

# The Promise and the Law

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**Text:** Galatians 3:15-29<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction:**

- I. “Since they [Ebionites] want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians.” (Jerome, *Epist.* 112.13)
- II. It is hard to imagine a desire to be both Jew and Christian. Surely part of this is due to the fact (to the best of my knowledge) I am not an ethnic Jew. Yet neither were most of the Christians who first read Galatians. But there was an influential minority persuading the Gentile converts to desire and practice Judaism along with the gospel. The resulting hybrid religion would look an awful lot like Ebionism. In fact, Ebionism only works if the book of Galatians, as well as the rest of Paul’s epistles, are rejected.
  - A. The Ebionites seem to be a second century heir of the influence and teaching that the apostle Paul is inspired to counter and correct within the Book of Galatians.
    1. It’s an oversimplification (and anachronistic) to call the gospel’s opponents in Galatia, circa AD 48, “Ebionite.”
      - a. There were different parties of Judaizers challenging the church at different points of doctrine and practice intermittently throughout the first four centuries of the church. Because they were different parties, the ground of their heresy was not always the same. (Christie-Murray, 17)
      - b. Some would lump Ebionites into a Gnostic camp and not purely Judaizers because of particular doctrinal positions.
    2. However, consider a snapshot of Ebionite beliefs.
      - a. “Ebionism developed from those Jews who had converted to Christianity, but who refused to give up the ceremonial observances of the Old Testament... They believed they were the chosen people of God.” (Brumback, 45)
      - b. “The main body of those who were classed as Ebionites asserted the obligation of all Christians to keep the law of Moses. They rejected the apostolic office of Paul. They used only the Gospel of Matthew, and that in a mutilated form. In their view Christ was a mere man, conceived in the ordinary way, and distinguished only by his righteous walk and the superior endowment of the Spirit which came upon him at his baptism. They were also millenarians, and looked for the coming of Christ to inaugurate a visible reign at Jerusalem. But the party of Jewish dissent was not altogether homogenous.” (Sheldon, 196)
    3. Second century Ebionites rejected Paul as an apostate from the Law.
    4. They clearly followed another gospel, an anathema, by emphasizing Torah observance, denying the significance of the cross, and mingling gnostic notions about the person of Christ (See “Ebionites” below, VI.B).
  - B. But the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write an admonition in the book of Galatians. Gentile Christians need not desire, let alone practice, Judaism. Every blessing they sought, they

<sup>1</sup> My outline of this text follows the same basic path found in Reese, Wharton, and Wiersbe.

already had in Christ through God's only gospel. In wanting to be Jew and Christian they were "foolish" and "bewitched" (Gal. 3:1). Ostensibly, with the best of motivations, their hearts were being deceived about Paul's message and God's plan for salvation.

- III. In Galatians 3:1-14, Paul quotes from the Old Testament six times to demonstrate that God's plan for salvation was not realized in keeping the works of the Law of Moses. Rather, it is the way of faith in Christ which justifies.
  - A. Judaizers<sup>2</sup>, evidently, were perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ by their handling of the Law of Moses and teaching that it must be observed for all Christians – Jew and Gentile – as essential to salvation.
  - B. Paul contends this is false and anathema. Instead, Jewish Christians must come to understand that they are saved like the Gentiles (through the gospel of Christ) and not for keeping the Law (Gal. 2:15-16; 5:4; cf. Acts 13:38-39; 15:11).
- IV. Yet obviously there is a relationship between the gospel way of salvation and the Law. What is it?
- V. In Galatians 3:15-29, Paul explains the proper understanding and relationship of the Law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ.
  - A. He presents scriptural history about God's promises to Abraham, demonstrating that only the gospel can be the fulfillment... in Christ.
  - B. The promise to bless all nations (Jews and Gentiles) by Abraham's descendent is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His way of justification for sins.
  - C. A corporeal family of Abraham (Jews, Israel), as well as the revelation of God's will for that people (i.e. the law) both served in the process of accomplishing God's promises.
  - D. Paul does not disparage the Law but shows how by positively understanding its role and duration there is no cause for Gentile Christians to begin observing it, nor for Jewish Christians to compel anyone to observe it...because they have received the promise!

### Body:

- I. **The Promise Is Unaltered By The Law (Galatians 3:15-18)**
  - A. "Brethren" (3:15) is certainly a kinder tone than "foolish" (Gal. 3:1). Now Paul reasons from the scriptures. There are logical appeals and arguments for the Galatian Christians to stay in the gospel, continue in the grace of God, and resist the influence and arguments of Judaizing teachers (Gal. 1:6-8; Acts 13:38-39, 43).
    - 1. A good attitude of discussion and investigation. Truth never fears investigation.
    - 2. Paul will use the Scriptures (what we consider the Old Testament) to demonstrate the truth of the gospel and the foolishness and futility of forsaking it for Torah observance.
  - B. Paul begins with "using a human illustration" (Gal. 3:15, HCSB). It is commonly understood and agreed among men how covenants operate. Paul begins with common ground. His

<sup>2</sup> "When a non-Jew began to behave as if he were Jewish, he would be said to 'Judaize.' Gentiles could Judaize, not Jews. This implies that when Christians are said to Judaize, these Christians are of Gentile, not Jewish origin... The apostles called Gentiles to 'turn to God' but it was by Faith in Jesus Christ not by Judaism or Torah observance (Acts 15:14, 19; 26:17-20)... Moses has had people reading him and preaching him for many generations and he is still read in the synagogues every Sabbath – yet that didn't get the Gentiles turning to God. But the gospel does (Acts 15:21)." (Roberts, 48)

logical case for the superiority of the promise through faith over the works of the Law begins with a shared understanding concerning the innerworkings of covenants. What is the common understanding?

