

God's Glory in God's Word

Exodus Part 2: The Law

Theme: Holiness

Consider that since the Garden, man has been separated from God.

He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen 3:24)

Consequently, consider the instructions to the people prior to God descending on the mountain:

the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." (Exo 19:10-13)

And consider the second warning after He descends:

The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." (Exo 19:20-22)

The Holiness of God is demonstrated through the power on the mountain:

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. (Exo 19:16)

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. (Exo 20:18-21)

Theme: Covenant

*while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.** These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. **All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."** And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. (Exo 19:3-8)*

Recall our discussion of covenant theology. Considering the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, where does the giving of the law fall?

Consider the difference between Westminster and Charleston concerning the Covenant of Grace:

Westminster Confession

This covenant (the covenant of Grace) was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the Gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.

Charleston Confession

This covenant (i.e. the Covenant of Grace) is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament

As we consider the theme of the Law, we will see that the Law was not intended to serve as a type of Covenant of Grace – i.e. differently administered. On the contrary, it was necessary in order to point people to the Covenant of Grace – the New Covenant – which was man’s only hope. Because in spite of their promise “All that the Lord has spoken we will do”, they broke the covenant.

Theme: Law

Exodus 20:1-17: And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

- 1. You shall have no other gods before me.*
- 2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
- 3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*
- 4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- 5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*
- 6. You shall not murder.*
- 7. You shall not commit adultery.*
- 8. You shall not steal.*

9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.*

Notes:

1. The first 4 commandments deal with our relationship with God.
2. The next 6 commandments deal with our relationship with others.
3. Jewish law points to 613 laws given by God to the people.
4. Those 613 laws fall under the 10 carved into stone.
5. And those 10 can be summarized as follows:

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Mat 22:37-40)

Question: What was the purpose of the giving of the law?

It was never intended to save, but rather to demonstrate the need for redemption from the penalty of breaking the covenant – a covenant of works.

In the light of the law, we are all lawbreakers – sinners. And the wages of sin is death.

I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. (Rom 7:9-10)

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." (Gal 3:10-11)

But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture **imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.** Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, **the law was our guardian until Christ came**, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (Gal 3:21-26)*

The free gift of God is Christ keeping the law that we could not and applying his righteousness to us in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"-- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:13-14)

Salvation comes through trusting in Christ's work – not our own.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. (Gal 3:7)