

The Law of God & the Christian

–Lesson 10–

- I. *Antinomista*: What effect did the law as a covenant of works produce on the Israelites?
- A. It sufficiently humbled them. There was a pride in the people who came out of Egypt. They said, “We are the people of YHWH; *we will do* all that He commands us” (Ex 19.8). Moreover, they had washed and purified themselves for three days before the Lord appeared. They were confident that they could “stand before Him.”
1. But when they saw the horrible sight and signs accompanying the giving of the law, they were afraid and stood afar off and said to Moses, “You go and speak to Him and bring word back to us, and *we will hear and do it*, but let Him no more speak to us, lest we die” (Dt 5.27).
 2. This desire for a mediator was commended by God as good and right (Dt 5.28-29). *In fact*, it was after this desire for a mediator, that the Lord renewed with them both the promise (of a seed) made with Adam and the covenant of grace made with Abraham (Dt 18.15-18).
- II. *Antinomista*: How does it appear that the Lord renewed the covenant of grace with them?
- A. In that the Lord, through Moses, gave them the Levitical laws, and ordained the tabernacle, the ark, and the mercy-seat, which were all types of Christ.
1. As the tabernacle was a type of Christ (Heb 9.11; Jn 2.19, 21), so God speaking from the tabernacle represented His speaking through a Mediator, even through Christ Himself. This was an appearing of God less terrible and more gracious than on Sinai, and which the people could therefore abide.
 2. Notice that all the Levitical laws given to Moses in Leviticus were spoken by God from the mercy seat (Lev 1.1; Ex 25.21-22).
 3. Notice that the covenant was made with Moses as the federal head of Israel (Ex 34.27). This pointed to Christ’s mediation and to the fact that the covenant of grace is made with Christ as the Federal Head of His people (WLC 31).
 4. And notice that the covenant made with Israel was sealed with blood, signifying the blood of Christ, Ex 24.3-8; Heb 9.15-22.
- III. *Antinomista*: But was it in every way the same covenant as the one made with Abraham?
- A. In substance and nature, it was exactly the same; but the Lord dealt with Israel as with children in their infancy, leading them by the hand with the help of ceremonial and earthly things which signified spiritual and heavenly things. Thus He led them by the hand to Christ through the types and shadows of an “under-age” dispensation in which the Spirit’s work was hemmed in until the fullness of time (Gal 4.1-5).
- IV. *Antinomista*: Did the Israelites see Christ and salvation by Him in the types and shadows?
- A. No doubt the believers among them did, for they offered their sacrifices by faith, Heb 11.24-28. When the believing Jew laid his hands on the head of the sacrifice (Lev 1.4), he no doubt, from his heart, acknowledged his guilt and condemnation and believed that YHWH transferred them both to the animal and would accept the animal’s death in his place, thereby forgiving him and removing his guilt. And the repeated offering of an animal was an act of faith in both the covenant promise of substitution and the covenant promise of a final substitute to come in the promised seed of the woman, the promised offspring of Abraham.
- B. Thus the believing Jews saw Christ in the promises of God and believed on Him for salvation, Heb 11.13, 26.

- C. Therefore all the Old Testament believers were partakers of one salvation and covenant with us, Acts 15.11; Gal 3.6-7; Heb 13.8.
1. The OT dispensation of the covenant of grace was in the form of promises and sealed with the blood of types and figures, which therefore all ceased with Christ's coming. They were led to hope in heavenly realities through the enjoyment of changeable earthly types.
 2. The NT dispensation of the same covenant of grace is in the substance of completed events and sealed with the blood of Christ Himself. We are led to hope in heavenly realities through the enjoyment of unchangeable, commemorative signs (baptism and the Supper) and our earthly blessings come second (Rev 21).
 3. It is in these ways that we are to think of the OT dispensation as "old" and the NT as "new," Heb 8.8-13. There is but one covenant of grace, WCF 7.6, administered by types in the OT and by substance in the NT, Heb 7.11, 22; 9.11-23.
- V. *Antinomista*: Then it seems clear that the OT believers were not saved by the works of the law.
- A. Indeed, they were neither justified nor saved, either by the works of the moral law or by the observance of the ceremonial law. When they saw at Sinai that they could not keep it, and were driven to the ceremonial law for communion with and access to God, they trusted in the promised Mediator which the ceremonial law prefigured.
- VI. *Nomista*: But surely the Ten Commandments served as a rule for their obedience?
- A. Yes it did. But not as it came from "God out of Christ;" but rather as it came from "God in Christ," or from "God revealed to them in the covenant of grace." Consider:
 1. After the law was given on Sinai, the Lord renewed the covenant of grace with them by blood, Ex 24.
 2. The Lord gave them a second set of tablets, for their instruction (not salvation), Ex 24.12.
 3. Moses was told to put the tablets in the ark, which represented Christ, showing that He would fulfill them, Dt 9.10, 25-10.5, and that He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes in Him, Rom 10.4.
 4. The law in the ark was covered by the mercy-seat and cherubim, which also represented Christ, to show that the law only comes to them through His mercy to them in Christ.
 - B. For the unbelieving Jews, the law still stood before them as covenant of works full of condemnation; but for the believing Jews, who trusted in the mediation of Christ in the types, the law as a covenant of works was shown to be fulfilled for them and now mediated to them from the mercy-seat as a rule for their obedience.

Bonus material:

- I. The covenant of grace was the *most principal* part of the Sinai transaction (*though the less conspicuous*), and was therefore published first in the words of the preface to the Commandments, Ex 20.2.
 - A. Following this covenant grant ("I am the LORD your God"), the Commandments were annexed as a rule of duty to Israel as His professed people, and especially to the true believers among them.
 - B. Notice how God shows that He is engaged to answer for them all the demands of His law as a covenant of works:
 1. Instead of saying to them, "Keep my Commandments, so that I may become your God" [i.e., Do and live.]; He says to them, "I am the LORD your God; therefore keep my Commandments" [Live and do.]. This grant has no other ground than Christ's mediation in the covenant of grace.
 2. At Sinai, God promised to forgive their sins (Ex 34.7), circumcise their hearts to love Him (Dt 30.6), take them for His inheritance, lead them, instruct them, and keep them as

the apple of His eye (Dt 32.9-10), and to dwell and walk among them (Ex 29.45-46; Lev 26.12). These are all promises of the covenant of grace.

3. **The first set of tablets (made by “God out of Christ”) were broken by Moses to show them that God would not relate to them “out of Christ” by the covenant of works; whereas the second set of tablets (made by Moses the mediator and therefore presented to the people as from “God in Christ”) were put in the ark (as if being entrusted to Christ to fulfill) and then covered by the mercy-seat, which was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice for the atonement of the covenant-breaking-people. God would relate to Israel “in Christ,” who would both satisfy the law for them and mediate the law to them.
4. Moreover, since the covenant of promise with Abraham was still in effect at Sinai, it was impossible for God to make a new covenant [of works] with Israel, Gal 3.17. It was therefore the same covenant of grace made with them as Abraham’s offspring.
5. Obviously, then, the sacrifices appended to the giving of the law at Sinai had no other efficacy than as the appointed types of Christ’s sacrifice of Himself, Heb 10.1, 14. It was only when an Israelite presented his sacrifice in the faith of the great atonement promised by the covenant of grace (made by Christ in time), that he received a real and full remission of sins.

**Next week: We’ll learn how Israel lived under the covenant of grace and what place the moral and ceremonial laws had in their lives.