C. The way of covenants (Gal. 3:15).

1. The word “covenant.”

a. “The basis of the illustration is the double meaning of the Greek word *diatheke*. The ordinary secular meaning of the word was a man’s last will or ‘testament.’ The Greek translation of the OT used the word to translate the Hebrew *berith*, ‘covenant.’ Since the word which might have been expected, *suntheke*, implied an agreement between equals, the Jews preferred *diatheke*, which preserved the idea of God’s determination of the stipulations in the covenant.” (Ferguson, “Christian Use of the Old Testament,” 358)

b. “**διαθήκη last will and testament... a will that has been ratified Gal 3:15**; cp. 17... in LXX δ. Retains the component of legal disposition of personal goods while omitting that of the anticipated death of a testator. A Hellenistic reader would experience no confusion, for it was a foregone conclusion that gods were immortal. Hence a δ. decreed by God cannot require the death of the testator to make it operative. Nevertheless, another essential characteristic of a testament is retained, namely that it is the declaration of one person’s initiative, not the result of an agreement betw. two parties, like a compact or contract... In the ‘covenants’ of God, it was God alone who set the conditions; hence **covenant...** can be used to trans δ. only when this is kept in mind” (BDAG, 228).

2. The way covenants work.

a. Once confirmed or executed...

b. Consequently, they cannot be added to or taken from – altered in any way.

c. This mirrors the unalterable nature of all of God’s revelation.

1) Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32

2) Proverbs 30:6

3) Revelation 22:18-19

4) Obviously, no one will add to or take from God’s word to Abraham.

3. If men’s covenants (between equal parties) are unalterable, how much more the covenant God made to Abraham (unequal parties). Not even Abraham would alter it, let alone any other who comes along afterward.

4. Paul’s readers are likely all nodding in agreement at this point. Paul is laying a foundation to say that the Law of Moses is NOT part of the covenant to Abraham.

D. The promises were made to Abraham and to his Seed (Gal. 3:16).

1. “Covenant” from v. 15 now substituted with “Promises” (v. 16).

a. “**ἐπαγγελία declaration to do someth. with implication of obligation to carry out what is stated, promise, pledge, offer...** God’s promise” (BDAG, 355).

b. Observation about this word swap. When we consider the process of a **διαθήκη** (covenant) from God and especially this aspect, “it is the declaration of one person’s initiative, not the result of an agreement betw. two parties, like a

compact or contract... In the ‘covenants’ of God, it was God alone who set the conditions,” – a covenant from God actually differs very little from God making a promise.

- c. Indeed, because God does not lie (Heb. 6:16-18), and His word always comes to pass (Isa. 55:10-11), whether God makes a promise or God makes a covenant practically differs very little.
    - 1) If God makes a promise it is understood to be unconditional.
    - 2) If God makes a covenant, there may well be conditions.
    - 3) But God will always perfectly keep His word, whether as a promise or as party to a covenant.
  - d. “The word promise is used eight times in these verses [Gal. 3:15-29 – A.R.], referring to God’s promise to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). This promise involved being justified by faith and having all the blessings of salvation (Gal. 3:6-9).” (Wiersbe, 701)
2. What is the identity of the Seed (v. 16)?
- a. “**σπέρμα** the source from which someth. is propagated, *seed*... male seed or semen... Then, by metonymy... **the product of insemination, posterity, descendants**... *descendants, children, posterity*...” (BDAG, 937)
  - b. Paul makes a grammatical argument of singular “Seed” versus plural “seeds.” Paul emphasizes singular versus plural to point to the Messiah. The promise and its repetitions/reiterations are singular: Seed.
    - 1) Genesis 12:3
    - 2) Genesis 18:18
    - 3) Genesis 22:18
  - c. God has continually appointed the line of Christ to fulfill this promise.
    - 1) God chose Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).
    - 2) God chose Isaac not Ishmael (Gen. 17:17-19).
    - 3) God chose Jacob not Esau (Gen. 25:21-28; Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13).
    - 4) God chose Judah from the Twelve tribes (Gen. 49:8-10).
    - 5) God chose Jesse from the tribe of Judah (Isaiah 11:1-10).
    - 6) God chose David from Jesse’s sons (Jeremiah 33:14-17; Acts 13:22-23).
    - 7) Jesus’ genealogy testifies to this Messianic lineage (Matthew 1:1-17). Fulfillment of Messianic prophecies and expectation shows God’s appointment.
    - 8) Paul argues that God’s promise and covenant was with Abraham and the Messiah.
  - d. Jesus Christ is the Messiah. Jesus Christ is the Seed (v. 16).
    - 1) “Paul ultimately interprets the OT promise of a seed in terms of Christ, the paramount offspring of Abraham (Gal. 3:16-19; cf. Gen. 12:7). As head of the corporate community (Gal. 3:29), Christ is identified as the ultimate

fulfillment of the divine promises to the patriarchs and later to David (Acts 13:23, 33-37).” (Verbrugge, 1183)

