

# **Response Paper to Far as the Curse is Found**

by

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There is a huge discontinuity between the old and new covenants! That is the common misunderstanding held by many. Here I am referring to people's idea that the Old Testament represents a different God than the God of the New Testament. Though this view has been popular it assumes a fundamental discontinuity between the old and new covenants to the exclusion of any continuity between them. What we see from this is the importance of needing to understand is the relation of the old covenant to the new. We need to ask questions such as: Where is there continuity between the old and new covenant? Where is there discontinuity? How did Jesus fulfill the old covenant? Answers to these questions are discussed in chapter 12 of "Far As the Curse is Found."

There is continuity between the old and new covenants. Isaiah mentions an everlasting covenant that God will make with Israel in Isaiah 6:8. Jeremiah distinguishes between the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant when he says, "It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers." (p. 210) Despite this tension, the Mosaic covenant is not faulted but rather Israel's disobedience. "Jeremiah anticipates neither the abrogation of law nor the writing of a new law." (p. 211) Jeremiah describes the covenantal goal of an intimate relationship between God and His people. He tells us that God's law will be written on the hearts of God's people. "In writing the law upon the heart, in giving Israel a believing and obedient heart, God is fulfilling the original intent of the Sinai covenant." (p. 212) Having an obedient heart was always the precondition for a covenant experience.

Discontinuity between the new covenant and the old covenant is also discussed. What sets the new covenant apart from his dealings with the people in the old covenant is that God addresses the issue of Israel's disobedience. God is going to give the cure to the disease of sin. In the new covenant God will remember sin no more. "The sin problem will be finally and definitively dealt with. Sin will no longer be a problem. Covenant breach will come to an end." (p. 214) The solution to sin is monergistically imposed. The new covenant brings about a consummation of creation and fulfills the promise of the messiah coming from David. It is the blood of Jesus that

inaugurates the new covenant as Hebrews 7-10 describes. The once-for-all sacrifice comes in the blood of Jesus who both links and separates the old and new covenants.

Jesus fulfills the old covenant. Matthew's gospel is abundant in covenantal themes. God's promises find their fulfillment in Christ. Jesus is the one who is anticipated by Moses who fulfills all of the obligations given by the Mosaic covenant. Christ fulfills the covenant by his perfect obedience to it. Jesus is the true Israel (Matt. 2:15ff.). He succeeds where Israel failed. Jesus is the true Adam. He defeats Adam's sin. Christ brings righteousness, grace, and justification to life. He effects the forgiveness of our sins as our covenant head. Christ rendered the old covenant obsolete in that he fully replaced the Old Testament sacrificial system. The new covenant abrogates: circumcision, food laws, and cultic and civil aspects of the law. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost ended the mediation of the knowledge of God in the Old Testament system. As a result, the Spirit of God is poured out unrestricted on all people. In Christ, all people have knowledge of God that is personal.

The relation of the new covenant to the law is discussed. Jeremiah promised that the law would be written on the hearts of people, but many Christians have argued that Christ rendered obsolete the Mosaic covenant. Paul writes as if law and grace stand in opposition to one another. He says that the believer is not under law but grace (Rom. 6:14-15) and that the new covenant people of God have died to the law (i.e. Rom. 7:4). Yet, Paul also seems to affirm the role of the law when he says that Christians should fulfill the law (i.e. Rom. 3:31; 8:3-4). To reconcile this we need to recognize that the New Testament affirms that God's law is written on people's hearts. God holds his people responsible to live within his moral order. The Ten Commandments summarizes the moral law and is clearer and more fixed than the natural law which is written on people's hearts. The reason that the law exists is not to create sin lists, but to challenge us to walk in God's ways. Jesus emphasizes that the law is about allegiance to God in his summary of the law (Mark 12:30-31).

There are important lessons to be learned from the continuity of the old and new covenants. Because God fulfills the covenantal goal of relationship with His people, all people can have a personal relationship to God. Since, the law is written on the hearts of people, I can be assured that the people to whom I preach all know the law. Since, the law is written on my heart, I must walk in conformity to God's ways. Because God decided to write His laws on peoples hearts, I see how God values relationship with His people. In God's giving of the law on people's hearts, I am empowered to preach the importance of being in right relationship to God because it is in this giving of the law that God gives an obedient heart to His people. When I evangelize I can have confidence in the fact that since God has given the law on people's hearts, then the people to whom I preach are empowered to be obedient.

The discontinuity of the old covenant to the new is a cause for rejoicing. Since, the problem of sin has been dealt with in the new covenant I can have assurance that God will remember my sins no more when I confess them. I can proclaim to people the good news of Jesus doing away with the problem of sin once-for-all. Because sin has been definitively dealt with in Christ, I can rejoice in that I am no longer separated from God because of my sin. Since, sin is dealt with through Jesus, I am empowered to take the news of God's solution to sin to all the unreached people in the world. Because the problem of sin is solved I am able to live in a right standing with God. Since, God has given the cure to sin, I must encourage all people to whom I preach to in the Church to share Christ with the lost.

Jesus' fulfilling of the Old Testament has applications for life. I am now righteous before God, and justified on behalf of what Christ has done. God has given grace to me and to all people. Christ stands in and acts as the covenant head of the church. Because of Jesus there is no need for the sacrificial system. We do not need to sacrifice bulls, goats, or rams. Since, Christ fulfills the law there is no need for anyone to keep the Old Testament dietary laws, to be circumcised, or keep the civil and cultic laws of the Old Testament. All people can rejoice that God's Spirit has been poured out on them and that they are able to have a personal relationship with God.

There are applications to be applied concerning the relation of the new covenant to the law. I am responsible for upholding God's moral law to people and living within His moral order. I must recognize that the purpose of the law is challenge me as well as all people to live according to God's ways. Since, this is the purpose of the law I need to always remain faithful to encouraging people to live according to God's law. Since, the heart of the law which is given in Jesus' great summary is allegiance to God, I need to see the law as having a positive aspect. This positive aspect is that the law is given so that we might know how to walk in right relationship to God. Hence, I see that the law is not be equated with legalism, cast in legalistic terms, or in purely negative terms. Because the law has this positive aspect, I am responsible for preaching and teaching it to people in my ministry.

The relationship between the old and new covenant has much commend to us. It helps us to see the continuity which exists in all of the Bible as well as the discontinuities which exist. It affects all of our life from how we may eat, how we are to live, the confidence that we can have in Christ, and how we understand the knowledge of God which He has written on our hearts. Since, this teaching affects these aspects of our lives let us not neglect it and let us teach it to all people.