

## Week 5 Book II: Covenant and the relationship between Old and New Testaments

1. 2.10.1-5; 2.11.1, 4, 7, 9-11 Relation between the Old and New Testaments
2. 2.6.1, 4; 2.7.1-8, 10-15 The Place of the Law in Christian life

### Relationship between Old and New Testaments

all men adopted by God into the company of his people since the beginning of the world were covenanted to him by the same law and by the bond of the same doctrine as obtains among us. It is very important to make this point. Accordingly I shall add, by way of appendix, how far the condition of the patriarchs in this fellowship differed from ours, even though they participated in the same inheritance and hoped for a common salvation with us by the grace of the same Mediator. (2.10.1)

‘The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in mode of dispensation.’ (2.10.2)

*Subsequent frameworks:*

#### 1. *Dispensationalism*

(i) man in innocence	creation to expulsion from Eden
(ii) under conscience	until the flood
(iii) in authority over the earth	until Babel
(iv) under promise	from Abraham
(v) under law	from Moses
(vi) under grace	under the gospel
(vii) under personal (millennial) reign of Christ	
(other Dispensationalists have come up with different divisions since then)	

#### 2. *Covenant Theology Structure*

1. The Covenant of Works (or Nature)
2. The Covenant of Redemption (‘eternal’, ‘inter-Trinity’, which is not distinguished by some from:)
3. The Covenant of Grace

*Calvin in context*

Michael Servetus and the Anabaptists, ‘regard the Israelites as nothing but a herd of swine ... fattened by the Lord on this earth without any hope of heavenly immortality.’ (2.10.1)

(2.10.2): 1. The Israelites were given the hope of immortality. 2. God’s mercy in *calling* Israel was the foundation of their hope, and not their own efforts. [Explained in 3.15-18]. 3. They ‘knew Christ as Mediator’.

## 1. Continuity is assumed

### *New Testament teaching*

'When the apostle says [in Rom3:19-21] that the promises of the gospel are contained in it, he proves with utter clarity that the Old Testament was particularly concerned with the future life.' (2.10.3)

John 8:56: 'Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad'. The implication is, God was 'discharging his ancient oath, [so that] one cannot but say that the Old Testament always had its end in Christ and in eternal life.' (2.10.4)

### *Old Testament Testimony*

- (a) *Same word, so same hope* (2.10.7)
- (b) *God's promise of fellowship* (2.10.8)
- (c) *Not God of the dead* (2.10.9)
- (d) *Patriarchs' perspective* (2.10.10-15)
- (e) *Psalms* (2.10.16-19)
- (f) *Prophets* (2.10.20-22)

### *Conclusion*

'that the Old Testament fathers (1) had Christ as pledge of their covenant, and (2) put in him all trust of future blessedness.' (2.10.23)

Scripture that has a strong explanatory power for many of the challenging biblical passages.

## 2. Discontinuity between the Old Testament and New Testament

'freely admit the differences in Scripture ... but in such a way as not to detract from its established unity.' (2.11.1)

He spots four differences (2.11.1, but he would be happy to add a fifth without objection):

1. *Old Testament emphasis on material blessings was a teaching tool* (1-3).

The curses and blessings were never the 'sum total' for Israel, rather 'they looked [at these], as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven.' (2.11.1)

2. *Old Testament had worship ceremonies that pointed to Christ, through the use of types* (4-6).

'It was fitting that, before the son of righteousness had arisen, there should be no great and shining revelation, no clear understanding.' (2.11.5)

3. *A 'literal' versus 'spiritual' difference between the two ages* (7-8).

'We are not to surmise from this difference between letter and spirit that the Lord fruitlessly bestowed his law upon the Jews, and that none of them turned to him. But it was put forward by way of comparison to commend the grace abounding, wherewith the same Lawgiver – assuming, as it were, a new character – honored the preaching of the gospel.' (2.11.8)

4. *Old Testament is typified by bondage and law, while the New Testament by freedom and 'gospel' (9-10).*

'But when through the law the patriarchs felt themselves both oppressed by their enslaved condition, and worried by anxiety of conscience, they fled for refuge to the gospel.' (2.11.9)

5. *A change from one nation to all nations (11-12).*

#### Objections:

- (a) *God changes his dealings implies that God is inconsistent? (2.11.13)*
- (b) *Why not right first time? (2.11.14)*

### **3. The Place of the Law**

'The law was added about four hundred years after the death of Abraham [cf. Gal. 3:17]. From that continuing succession of witnesses which we have reviewed it may be gathered that this was not done to lead the chosen people away from Christ; but rather to hold their minds in readiness until his coming; even to kindle desire for him, and to strengthen their expectation, in order that they might not grow faint by too long delay.' (2.7.1)

Typology comes about because:

- (1) the unified reading of the Bible
- (2) God as sovereign and consistent in his dealings
- (3) the centrality and necessity of Christ's work for *all* who will be saved.

If emphasis is placed on the difference between OT and NT:

- (1) the nature of Scripture which will be read as two disparate parts;
- (2) the work of Christ, only applicable to first century onward
- (3) the character of God: how different in Old and New Testaments

#### ***Third Use of the Law***

'The term "law" for Calvin may mean (1) the whole religion of Moses (2.7.1); (2) the special revelation of the moral law to the chosen people, i.e. chiefly the Decalogue and Jesus' summary (2.8); or (3) various bodies of civil, judicial and ceremonial statutes (4.20.14-16 ...). Of these, the moral law, the "true and eternal rule of righteousness" (4.20.15), is the most important' (348 n.1)

Three uses explained:

Firstly 'it warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness' (2.7.6)

Secondly 'at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law,' (2.7.10)

'The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns... [It is] the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they

aspire... It provides exhortations and 'by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression.' (2.7.12)

*Haven't Christians been 'released from the law'?* (Romans 7:6)

*Of moral law:* 'That we should not be borne down by an unending bondage, which would agonize our consciences with the fear of death... no part of the authority of the law is withdrawn without our having always to receive it with the same veneration and obedience.' (2.7.15)

*Of ceremonial law:* 'Just as the ceremonies would have provided the people of the Old Covenant with an empty show if the power of Christ's death and resurrection had not been displayed therein; so, if they had not ceased, we would be unable today to discern for what purpose they were established.' (2.7.16)

(1) if Christ had not come the ceremonies would have been empty because they pointed to nothing;

(2) if they continued after the reality was here then it would have been unclear, to us, what they were pointing to.