- e. However, Jesus is only part of the Seed argument. For the singular “seed” may be understood as a singular descendent but may also be understood as all of their progeny, offspring, or descendants.
- 1) “Paul’s use of *sperma* occasionally transcends the basic physical relation to include the spiritual descendants of OT believers. Consequently, the NT expression ‘Abraham’s seed’ is not restricted to the generic house of Israel, but includes all who possess the same kind of faith as the patriarch had (Gal. 3:29). The OT promise to the patriarchs thus includes the ultimate spiritual blessing of all who believe, Jew or Gentile (Rom. 4:16-18).” (Verbrugge, 1183)
  - 2) “God’s covenant with Abraham is embodied in the promises which ‘were made to Abraham and to his offspring’: this is the ‘covenant previously ratified by God’ which cannot be annulled or even modified by the law which was promulgated 430 years later (Gal. 3:16f.) Paul, however, insists that Abraham’s offspring to which the inheritance was secured by God’s covenant is not exclusively, and not necessarily, his offspring ‘according to the flesh’ but ‘according to the spirit’. Abraham’s offspring is primarily Christ – we recall the argument that the Greek word *sperma* is singular, and can therefore refer to an individual as well as to a plurality of descendants – and then the sum-total of those who belong to Christ: ‘if you are Christ’s then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise’ (Gal. 3:16, 21-29).” (Bruce, 52)
  - 3) “The promise to Abraham, ‘in you shall all the nations be blessed’, is finding its realization in the Gentile mission: ‘those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith’ (Gal. 3:8f.).” (Bruce, 52)
- f. Paul’s exegesis of the “seed” to ultimately include Gentiles certainly has garnered discussion. And as we might imagine. Jews would contend that a genetic posterity is really all that “seed” would demand.
- 1) “In imagistic use of metonymy  $\sigma\pi$ . is also used w. ref. to Abraham’s spiritual descendants, i.e. those who have faith like his... **Gal. 3:29**. – It is contrary to normal OT usage (for, even if Gen. 4:25; 1 Km 1:11  $\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha$  is used w. ref. to a single individual, he stands as the representative of all the descendants) when one person, i.e. the Messiah, is called  $\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha$  and thus is exalted above the mass of Abraham’s descendants... **Gal. 3:16, 19**” (BDAG, 937)
  - 2) “Paul’s exegesis in Gal. 3:16-19 has sometimes been criticized for its artificiality. Note that the pl. of the Heb. word of ‘seed’ generally means grain or crops (e.g., 1 Sam. 8:15); thus the Heb. of Gen. 12:7 must have been sing., even though God’s promise to Abraham was not confined to a single individual but extended to his posterity. Yet Paul’s argument in Gal. 3:16-19 is not grammatical but theological. In the first instance, the seed refers to the people of Israel, the posterity of Abraham. Although the children of Ishmael also descended from Abraham, there was only one covenant people (seed) descended from him, the line that came through Isaac. Christ as the ultimate seed represents the covenant through Isaac.” (Verbrugge, 1183)

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- 3) “The Messiah, as the true descendant of Abraham and the true representative of his people, and in him his elect ones, as sharers in experiences and his benefits, are seen as the legitimate heirs of God’s promises. While the Judaizers at Galatia may have insisted that the promises made to Abraham and his seed involved the Jewish people as a whole, Paul finds a deeper application of this principle.” (Verbrugge 1184)
3. The Law came 430 years later (Gal. 3:17).
- a. Paul cites Exodus 12:40 for the figure 430 years.
  - b. However, the LXX reading of Exodus 12:40 evidently differs from the Hebrew reading of this text.
    - 1) The LXX of Exodus 12:40 communicates that 430 years refers to the time that the children of Israel sojourned in Canaan and Egypt.
    - 2) The Hebrew of Exodus 12:40 communicates that 430 years refers strictly to the sojourn in Egypt, and does not refer to Abraham or Isaac.
  - c. How is 430 years calculated?
    - 1) Willis wrote, “The 430 years needs some discussion.” (Willis, 146)
      - a) “The period from the giving of the covenant to Abraham to the deliverance from Egypt is here given as 430 years; this reflects the LXX reading of Exodus 12:40, which gives the time of the sojourning of the children of Israel in Canaan and in Egypt as 430 years... The Hebrew text, however, limits the 430 years to the sojourn in Egypt, not including the period from the giving of the covenant until the removal to Egypt during the time of Joseph. Genesis 15:13 rounds this number to 400 years for the time of the affliction, and Stephen, in Acts 7:6, follows the number of 400 years for the Egyptian sojourn. One might be inclined to totally discount the LXX reading were it not for the chronological support given by the genealogies in Genesis.” (Willis, 146-147)
      - b) “Notice how the genealogies in Genesis lend support to the LXX reading. Abraham dwelt in Canaan for 25 years prior to the birth of Isaac (Gen. 12:4; 21:5). Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born (Gen. 25:26). Jacob was 130 years old when he moved his family to Egypt (Gen. 47:9). This makes 215 years from the giving of the covenant until the time that Israel moved to Egypt. If Israel was in Egypt for 430 years, the total number of years from the giving of the covenant until the giving of the Law was 645 years.” (Willis, 147)
      - c) “On the other hand, if the LXX reading is treated as authentic, we have 430 years for the time from the giving of the covenant to the giving of the Law. Of the 430 years, 215 are required for the period from the giving of the covenant to the removal to Egypt. The genealogies must now be consulted for the rest of the argument. Joseph was 39 when Jacob came to Egypt (Gen. 41:46-47; 45:6). Since Jacob was 130 years old at the time Israel went into Egypt, Joseph must have been born when Jacob was 91 years old. Joseph appears to have been born at the conclusion of the fourteenth year of Jacob’s service to Laban (Gen. 30:25), which lasted altogether 20 years (Gen. 31:38, 41). Hence, Jacob

was approximately 71 years old when he moved to work for Laban; he married Leah and Rachel at 78 years old. His third son by Leah, named Levi, could not have been born prior to his 81<sup>st</sup> year. Therefore, Levi must have been approximately 49 years old (130 minus 81 = 49) when the Israelites moved to Egypt. Levi lived to be 137 years old (Exod. 6:16). Amram, father of Moses and Aaron, married Jochebed, his father's sister (Exod. 6:16-20). Jochebed was the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bore to Levi in Egypt (Num. 26:59). Jochebed must have been born less than 88 years (number of years lived in Egypt is calculated by subtracting 49 from 137) after the descent into Egypt. We do not know how old she was when Moses was born. We do know that Moses was 80 years old when he led the people out of Egypt (Exod. 7:7). If we let  $x$  equal the age of Jochebed when Moses was born, we have the formula  $88 + x + 80 =$  the number of years Israel was in Egypt. If the LXX chronology is correct, the children of Israel were in Egypt 215 years and Jochebed was approximately 47 years old ( $88 + x + 80 = 215$ ;  $x = 47$ ) when she gave birth to Moses. If we adopt the Hebrew reading of 430 years for the sojourn in Egypt, Jochebed was 262 years old ( $88 + x + 80 = 430$ ;  $x = 262$ ) when Moses was born. Strictly following the genealogies leans in favor of the LXX reading. The problems with the Hebrew reading are resolved by understanding that generations have been omitted in the genealogical tables." (Willis, 147-148)

