

The School of Biblical Law
Introduction to Law and Grace
Lesson Eighteen: “The Self-Maledictory Oath, Part 1”

Because all of mankind is under the sentence of death and no one is able to merit a right standing with God, God manifests His grace and mercy by way of offering a covenant, which explains the terms upon which God will deal with man. The covenant is activated when man takes the self-maledictory oath.

1. The giving of every covenant unto man is always due to God’s willingness to favor and assist.

The covenant is not necessarily mutually beneficial to both God and man since God is self-sufficient and completely independent of His creation, needing nothing from it.

The following are examples of covenants of grace:

- Noah found grace (Gen. 6:8).
- Abraham was called to separate from family and country (Gen.12:1).
- Jacob was a supplanter (Gen.25:26).
- Israel was like a newborn cast away when God had pity (Ez.16:3-6).
- David was called from following the sheep (Ps.79:70-71).
- The church is a people who were not a people (Hos.1:10; Rom.9:26).

2. The covenant is ratified by a self-maledictory oath.

Self-malediction literally means to speak evil of oneself.

The one taking the oath would call down evil on himself if he failed to keep the terms of the covenant; or, in essence, he would acknowledge the penalties ascribed to his failure to live under the ethics outlined by the sovereign within the covenant.

3. Examples of this type of oath include:

- Taking the oath by the vassal in the Suzerain treaties
- Swearing to tell the truth in court of law or incur perjury
- Signing a loan note knowing it carries penalties and interest
- Calling down unrealistic penalties to secure a privilege
- Releasing the sanctions on Mt. Gerizim (blessing) and Mt. Ebal (cursing)
Deut.27:9-26.

Because the ethics of God’s covenant could be summarized in “Be thou holy as I am holy” (Lev.11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; I Peter 1:15-16), the man, who received the grace of covenant life, would still remain under the threat of sanctions should he fail to keep covenant terms and live a life of holiness. Therefore, terms for restitution are usually found within a covenant, for example financial penalties can be attached to transgression and serve to re-set the terms and promises. In the case when the ascribed penalty is as severe as death, the hierarchy would seem to be without hope for restitution and thus restoration. What is the hope for the covenant man who’s sin has the death penalty attached?