of law. A slave has no rights of inheritance against his father, so the law created slaves because there was an indebtedness that could not be paid and the children of the law—children of Israel born under the law—were inherently born into slavery.

Look at it from the book of **Galatians, chapter 4**, and because they were slaves they could never be sons. Here it is: the book of **Galatians, chapter 4**, here it says, **“Tell me, you who want to be under the law,”** (this is **Galatians 4:21**) **“are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.”** Now note the references to Hagar and Sarah are references in terms of their liberty interest. Hagar is a slave; Sarah is a free woman, and that sets up the matter of the status of their sons. His son—Abraham’s son—by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way. That means she could have children, she belonged to Abraham, was a member of his household as a slave, so she could have children to Abraham.

But the son by the free woman was born as a result of promise. Now we said that the covenant of sonship is between God and God and Abraham was the third party beneficiary. There was a promise made to him. He was not entitled to sonship; it was a promise that God made to himself, which promise He attached to the lineage of Abraham. So that is the difference: born as a result of promise. These things may be taken figuratively. When the Bible says you may take something figuratively that is because it intends for you to take it figuratively. Why? What is the figure of speech? Because the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mt. Sinai. Now which covenant is that? Unmistakably this is the law. It was enacted at Mt. Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves.

I’ve explained how that comes about. God made the covenant with the Jews. Moses said

it in **Deuteronomy, chapter 5**. “God did not make this covenant with our fathers, He has made it with us who are alive here at the mountain today.” (Inserted – **Deuteronomy 5:3**) It was God with the Jews. Now God would always keep his covenant, but the Jews would not. Therefore there rose an indebtedness under the law which, in order to satisfy that indebtedness, the Jews had to be converted from human beings to property to satisfy this. And they changed their status from being free people to the status of being slaves. **“One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.”** (Inserted – **Galatians 4:24b**)

You must understand what an insult this would have been to the Jews and what an insult it would be to Jews today and to those people who are Judaizers among the people of God. It is a popular thing today to be a Judaizer but the danger that it is, is that it turns sons back to slavery and you lose your rights of sonship once you become a slave. **“This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mt. Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem.”** – (Inserted – **Galatians 4:25a**) At the point at which Paul was saying this, Jerusalem had not fallen so he was saying Mt. Sinai corresponds to Hagar because the children of the law are going to be made into slaves and that ties into the present city of Jerusalem with the Temple and with the worship associated with the Temple. And it says this about all of that: **“She is in slavery with her children.”** (Inserted – **Galatians 4:25b**)

Now for all of those who would go under the law, especially if you are a believer—never under the law—if you would go under the law this is what you have done. You have traded your liberty in Christ for the status of a slave. You have gone from a relationship of grace—the grace of sonship—to the restrictions of the law, which you can never keep. And because you cannot keep the law you have traded your place in the house of God for that of a slave—that’s what you have done because the law is only capable of making you into a slave. Now that’s what Paul is saying here when it says, **“But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.”** (Inserted – **Galatians 4:26**)

Now here it gets to be amazingly plain. I’d like for you just to look at **verse 15**, of **Galatians the 3rd chapter** and this lays out everything that I’ve been saying. It lays out the fact that God began creation with a promise of sonship—a covenant that He swore to himself. That covenant pre-existed the Law and is known as a covenant. God attaches this covenant to Abraham and promises his descendents that they would be his heirs. At Mount Sinai, He offers this covenant to the Jews, promising to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They elected not to, because that would have required them to go up into the presence of God, which, when they refused to, then God gave them the law. The law was between them and God because they couldn’t keep the law; the law made them a slave. God kept the law; they refused to keep it; they were made into slaves. But here the Scriptures line all of this out for us.

This is not a mystery. I would challenge anyone to read the following verses. This is

from **Galatians, chapter 3**, beginning at **verse 15**, **“Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later...”** Later than what? Than this promise to Abraham. The law, **“...does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator”**—the mediator being Moses.

“A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God?” The answer is: **“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.”** Therefore, **“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 that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”** What are we then? **“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”** And then he says, **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”** (Inserted – **Galatians 3:15-29**)

So first God promised them sonship. They refused sonship; they were put under the law, but because they couldn’t keep the law they became slaves. The law on Mount Sinai existed 430 years after the original covenant was made. God first made a covenant with himself and then ratified that covenant with Abraham. That was the existing covenant. That’s why God would have brought them up to Mount Sinai to have entered that covenant. When they rejected that covenant, then God gave them the law, which made them into slaves. He could hold them under the restrictions of the law until the Seed should come but once the Seed came He fulfilled the law and He did away with it. We want to continue in a second part to this to compare the relationship of sons to that of slaves. I’m Sam Soleyn and we’ll continue this discussion.

Scripture References:

Deuteronomy 5:1-5a

Exodus 20:7

Exodus 20:16

Exodus 22:14

Exodus 21:12-14

Galatians 4:21

Deuteronomy 5:3

Galatians 4:24b-26

Galatians 3:15-29