- d) Helpfully (?) while the LXX makes sense, if we assume omitted generations in the genealogies, the Hebrew reading makes sense, too.
- 2) I doubt the Judaizing teachers would quibble with Paul over 430 years, especially since it does come from Exodus 12:40. Paul's argument stands whether 430 years encompasses the lives of the patriarchs or not.
  - 3) A number of suggestions have been put forward to clarify these calculations. The one I currently favor: "Paul was counting from the time Jacob went into Egypt, when God appeared to him and *reaffirmed* the covenant (Gen. 46:1-4). The 430 years is the time from God's confirmation of His promise to Jacob until the giving of the law at Sinai" (Wiersbe, 702, emphasis his).
    - a) I like Wiersbe's solution because...
    - b) Paul emphasizes a "confirmed" covenant (Gal. 3:17).
      - 1] "a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it" (Gal. 3:15).
      - 2] "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God..." (Gal. 3:17).
    - c) Focusing on "confirmed," we then notice Psalm 105:7-12. It uses the language of "confirmed" in regards to the covenant once it was spoken to Jacob.
      - 1] The "covenant" is made with Abraham
      - 2] His "oath" to Isaac.
      - 3] "Confirmed" it to Jacob

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- 4] Admittedly, Psalm 105 specifies the Land promise (Psalm 105:11). Perhaps we should not apply Psalm 105 to the Seed promise.
  - 5] However, it seems to me, these promises go together. They were all repeated to Isaac and Jacob.
4. Thus, the Law cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed by God in Christ (Gal. 3:17).
    - a. “The covenant was confirmed and ratified 430 years prior to the giving of the Law. Therefore the giving of the Law was not a part of the original covenant. The giving of the Law at a later date did not make the original covenant invalid... Once God had made an unconditional promise to Abraham, binding himself by an oath (Heb. 6:13-20), its fulfillment was guaranteed. Whatever happened later could not alter the promise or the covenant that God had made with Abraham; it was inviolable.” (Willis, 146)
    - b. The Law cannot add to or take from the promise.
  - E. God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise (Gal. 3:18).
    1. The inheritance, which is the blessing of all nations was promised to Abraham and his Seed.
    2. It’s mistaken to look to the Law to bring the blessing. It will not come from the law. It was never intended to come from the Law.
    3. God made a promise to Abraham. God gave a Law to national Israel. Yet if the blessing came from the Law, there’d actually be a problem. It would mean that the covenant with Abraham had been changed after-the-fact and that cannot be.
  - F. The Promise is unaltered by the Law. This allows us to see that the promise will be the promise and the law will be the law. If the law does not bring the blessing, indeed, the law cannot bring it, what purpose does the law serve?

## II. The Promise Is Greater Than The Law (Galatians 3:19-20)

- A. What purpose then does the law serve (Gal. 3:19)?
    1. As Paul begins to present and unpack a proper understanding of the relationship between the Law and the Promise, he starts with the appropriate order and weight of the Promise.
    2. The Promise is greater than the Law. The Judaizers suggested the Law is greater than the Promise. At least implicitly by their doctrine, if not explicitly. Possibly the Judaizers held a notion that the Law could justify men or that the Law was the fruition of the promise – national Israel, an earthly progeny of Abraham. Then again, they may not have concerned themselves with Abraham’s promise and its relationship to Jesus. Yet Paul’s arguments deconstruct all of these perspectives.
    3. But Paul does not denigrate the Law of Moses. It came from God. Christians must be taught to keep it in its proper role and perspective.
    4. “Paul’s specific answer to ‘Why then the law?’ is given in four statements. 1) It was added because of transgressions; 2) it was in effect until the Seed of the promise had come; 3) it was put in place by angels, and; 4) by the hand of a mediator.” (Saltz, 38)
  - B. The Law was added because of transgressions (Gal. 3:19).
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1. Here, Paul gives a purpose for the Law and it is related to transgressions.
  2. Augustine's view was that the Law was added to provoke transgressions. By causing people to sin, the Law both demonstrated and assured the need of a Savior for all men.
  3. This perspective on the Law tends to make it sound like a stumbling block, itself, and that God tempts men to sin. I know Augustine would not see it that way, but nevertheless it makes the Law sound like an intentionally bad thing. But Paul continually says it is good – when properly understood through Christ.
  4. Within the paragraph of Gal. 3:19-25, the overall contextual answer for the question, “why the Law?” is: “the law was our guardian (παιδαγωγός) to bring us to Christ.” The guardian (see below, III. E) was not a brutal, drunken, child abuser. Rather the guardian was primarily to protect and guard his charge against both himself and those who would harm him.
  5. “When considering the pedagogue, the law must have been added as a benefit for Israelites who needed to be taught about cleanliness and or interactions with others. It also served a disciplinary role, providing the Israelites a knowledge and recognition of sin and punishment for disobedience (Rom. 7:7).” (Saltz, 39)
  6. In this light, the Law was good and necessary just as any authority figure over small children. “Rules” are never put in place to harm children. They are there to protect children and instill proper values and judgments in children. Having said that, children invariably break some rule, and can develop bad attitudes toward rules in general.
  7. The Law was given as a disciplining system, (“stick and carrot,” if you will) to keep Abraham's descendants (Israel) in a path pursuing the righteousness and holiness of God until the time of the fulfillment of the promise.
- C. The Promise is Greater Because of Its Duration (Gal. 3:19).
1. The Law was temporary.
  2. “It was added... until the Seed should come”
  3. Unlike the Promise, which was made to the Seed (Christ) and continues with the Seed (who lives).
  4. The Law had a limited duration. From the time it was given, it foretold a time when it would cease.
    - a. What was the Law of Moses prophesying?
    - b. What cannot be denied is that once the Temple fell in AD 70, the practice of Judaism, true Torah observance, was finished. Thus, whatever the Old Testament was picturing and foretelling must be accomplished by then.
    - c. Was it prophesying rabbinic Judaism?
    - d. Or was it prophesying the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church?
    - e. Paul says it was all about Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4-5).
  5. The appearance of Christ in the time of God would mean the cessation of the authority of the Law in the lives of God's children.
- D. The Promise is Greater Because of its Scope.
1. Notice that the promise is connected with “blessing” and it is for “all nations” in Galatians 3. All – whether Jew or Greek – are sons and heirs according to the promise.

