

Exegesis of Exegesis of Heb. 8:7-13

by John Murray

The Mosaic Covenant is a shadow of the New Covenant, based on the principle of works, while the Abrahamic Covenant is based on the principle of grace.

Duration: 44:22

Topics: "Exegesis"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the unity of the Covenant of the Spirit, focusing on the passage in Galatians 3:17-22. The main point is that it is impossible to attain righteousness through works of the law. The speaker emphasizes that the Mosaic economy should not be interpreted as antithetical to promise and grace, as God did not establish a dispensation based on an impossibility. The sermon also touches on the relationship between the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant, highlighting the principle of grace in the latter.

Transcript

We proceed now with our subject, which is, broadly speaking, the unity of the commoners today. In case I forget at the end of the hour, will those who have to take re-examination please meet with me after the hour in order to try to arrange a time for re-examination. It may not be that we can get one now, that would be suitable for all, but we shall try.

Please try to see me at the bin. Now the obvious implication is that it is impossible to attain to righteousness of life by... What we have to take is the reason for which a Paul appeals to that principle in this instance. The reason is that because of its truth, because of its truth, we are not to find in the Mosaic economy the enunciation or proposal of any such arrangement.

The enunciation or proposal of any such arrangement. Note the connection between the first part of verse 21 and the second part. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid.

Or if a law had been given which was able to make alive verily from law righteousness would have been. What Paul is saying in effect is that we must not interpret the Mosaic economy in terms of a principle antithetical to promise and grace for the simple reason that anything antithetical is an impossibility. An impossibility.

And that God therefore did not promulgate a dispensation on the basis of what is another impossibility. In other words, it does not find its organizing and operative principle in a covenant of wax. Now five, and finally, we look at verse three, Galatians 3.22, which reads, But the Scripture has shut up all things under sin in order that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3.22. So you see, Paul here is appealing to Scripture in support of his interpretation of the Mosaic economy or the Mosaic covenant. He's appealing to Scripture, I say, in support of his interpretation of construction. And by Scripture here he must mean the Old Testament.

And since he has no qualification, he must mean the Old Testament in its entirety. And so, quite obviously, Paul finds in the Old Testament the principles which govern the gospel of grace. He finds in the Old Testament as a unit the principles that govern the gospel of grace.

Let's go back and look at the verse, isn't that what he's saying expressly? The Scripture has shut up all things under sin except the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. How do you think that it would be feasible for the apostle to appeal unqualifiedly to the Old Testament in order to support the principle of grace and of faith in such a large segment of the Old Testament? Or at least such a large segment of Old Testament history was governed by a principle that is the very opposite of grace? I think you can see the impossibility of verse 22 on any other basis than that the unified witness of the Old Testament is that it shut men up to faith, to faith, to grace. To give to grace, to promise.

Do you see this, perhaps? Verse 22 brings to clear focus, you would say into definitive focus, what had been the argument of the apostle all the way along the line from verse 17. And again, verse 22 confirms, confirms the interpretation of verses 17 through 21, which I have been presenting, is not really compatible with any other construction of the relation which the Mosaic covenant sustains to the Abrahamic. In a word, it is clear that the Abrahamic covenant is the fabric around which is woven the web of the Mosaic ritual and ordinance.

Mosaic ritual, now that was Galatians 3, you could go ahead in Galatians 3 and take verses 23 on to the end of the chapter and into chapter 4 to get additional context. Now, the next passage is what you find in the epistles of the Hebrews, but particularly related to Hebrews 8, 7 through 15 and Hebrews 10, 16 and 17. However, the starting point in these two passages in the epistle to the Hebrews, you have a contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant.

A reiteration of what you find in Jeremiah 31 through 34. A reiteration, quotation to a large extent of Jeremiah 31 through 34. Now the contrast is between the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant.

The terms of the passages make that quite clear. Contrast between the Mosaic and the new covenant. Now, anything that we should find in this epistle, because if in Galatians 3, 17 following, the question is the relation of the Mosaic covenant to what went before, namely the Abrahamic.

