

**Class 10:** The purpose of this class is to understand the nature and the function of the Law (Decalogue or *Ten Commandments*) as it was delivered to Israel at Mount Sinai.

**1. The nature of the relationship between God and Israel was a covenant of grace not a covenant of works.** See Ex 2:23-25 *etc*

**2. God gave the law to Israel as a rule of life for Israel.** Our goal is to understand the original context of the law as delivered to Israel at Sinai. Exodus 20:2 established the context of the Decalogue. God gave the law to the people who He had redeemed from slavery in Egypt and who had made His own covenant people.

**3. God gave the Decalogue to Israel to distinguish Israel from the other nations of the world.** Exodus 19:4-6 describes the characteristics of Israel as God's redeemed, covenant people. God redeemed Israel to make Israel *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. To be a *holy nation*, Israel had to reflect the holiness of God in their individual lives and nation; therefore, God gave Israel the Decalogue as a reflection of His holy character. Israel was to be distinguished by living according to God's law of perfect holiness rather than the law of the kingdom of the world.

**4. Law observance was not the meritorious ground for the blessing of the covenant, i.e. the Promised Land.** The land was given to Israel out of God's free grace. Notice that the promise of the Land of Canaan was given before the Decalogue. See Gen 12, 15, 17; Ex 3:7-8 *etc*; and Gal 3.

**Secondary but necessary attributes of the Law in the Covenant of Moses:**

**5. Retention of the land by Israel depended upon obedience to the law, but the basis was not strict justice.** We will cover this attribute of the law in more detail when we get to Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In short, when Israel ceased to reflect the Kingdom of Heaven and their identity as the Church, God removed them from the land. One transgression of the law did not lead to expulsion. Israel was exiled when the whole nation, especially the King, had become apostate, but remember that in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, God restored (or promised to restore) Israel to the land of Judah. They were not a nation again, but they were returned after 70 years in exile.

**6. There is a danger in neglecting the legal character of the Mosaic Covenant.** The Bible teaches continuity between the OT and the NT, but the legal character of the Mosaic Covenant is a certain discontinuity. The discontinuity was in measure of liberty, not in nature of the covenant grace.

- The Law echoed the principle of the covenant of works with Adam. In other words, God requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to receive the inheritance of eternal life. Even though Israel was under the covenant of grace, God reminded them of the perfect holiness required of them in the Decalogue. (*For example, see the parable of the rich young ruler.*)
- The Law also taught the Gospel. A quick examination of the sin and guilt offerings of Lev 4 and 5 demonstrates that the Gospel was given to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant also. The sacrifices of atonement were given alongside the law of perfect righteousness. You can say that the law served the Gospel in the Mosaic Covenant. The legal nature of the Mosaic covenant exists in the fact that even the most sincere OT believer was bound to keep the ceremonial law, the laws for purity etc.
- The NT believer has a greater liberty than the OT believer because he is not required to keep the ceremonial because it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion:**

1. Both the NT Church and the OT Church were under the covenant of grace.
2. The Law of God applies to the NT Church as a rule of life also. (Rom 6, Col 3)
3. The NT Church is still called to be holy nation and royal priesthood. (1 Peter 2)
4. The true inheritance of eternal life is given by grace alone through faith alone. (Eph 2:8-9)
5. There is a danger if the NT Church ceases to be the Kingdom of Heaven. It is similar to the threat given to Israel in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Revelation 2 and 3 gives similar threats for abandoning the true faith. If a church ceases to be The Church, God threatens to remove its lampstand, which can be interpreted the pastor. In other words, the means through which God administers the covenant of grace will be removed – i.e. preaching of the Word and sacraments. (See WCF 7.5)
6. Christ kept the ceremonial law, so NT believers have a greater liberty to approach the Lord through Jesus Christ.