2. Notice that the Law is connected with “curse” and there is no mention at all of “all nations” in connection with the Law in Galatians 3.
  3. This difference reminds us that the Law was limited in scope to Israelites (Deut. 4:7-8; 5:1-5, 15).
- E. The Promise is Greater Because of its Communication (Gal. 3:20).
1. The Law was appointed by angels through the hands of a mediator (Gen. 3:19).
    - a. This speaks to the process by which God was working with Moses. God to angels to Moses (Acts 7:53).
    - b. Moses served as a mediator between God and Israel (Deut. 5:5).
    - c. The idea seems to be that by the time Israel receives their Law it is third hand. This is not to be construed as planting doubts about the soundness of the revelation. Paul is in no way suggesting that somehow angels or Moses corrupted the Law.
  2. However, God is one and spoke directly to Abraham and the Fathers when He made the Promise (Gal. 3:20).
    - a. “God who gave the promise is one (party). When God made His covenant with Abraham, He did it personally, without a mediator. The promise was not third hand like the Law of Moses was; therefore the promise is superior to the Law... The unspoken, but understood idea is that the quality of the messenger is directly related to the importance of the message. No doubt, God is a superior messenger to Moses.” (Reese, 157)
    - b. “A mediator stands between two parties and helps them to agree; but there was no need for a mediator in Abraham’s case since God was entering into a covenant with him, not Abraham with God. ‘God is one’ (Gal. 3:20), therefore there was no need for a go-between.” (Wiersbe, 702)
- F. “The priority of the promise over the law is unquestionable: the promise came first, is permanent, and was delivered by God Himself, while the law came much later, is servant to the promise, was temporary, and was given by angels through a human mediator.” (Wharton, 113)
- G. Now that Paul has established the weight and order of the Promise, he turns to deal with the role of the Law – a secondary and supporting role to the Promise.

### III. The Promise Is Complimented And Served By The Law (Galatians 3:21-25)

- A. What should be our attitude toward the Law of Moses then? Is it hostile to God’s promises (Gal. 3:21)?
1. The law didn’t hinder God’s promise but it didn’t fulfill it either.
  2. The law was NOT that which blessed all nations.
- B. If there had been a law given that could give life, it would have been by the Law of Moses (Gal. 3:21)!
1. People make up many laws and systems.
  2. If righteousness could come by a law, it would come by the Law of Moses. The Law which God gave to Israel through a mediator. After all, it came from God.
  3. But we see it wasn’t the plan or the design for the Law to do this.

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- C. A contemporary Jewish perspective and critique of Paul's treatment of the Law of Moses is found in *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* by Prager & Telushkin, pages 78-91.
1. "Whether or not Jesus was the Messiah is not the most important question that divides Judaism and Christianity. The major difference between Judaism and Christianity lies in the importance each religion attaches to faith and actions. In Judaism, God considers people's actions to be more important than their faith; acting in accordance with biblical and rabbinic law is the Jews' central obligation. As Christianity developed, however, it did away with most of these laws, and faith became its central demand." (Prager & Telushkin, 78)
  2. While Prager & Telushkin go on to argue why they don't believe Jesus is the Messiah either, I found it amazing that, in their opinion, the most significant difference between Judaism and Christianity was over keeping "biblical and rabbinic law."
  3. What makes a Jew a Jew? What keeps a Jew a Jew? The Law (Eph. 2:11-18). What makes Jews and Gentiles into one people, the sons of God? The Faith (Eph. 2:11-18; Gal. 3:26-28).
  4. Prager & Telushkin attack Paul for what he wrote about the Law in Gal. 3:10-14. They accuse Paul of formulating a new and hostile ideology toward the Law that became dominant within Christianity.
    - a. Prager and Telushkin attack Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:10 as "a mistaken reading." "Pauline ideas" and "Paul's caricature of the law" are attacked as being purely his own notion. "Paul misunderstood (or intentionally changed)" Deuteronomy 27:26. Hence, there is "a mistranslation which remains in the New Testament." (Prager & Telushkin, 80-82)
    - b. *Mistakes, misunderstandings, and mistranslations* all amount to: Paul was wrong and his writings should be rejected.
    - c. "The Pauline idea that a person is cursed by God for breaking any law (see *Galatians* 3:10-3) was a new one, not to be found anywhere in the Bible or in normative Judaism. From where, then, did Paul develop this notion?" (Prager & Telushken, 80)
  5. Perhaps unbelievers have always wondered where Paul's teaching originated. While Paul does not go to great lengths to defend his apostleship in Galatians, he does assert it.
    - a. His message came through the revelation of Jesus Christ – not from men (Gal. 1:11-12).
    - b. He was an apostle due to Jesus Christ selecting Him and God separating him for the work (Gal. 1:1, 11-12, 15-16).
  6. However, Paul does not deserve to be singled out among the apostles and vilified for his understanding, use, or preaching of the Law of Moses. While Paul focused on a Gentile field, all of the apostles were farming with the same seed and water – one faith, one gospel, one apostolic doctrine – in order to evangelize both Jews and Gentiles. It is a grave error to set Paul against Peter. (See Roberts, "The Early Christians and the Law of Moses", 53-55)
  7. Paul knew Jews did not truly keep the Law even before the Temple fell (Gal. 6:13). Surely Paul would be shaking his head at current arguments for Rabbinic Judaism,
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that somehow twenty-first century Jews act in accordance with biblical Law today, without the Levitical Temple system at all.