No, you go in the other direction. It's the relation of the Mosaic covenant to the new, to what followed. So you have an admirable sequence here on the very question of the issue.

What is the properties of a covenant? The Abrahamic which goes before in relation to the new covenant which follows. Here we are. Well, a definite contrast.

The writer of this epistle talks quite frequently about the haughtiness, using English terms, remember, haughtiness, defectiveness, imperfection of the old covenant. This is what an instance would have been. If

that first covenant had been haughtless, no place would have been sought for the second.

Haughtless? No, it was haughty. It was something that was going to pass away. Now you see, here you have that everything we're interested in.

What was the fault of the Mosaic covenant? What was it? Defects, incoming, inadequacy, what? Now this position, I'll listen, says, clearly, haughtiness of the Mosaic economy and of the Mosaic covenant was that it was a covenant of what? That it was based on the legal principle which is the antithesis of grace. And consequently, the sensationalist is going to expatiate on the basic inadequacy, the basic haughtiness, defectiveness of the Mosaic economy. It is going to the heart of the question, he must say, consisted in its legal governing principle.

And if the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, dealing so, so repeatedly with the defectiveness, haughtiness of the Mosaic covenant, held the same point of view, then he would be compelled to say the same thing. If he were a dispensationalist and did not say the same thing, he would be leaving the issue. The faultiness, the defectiveness, the shortcoming of the Mosaic covenant of contrast.

That should be clear, shouldn't it? What the faultiness according to dispensationalism is, and what the faultiness would have been enunciated to be if the writer were... Now we come to the question, what do we find? What is this faultiness? It is not this kind of contrast that he institutes at all. Not this kind of contrast. What is the contrast? Well, from chapter 7, verse 1 on, chapter 7, verse 1 on, the contrast and the sustained contrast is between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood that is after the order of Melchizedek.

The Levitical priesthood and the Melchizedek priesthood. And that is just saying that he construes this defectiveness in terms of the Levitical economy. The Levitical economy.

And if one thing is obvious, precisely this, that the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical ritual, however defective, did not exemplify the principle of wax in contrast. If that isn't clear, nothing can be clear. The whole Aaronic order, priesthood and the Levitical economy, have no affinity with the principle of wax because legalism, legalism, principle of wax, knows no mediation, no sacrifice for sin, no remissions.

But however imperfect was the Aaronic priesthood and the ritual connected with it, I say, however imperfect was the Aaronic priesthood and the whole ritual associated with it, they bespoke the remission of sin. Every high priesthood, in 3, chapter 8, verse 3, every high priest is ordained to offer both gifts and sacrifices. The Aaronic priest, you see, offered sacrifice first for his own sin and then for the sin of the people.

According to the law, all things were cleansed by blood, Hebrews 9, 22. So the defectiveness, the faultiness of the mosaic covenant resided in the imperfection of its gracious provisions, not at all in the imperfection that would have arisen from a covenant. Wax.

The imperfection of its gracious provisions did provide for sacrifice, it did for mediation, it did for remission of sin, it did for acceptance. So you see the contrast here, all together, in the ambit of grace. No second consideration derived from the epistle to the eagle.

And this is even stronger in reputation of the eagle than the one I just mentioned. It is the relation which the Levitical economy sustained to the new covenant, sustained to the new covenant. And that is set forth most clearly in Hebrews 9, 23 and 24.

Hebrews 9, 23 and 24. Therefore necessary, the pattern of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, antitypes of the true, but into heaven itself, now to be made manifest in the presence of God.

So if this isn't clear, nothing can be clear. Namely, that the Levitical sacrifices were patterned after the heavenly exemplar of Christ. And of course you can go further, you can say that the whole Levitical economy was patterned after the great exemplar that in due time would be fulfilled.

