

The School of Biblical Law
Introduction to Law and Grace

Lesson Twenty: “The Self-Maledictory Oath and New Covenant Sacraments”

God cut covenant with Abraham and promised that the negative sanctions, which resulted from failure to live up to all the terms of the covenant, would fall upon a substitute and not upon Abraham. God took the self-maledictory oath in the place of Abraham when the smoking furnace and burning lamp passed between the pieces of the animals (Gen. 15:17-18).

1. Abraham participated in the oath by way of the covenant act of circumcision. Gen. 17:10-14 reads: “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed . . . must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.”

Circumcision was a bloody symbol of covenant (*berit* – to make a compact or league in the sense of cutting).

Circumcision represented the cutting away of reproduction from the old seed line, which was death after Adam’s transgression, and the forwarding of a new living seed line based upon covenant.

2. The covenant symbol of circumcision found in the Old Covenant was replaced in the New Covenant with the sacrament of water Baptism.

The following passages reveal the New Testament view of circumcision:

- Acts. 15: The Council at Jerusalem no longer required converts to be circumcised.
- Rom. 2:28-29: Paul describes true circumcision to be of the heart and not of the flesh.
- Col. 2:11-14: Paul equates the rite of circumcision with the ordinance of baptism.

3. Water Baptism testifies of the New Covenant believer participating in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; thus affirming that the malediction fell upon Jesus as the believer’s penalty was vicariously ascribed to Christ as the substitute.

Water Baptism , like circumcision, testifies of the cutting away of reproduction of the old seed line, which was death after Adam’s transgression, and the forwarding of a new living seed line based upon covenant.

4. The sacrament of Communion is an act of covenant renewal where the believer remembers that the curses were imputed to Christ’s sacrifice (I Cor. 11:23-32).

In the ordinances of baptism and communion, the believer testifies that covenant law is operative and that every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward (Heb. 2:2); but the covenant offered in Christ provides for the penalty to be appropriated to the substitute. Covenant life includes the efficacious sacrifice.