

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 33.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #33. *Was the covenant of grace always administered after one and the same manner?*

A. The covenant of grace was not always administered after the same manner, but the administrations of it under the Old Testament were different from those under the New.¹

Question 1—*Is the covenant of grace one and the same covenant of grace under the Old and New Testaments?*

Answer—That there is an identity of the covenant of grace under the Old and New Testaments is proved by several considerations:

First, Scripture teaches that the covenant of grace, contracted with those under the New Testament, is the same covenant with that made previously with Abraham, Luke 1:68-73. Thus, Peter addresses the Jews concerning the days of Christ, predicted by the prophets, as consisting of that same covenant made with Abraham, Acts 3:25. So, too, Paul mentions this covenant and its promise in conjunction with the New Testament era, Gal. 3:8. It is upon this basis that Abraham is seen as an example for Jews as well as Gentiles, Rom. 4:3. This fact is established by calling the promise given to Abraham “the covenant” which was with Abraham “before confirmed of God in Christ,” Gal. 3:17.

Second, this identity is demonstrated from those substantive parts of the covenant of grace which form the foundation of all covenant blessings, Matt. 22:32; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3. This was proposed to Abraham, Gen. 17:7; renewed through Moses, Ex. 3:15; and confirmed in the captivity and after it, Ezek. 36:28.

Third, the identity of the Mediator, who is the foundation of the covenant, is one and the same, even the seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the serpent, Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14; Rom. 16:20. The same is the seed of Abraham in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16. In the Old Testament, he is the angel of LORD’s presence, Isa. 63:9; the angel of the covenant, Mal. 3:1; even the Mediator given for a covenant for the people, Isa. 42:6; 49:8; who bore the griefs of his people and was smitten for their sins, Isa. 53:5, 6. In the New Testament, he is the Mediator between God and man, 1 Tim. 2:5; the Mediator of the New Testament and a better covenant, Heb. 8:6; 9:15; who is the same Mediator for all time, Heb. 13:8; by whose grace the fathers, no less than we under the New Testament, were saved, Acts 15:10, 11.

Fourth, there is the same condition, faith, by which righteousness was imputed to Abraham, Gen. 15:6; and is proposed to us for an example, Rom. 4:11. Wherefore the faith of the ancients, which is proposed for our imitation, is the same required of us now, Heb. 12:1, 2; Rom. 4:12.

Fifth, there are the same spiritual promises given to them as are held forth to us, under the New Testament, Acts 13:32. Thus, it is that certain spiritual blessings are conferred upon believers under the New Testament which had been promised and given to Abraham, Acts 3:25, 26. This includes, the gift of the Spirit, Gal. 3:14; Ezek. 36:26, 27;

¹2 Cor. 3:6-9.

justification and remission of sins, Ps. 32:1; Acts 10:43; sanctification, Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:26; and eternal life, by promise, as Job, Job 19:26; and David, Ps. 22:26.

Sixth, the sacraments, as seals of the covenant, are in both testaments, as to substance, the same, signifying and sealing Christ and his benefits, Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 5:7. Thus, to the fathers, was ascribed baptism and the feast of the supper, 1 Cor. 10:1-4; and to us, under the Gospel, both circumcision, Col. 2:11, 12; and the Passover, 1 Cor. 5:7.

Seventh, the very law of Moses, under which the fathers were, instructed them concerning the covenant of grace and prepared and stimulated them to embrace it, so as to be a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, Gal. 3:24; and Christ is accounted the end of the law, Rom. 10:4.

Question 2—*Why did God administer this one covenant of grace in diverse manners under the Old and New Testaments?*

Answer—The fact that this same covenant of grace is administered differently is acknowledged within Scripture itself, 2 Cor. 3:6-9.

That God did this in order that his great wisdom and power might be the more clearly perceived appears by the following considerations:

First, under the Old Testament, God spoke to the fathers at sundry times (*πολυμερῶς*; *i.e.*, manifesting this revelation in different degrees) and in divers manners (*πολυτρόπως*; *i.e.*, using various modes of revelation), Heb. 1:1; but, under the New Testament, he speaks by his Son, Heb. 1:2.

Second, the condition of the church demanded that, while it was in a state of infancy, not having reached maturity, it should be treated as an infant, Gal. 4:1. In this state, God spoke, as it were lisping, giving sometimes the smallest measure of revelation, Isa. 28:9-11; these first elements and rudiments were, afterward, to make way for a fuller revelation, when the church had advanced and arrived at its adult age, Col. 2:16, 17.

Third, the dignity of the Messiah, Christ, and the excellency of his work is such that it was suitable first to propose his image to excite a desire and draw their minds to a heightened expectation, Ps. 78:2-8; Luke 2:25-32. It was just to reserve the open declaration of the great mystery of Christ, in order to explain more clearly the distinction between Moses and Christ, between the symbolic teacher and the heavenly teacher, Deut. 18:15; Heb. 3:3. In this manner, a conviction of man's weakness precedes that of the need of grace and an ardent desire for the Savior, 2 Cor. 12:9; Heb. 7:18, 19; Rom. 8:3.

Fourth, the nature of the things themselves, since many things were still future and prophecies before their fulfillment are wont to be obscure, this progress in revelation and administration should not be a matter of great wonder, Matt. 13:17; John 8:56. The more the time of fulfillment pressed on, the clearer and fuller the promises became; for example, from the beginning Messiah is promised as the seed of the woman, Gen. 3:15; then the son of Abraham, Gen. 12:2; from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:10; and from the house of David, 2 Sam. 7:13, 14. Likewise, the circumstances and conditions of his mother were added, that she would be a virgin, Isa. 7:14; concerning the place of his nativity, Mic. 5:2; concerning the time of his coming, Dan. 9:24-27; his twofold state of suffering and glory, Isa. 53; as well as his forerunner, Mal. 3:1.

The relationship between these two dispensations is that of the shadow, Heb. 8:5; to the brightness of the light which projects that shadow, 2 Cor. 4:4.