D. What is the purpose of the Law?

1. A rabbinic response: “The law’s purpose is, of course, the universal recognition of the rule of God, a goal which neither Christianity nor Judaism believes has been realized.” (Prager & Telushkin, 79, footnote)
2. Paul did not present the purpose of the Law in this way at all.
3. Yet Paul does no violence or disrespect to Moses’ Law or the Scriptures. We do well to observe that Paul’s approach to differentiating the Promise and the Law is entirely different from other religious leaders who distinguished their religious movements from previous religions or the beliefs previously held by the new adherents. Examples help:
  - a. Paul does not disparage or destroy the Law as did Gnostics to the Old Testament in 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.
    - 1) Adolf Harnack (1851-1930), famous German church history professor of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century described Gnosticism as an “acute secularizing or hellenizing of Christianity, with the rejection of the Old Testament.” (Quoted in Bock, 21)
    - 2) “The different Gnostic sects either rejected the Old Testament entirely, like Marcion, or else made the Old Testament Scriptures mean what they wanted by the most fantastic allegorical interpretations.” (Green, 134)
    - 3) Paul stresses that the Law is good. It is Scripture. Unlike Gnostics, Paul argues for one and the same God who revealed the Scripture (what we call the Old Testament) and likewise revealed the gospel. The same God appointed Paul an apostle to proclaim it (Gal. 1:1, 11-12, 15-16).
    - 4) This points to the tension of continuity-discontinuity between the Gospel and the Law of Moses.
    - 5) How the Old Testament is viewed and treated is a significant distinction between Christianity and Gnosticism.
  - b. Paul does not teach nor practice a Doctrine of Abrogation as is taught and practiced in Islam.
    - 1) Forgive me if this feels a bit anachronistic. I understand that Islam began 600 years after the life of Paul. However, it’s been said that Islam’s doctrine of Abrogation is like Paul’s treatment of the Old Testament. The idea is that the New Testament “abrogated” the Old Testament.
    - 2) Islam’s preacher Muhammad taught that the previous scriptures of the Torah and the Gospel had been corrupted by Satan.
      - a) “We have sent no messenger or apostle before you with whose recitations Satan did not tamper. Yet God abrogates what Satan interpolates; then He confirms His revelations, for God is all-knowing and all-wise.” (Ali, Surah 22:52)
      - b) “When we cancel a message (sent to an earlier prophet) or throw it into oblivion, We replace it with one better or one similar. Do you not know that God has power over all things?” (Ali, Surah 2:106)

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- c) “When we replace a message with another – and God knows what He reveals – they say: ‘You have made it up,’ yet most of them do not know.” (Ali, Surah 16:101)
- 3) Muhammad claimed that a part of his prophetic mission, as well as a personal prerogative, was Abrogation – to correct all the corruptions of God’s word interpolated by Satan through the workings of various Jews and Christians.
  - 4) The Doctrine of Abrogation meant that Muhammad could change or throw away or annul any teaching by any previous prophet. Furthermore, this power extended even to himself and so he could contradict himself on occasion. When this happened, it was to be understood that whatever he said on a subject most recently abrogated whatever had been said or written previously.
  - 5) Paul never says that the Old Testament is corrupted or in need of correction. While He warns strongly against Satan, Paul never hints that the Lord cannot or would not safeguard His word (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). Rather Paul contends that God’s people must love the truth.
  - 6) Furthermore, Paul’s thrust in Galatians 3:15-29, is that God’s word never fails. What He spoke to Abraham was not altered or violated by giving the Law 430 years later. The reason the Law of Moses and covenant with Israel was succeeded by the covenant of Christ for all men was because it was designed to be succeeded. It prophesied it would be succeeded. God’s word in the Old Testament was not corrupted at all. It was completed.
  - 7) Let Christians be careful about using terminology such as “abrogate” or “annul” with regard to the OT/NT relationship. God’s word can never be abrogated or annulled.
- c. Paul uses OT Scriptures, quoting them, to explain both the continuity and discontinuity between the Promise and the Law. Often we speak in terms of Old Testament or New Testament.
4. As we begin to understand Paul’s explanation of the continuity and discontinuity between God’s Law for Israel and His Promise to Abraham, let’s be aware that our reading of Galatians leads us to a different understanding than many Protestant Reformers who have gone before us.
    - a. Martin Luther said “Moses knows nothing of Christ.” (Wright, 57)
      - 1) Grant Luther the hyperbole.
      - 2) It still is too much to say. Jesus said Moses testified of Him (John 5:45-47; Luke 24:47).
      - 3) We must recognize a complementary relationship between Old Testament and New Testament not oppositional.
    - b. Some Reformers and Theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thought that “the ‘civil’ and ‘ceremonial’ laws being abolished...the ‘moral’ ones remained...” They ignored “the fact that most ancient Jews would not have recognized such a distinction.” (Wright, 57)
      - 1) Neither in the Old Testament writings nor New Testament writings do we find the teaching that some portions of the Old Testament still exercise
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authority over Christians while others Jesus fulfilled and so brought them to fruition. Jeremiah prophesied a new covenant, not like the existing covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:7-13; 10:11-18).