And of course you can go further, you can say that the whole Levitical economy was patterned after the great exemplar that in due time would be fulfilled. When Christ shed his blood, entered into the holy places not made with hands, was made manifest in God's presence. And therefore, they were, that is, these sacrifices which were of the Levitical economy, they were patterns, shadows, anticipations of what is central in the new covenant, namely the high priestly ministry.

Pattern, shadow, anticipation. Don't be confused. The writer, you see, calls them antitypes.

Christ is the antitype, in theological terminology. Don't be confused by the terms of the disciples used. He calls the Old Testament the antitype.

And Christ, you see, would be the type in the sense of the exemplar, that from which the antitypes are copied, you see, that's the usage. But he also uses the term pattern, if you point at him, he uses the term shadow, skia, and so on. Well, that's clear.

They were patterns. Now, what did the defectiveness consist, then? And what did the defectiveness, the faultiness, consist, which demanded a better sacrifice, demanded a heavenly sanctuary rather than a sanctuary of this world? What was the defectiveness? That they were shadows. They were only shadows.

Patterns. Not that from which you copy, but that which is copied. And therefore they were not the final reality.

But now, the all-important observation for all interest is, according to this writer of the New Testament, the Old Covenant was after the pattern of that which is central in the New Covenant. After that which is central in the New Covenant. And what is central in the New Covenant? What is central in the New Covenant? Certainly not a principle of works.

Not a covenant of works. Not legal obedience as the condition of salvation. It is central in the New Covenant, the condition of grace.

Now, the mosaic is, therefore, an adumbration, an analogy of the New Covenant, the center of its grace, efficacy, and perfection. And you see, therefore, that the whole principle developed by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the interpretation of the mosaic covenant in contrast with the New Covenant, simply and solely the mosaic covenant did not bring to final realization, did not bring to perfection the principle on which it operated, the principle it enunciated. But nevertheless, the principle is the same as that which we find was the Old Covenant.

It is a shadow, a pattern, an antitype, and therefore its governing principle. Governing principle is that of which it is a pattern, an antitype, a shadow. ...may be the eye, priestly, or lord and seeker.

Now, there are many, many, many questions to be answered. And therefore, numerous others consider these questions, which we are concerned now, more fully and more directly than these questions. As I said already, Paul, in Galatians, is dealing with the relation of the mosaic covenant to the Atomic, just as the Hebrews is dealing with the relation of the mosaic covenant to the New Covenant.

What we find in Paul's instance, according to Paul, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the contrast is to be entirely in turn of the principle of grace enunciated in the Abrahamic Covenant, and the principle of grace brought to its final fruition manifestly in the New Covenant. And with reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is well to bear in mind that he who ever says, and he may be the only one who expressly does that in the New Covenant, has the everlasting covenant. And therefore, he construes the Levitical economy as a shadow, pattern, lampeter, of that which has eternal validity.

It is not strictly proper to speak about the abrogation of the mosaic covenant. The mosaic economy, strictly speaking, it is not proper to speak. What is abrogated is the absurdness, because that which was taught, enunciated, set forth in the Levitical economy, is that which has permanent meaning and validity in that which provided the great exemplar, namely the sacrifice of Christ.

Now, I'm not going to deal any more with this subject. I'm going to pass on now to the next topic, which we deal in connection with the... In connection with the... We had, first of all, the plan of salvation. Then we have the interplanetary economy.

We have the unity that now makes, logically, that falls within the locus, soteriology. And therefore, we are dealing with that aspect of the doctrine of Christ, which is conditioned by and related to the plan of salvation, the interplanetary economy, and the covenant of grace. Last year you dealt with the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the person of Christ.

The phases with which you dealt last year under theology proper are those phases which are concerned with the immanent, immanent, not imminent, but immanent relations between the persons of Christ to the other persons of the Godhead, the immanent. Now, you see, we are coming into the field of history. We are dealing with the doctrine of the Incarnation.

First of all, we have the fact of the Incarnation. I judge the bell will ring in a second.

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