

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 34.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #34. *How was the covenant of grace administered under the Old Testament?*

A. The covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament, by promises,¹ prophecies,² sacrifices,³ circumcision,⁴ the passover,⁵ and other types and ordinances, which did all fore-signify Christ then to come, and were for that time sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah,⁶ by whom they then had full remission of sin, and eternal salvation.⁷

Question 1—*Did God reveal Christ to come to the Old Testament church by way of word, through promises and prophecies?*

Answer—God revealed Christ to come to the Old Testament church, by promises and prophecies, that they might take a view of him by faith, Rom. 15:8; Acts 3:20, 24. Thus, the Old Testament Scripture holds forth numerous promises and prophecies designed to excite them to desire and expect the Messiah: 1.) God told Abraham that in his seed, the Messiah, who should descend from him, should be the One in whom all nations of the earth will be blessed, Gen. 22:18. 2.) Again, God likewise held forth to Israel, by Moses, the hope of the coming Messiah, Deut. 18:15.

Later, he held forth farther light concerning the person and offices, as well as the sufferings and glory of the Messiah, Acts 10:43. Thus, Isaiah gives so clear an account that he has been called the evangelical prophet, speaking: 1.) Of his birth, given as a public blessing to the world, he holds forth numerous names discovering the divine nature by which he is fitted for this trust, Isa. 9:6, 7. 2.) Of the details of the birth of Messiah, that he should be born of a virgin, Isa. 7:14. 3.) That he has condescended to bear our sins and, as standing in our room and stead, has designed to make an atonement for them, Isa. 53:5, 6, 10, 11. 4.) Elsewhere, he speaks of his triumphing over conquered enemies, and pursuing of victories, Isa. 63:1.

Moreover, Jeremiah speaks of the Messiah as one who would grow out of the root or stock of David, when it was almost dead and dry, and that he should set up his glorious throne, and exercise a government over his people in a spiritual way, Jer. 23:5, 6. The prophet Micah gives us an account of the very place of his birth, Mic. 5:2. Another prophet signifies that he shall come at a time when the world would be filled with civil commotions, and cause it to feel the sad effects of those wars whereby the kingdoms of the world had been disjointed, and many of them broke in pieces, Hab. 2:7. The prophet

¹Rom. 15:8.

²Acts 3:20,24.

³Heb. 10:1.

⁴Rom. 4:11.

⁵1 Cor. 5:7.

⁶Heb. 8,9,10,11:13.

⁷Gal. 3:7-9,14.

Daniel speaks of him as the Messiah, or Christ, giving a chronological account of his coming, as well as his making way for another dispensation of the covenant, Dan. 9:24-27.

Question 2—Did God also reveal Christ to come through the administration of various types and ordinances of the ceremonial law?

Answer—There were many ceremonial and typical ordinances which God gave to the Jewish nation, which were significant representations of the grace that was displayed in the gospel, foreshadowing, as they did, Christ who was to come, Heb. 10:1. These all pointed to the grace of the covenant, or the accomplishment of what was to be performed by Christ after his incarnation, Col. 2:17.

The sacrifices, which were offered from the first ages of the world, were given as an intimation of that blood of the covenant, which was shed for the expiation of sin, *cf.* Gen. 4:3-4; 8:20. These sacrifices are part of that whole body of ceremonial law given at Sinai and intended to bring knowledge of that grace to be obtained by Jesus Christ, Heb. 8:3-5, 9, 10; 9:8-14, 19-22; 10:3-6, 10-13, 28, 29. Now, these were all typical ordinances holding forth the promises, not yet accomplished but, by faith, received and guaranteed, Heb. 11:13.

Additionally, circumcision was instituted, by which a visible mark, a token of the covenant, looking toward that promised seed, and it was given to Abraham when God was pleased to enter into covenant with him, Gen. 17:9, 10. This sign was continued in the church, throughout all generations, until our Saviour's time, being given as a sign and seal of that righteousness which is of faith, Rom. 4:11. Likewise, the Passover was ordained as a commemoration of Israel's departure out of Egypt, having in its many significant rites and ceremonies the setting forth of our redemption in Jesus Christ, whereby he is called by this, 1 Cor. 5:7. Jesus Christ is that sacrifice provided by God, Gen. 22:7, 8, 13, 14; the Lamb of God in whom and by whom the sin of the world is taken away, John 1:29.

Question 3—How were these things sufficient to build up his elect in the faith of the promised Messiah?

Answer—While it is true, that the Old Testament, when compared with the New, was veiled, 2 Cor. 3:13, 14; so that it was comparatively a dispensation of darkness when opposed to that of the gospel light, Isa. 21:11; Song 2:17; Mal. 4:2; yet, it was still a revelation sufficient to build up the elect in faith, *cf.* Jer. 23:5, 6; Zech. 13:7; Ps. 32:1, 2 *with* Rom. 4:6. Thus, Abraham is described as rejoicing to see the day of Christ, John 8:56; and Isaiah speaks particularly of his person and offices, Isa. 22:25; 52:13-15.

Those who lived under that Old Testament had sufficient helps designed to bring them to the spiritual meaning of the ceremonial law in the persons of the Levites, whose job was to instruct them in it, Deut. 33:10; Mal. 2:7. It is this spiritual meaning that continues to be a rule of faith and obedience under the New Testament, Rom. 15:4. These figurative representations of the ceremonial law functioned much like parables, Ps. 78:2; Ezek. 17:2. They are not without meaning but their meaning is veiled from those to whom it is not given to know, Luke 8:10. It is opposed to the plain way of speaking, when meaning is not veiled by the words used, John 16:29. At that time, salvation was of the Jews, not revealed to the Gentiles, Deut. 7:6, 7; John 4:22; so, this veiled mode of revelation was used to close up the truth to the Jews until the coming of Christ, Gal. 3:23, 24. To the Jews, the law functioned much as the parable which Nathan spoke to David, when he reproved him for his sin, it was not understood until he added the significant words which

made it clear, 2 Sam. 12:1-6. So, too, the Jews were instructed in the significance of the ceremonies, Deut. 30:6; Hos. 14:2; Ps. 116:17.