- 2) Alexander Campbell's *Sermon on the Law* is best understood as a critique and rebuttal of the classic Protestant division of Old Testament into "civil," "ceremonial," and "moral" laws. Rather the Law, as a whole, must be understood in relation to the Gospel. They are two unique systems of Justification and as the book of Galatians demonstrates, taking up portions of the Law requires one to take up all the Law (Gal. 2:16; 3:10-12).
  - 3) Indeed, if Jesus failed to fulfill all which the Law and Prophets said, the Law has not been fulfilled and the conclusion would be to practice Temple Judaism (Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-47). But this is impossible for the Temple is gone!
5. For Paul, the gospel is the word of God (Gal 1:11-12; cf. 1 Thess. 2:2, 13) and the Scripture is the word of God (Gal. 3:8; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul continually appeals to Scripture to uphold and teach the gospel (Gal. 3:8, 22; 4:30).
- a. Clearly things changed. There is discontinuity from Judaism and Torah observance to Christianity and being led by the Spirit.
  - b. Yet there must also be continuity. The One God had one plan to bless all mankind.
  - c. "It is not hard to imagine illustrations of how this continuity and discontinuity function. When travelers sail across a vast ocean and finally arrive on the distant shore, they leave the ship behind and continue over land, not because the ship was no good, or because their voyage had been misguided, but precisely because both ship and voyage had accomplished their purpose. During the new, dry-land stage of their journey, the travelers remain – and in this illustration must never forget that they remain – the people who made *that* voyage in *that* ship." (Wright, 57)
  - d. But in Galatians, the metaphor Paul chose to explain the relationship of the Promise to the Law is *Paidagogos*.
- E. Explaining the metaphor of the *Paidagogos* is understanding the role of the Law (Galatians 3:24).
1. The question raised in Galatians 3:19, "What purpose then does the Law serve?" is answered summarily in Galatians 3:24, "Therefore the law was our guardian to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."
    - a. "Therefore" in Gal. 3:24 helps us see that information in Gal. 3:19-23 was bringing us to this conclusion.
    - b. Thus, the picture of a *Paidagogos*, has been painted and now labeled. Conversely, the picture of a *Paidagogos* becomes an interpretive key to help understand earlier statements about the Law in Gal. 3:19-23 that might seem cryptic to us.
  2. "παιδαγωγός" Orig. 'boy-leader', the man, usu. a slave...whose duty it was to conduct a boy or youth... to and from school and to superintend his conduct gener.; he was not a 'teacher' (despite the present mng. of the derivative 'pedagogue'... παιδαγωγός and διδάσκαλος are differentiated... When the young man became of age, the π. was no

longer needed... In our lit. **one who has the responsibility for someone who needs guidance, guardian, leader, guide**. As a pers. to whom respect is due, beside the father... **1 Cor. 4:15**. The law as a π... Paul evaluates the Mosaic law as a παιδ. ε□ζ Χριστόν **Gal 3:24**, where the emphasis is on the constrictive function of the law in contrast to freedom in the gospel. Humankind remains under its constraints, □π□ παιδαγωγόν vs. **25**, until God declares, by sending his Son, that it has come of age...the law had temporal limitations.” (BDAG, 748)

3. Descriptions of the *Paidagogos* of in the Greco-Roman world.
  - a. “In a household, the guardian responsible for the care and discipline of the children.” (NKJV, Gal. 3:24, note 1, 1025)
  - b. Plutarch: “And yet what do pedagogues teach? To walk in the public streets with lowered head; to touch salt-fish with one finger, but fresh fish, bread, and meat with two; to sit in such and such a posture; and in such and such a way to wear their clothes.” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, in Saltz, 36)
  - c. Plutarch commenting on the slave, Arastus: “And all the world thought Arastus was a good pedagogue for a kingdom no less than for a democracy, for his principles and character were manifest, like color in a fabric, in the actions of the king.” (Plutarch, *Lives*, “Arastus” 48.3, in Saltz, 36)
4. The time of the *Paidagogos* is limited.
  - a. “Over all, the pedagogue functioned to protect the heir – both from himself and from others – until he had reached maturity, able to protect and guard himself, and was ready to inherit his position and title...[the pedagogue’s] role – and authority – ended when the heir assumed his position.” (Saltz, 37).
  - b. “Now if the Law was a custodian and we were confined under its direction, it was not opposed to grace but cooperated with it. But if it continues to bind us after grace has come, then it is opposed to grace... Those who maintain their custody at this point are the ones who bring the child into the greatest disrepute. The custodian makes the child ridiculous when he keeps him close at hand even after the time has come for his departure.” (Chrysostom, *Homily on Galatians* 3.25-26)

F. How is the Old Testament the Christian’s *Paidagogos*?

1. So long as Christians keep with the apostles and their understanding and use of the Old Testament Scriptures, we will always see the positive, molding power of the Old Testament for a godly worldview and rejoice in its promise and prophecies that are fulfilled in Christ.
2. The Apostles quoted and expounded the Law of Moses in various ways but all showing Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. Jesus is the explanation of it all! NT writers quote the OT extensively, though their sense of quotation will not always follow our current standards of quotation in modern writings. The following list shows various uses of the OT in NT exposition of the doctrine of Christ.

1 Peter 3:18-24	OT: Types	NT: Antitypes
Galatians 4:21-31	OT: Allegory	NT: Reality
Colossians 2:11-17	OT: Shadows	NT: Substance
Ephesians 3:1-12	OT: Mystery	NT: Manifestation
2 Corinthians 3:4-18	OT: Veiled	NT: Unveiled
Acts 3:18-26	OT: Prophecies	NT: Fulfillment

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3. The Apostles, as per Paul in Galatians 3, proclaimed continuity from OT to NT.
    - a. There is one God, the same God for Jews and Christians, now fully known in Jesus Christ.
    - b. The OT shows God's promises, prophecies and plan from the beginning, come to fruition in Jesus Christ.
    - c. The same Holy Spirit who had brought about the OT was active in the Apostles – He was moving, leading, and they were His instruments. Through them, the Holy Spirit was manifesting power (in signs and wonders) and knowledge (in revelation to be preached and penned). The Galatians were witnesses of this (Gal. 3:5).
  4. If we follow the Apostles' example – their recognition, respect, and use for the Old Testament Scriptures – we see several blessings and benefits in the *Paidagogos* for every Christian of every age.
    - a. The Old Testament Points to Christ (John 5:39, 45-47).
      - 1) The Old Testament bears witness of Christ and continues to point to Him.
      - 2) This is the reason that Christians cannot give up the Old Testament, and it is also the reason it is not authoritative.
      - 3) Road sign analogy: Road signs are very valuable in directing a person to his destination but are passed by when he reaches his destination (Gal. 3:24-25). So to, the OT provides road signs pointing to Christ. But Christ is the goal and the authority. One no longer depends on the witnesses when he has the object of their testimony to examine for himself.
      - 4) The Jews studied the Law as an end in itself, but instead of being life-giving in itself, it pointed away from itself.
      - 5) Galatians shows that the Law had to point to something else because the Law does not give life (Gal. 2:16; 3:21-22).
      - 6) It only leads to life insofar as it leads to Christ. It only makes us wise for salvation insofar as it leads to the wisdom of Christ (1 Cor. 1:18-25).
    - b. The Old Testament Shows the Unfolding Purpose of God (1 Pet. 1:10-12).
      - 1) The prophets, themselves, didn't understand all that they said or wrote.
      - 2) Yet they served Christians because Christians can understand it.
      - 3) It all makes sense in Christ. The gospel reports what the prophets predicted.
      - 4) Galatians highlights the story of God's promises to Abraham and how redemptive history brought it all about (Gal. 3:16-18, 29).
    - c. The Old Testament Instructs in Salvation (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
      - 1) The Bible of the Early Christians was the Old Testament, truly the LXX.
      - 2) Yet it was understood in light of Jesus Christ.
      - 3) The Old Testament canon was accepted with faith in Christ.
      - 4) The Old Testament was supplemented by the teachings and interpretations of Jesus and the apostles – Scripture that we call the New Testament.
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- a) For Christians, “Scripture” became broader than the Old Testament even as the apostles lived and wrote.
  - b) Luke 10:7 is “Scripture” just as Deut. 25:4 according to 1 Tim. 5:18.
  - c) Paul’s epistles are “Scripture” according to 2 Peter 3:15-16.
- 5) Thus, the NT today is the authority of Christian faith and practice. It’s the inspired record of the fulfillment and inspired interpretation of all that came before it in Jesus.
- 6) The Christian Faith is the key for understanding the Old Testament.
- d. The Old Testament Provides Righteous Examples to Follow:
- 1) By Faith, they pleased God (Heb. 11).
  - 2) Persevere like Job (Jas. 5:8-11).
  - 3) Pray like Elijah (Jas. 5:16-18).
- e. The Old Testament Provides Warnings Against Disobedience.
- 1) The Israelites’ punishment in the wilderness warns us that we must endure to enter our rest (Heb. 2:1-4; 3-4).
  - 2) Israel’s stubborn and trying behavior should not be repeated by saints (1 Cor. 10:1-11). They are our examples.
  - 3) Notice, the fulfillment of the OT has come upon Christians (1 Cor. 10:11).
- f. The Old Testament Gives Hope (Rom. 15:4).
- 1) Hope is confident expectation.
  - 2) Christians have hope because of who God is (Rom. 15:13).
- g. The Old Testament Reveals the Nature of God.
- 1) The God revealed in the OT is proclaimed in the NT. It’s the same God.
  - 2) Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
  - 3) Christian doctrine of God goes beyond the OT but it does not contradict it at all.
  - 4) The Law declared God’s love (Deut. 7:7-8, 13), but Jesus Christ shows the love (1 John 4:7-10).
- h. The Old Testament Greatly Informs the Christian’s Worldview.
- 1) The Law provides a philosophy of history and nature.
  - 2) The Beginning – the Bible doctrine of Creation.
  - 3) Sanctity of human life.
  - 4) God is active in human affairs.
  - 5) God is ultimately in control and achieves many of His purposes through human processes.
  - 6) All nations and events are within His perception and providence.
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5. Thus there is continuity in the redemptive plan, history and examples found within the Old Testament Scripture but discontinuity in authority. The Law of Moses is not the Christian's covenant (Gal. 3:24-25; cf. Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6).
  6. The heresy of the Judaizers rears its ugly head through the ages when people go back to the *Paidagogos* and bind its teachings as salvation essentials.
    - a. Christie-Murray's example of this error is Seventh Day Adventism.
      - 1) "Heresies do not die but appear in new guises. So, in the twentieth century, the old Judaism has appeared in the shape of Seventh Day Adventism, which requires its followers to observe Saturday rather than Sunday as the weekly holy day, arguing that keeping the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments and therefore binding upon believers. Adventists also follow at least some of the food regulations of the Old Testament, such as the prohibition to eat pig-meat in any form." (Christie-Murray, 19)
      - 2) "In stating that Seventh Day Adventism is a revival of the old Judaizing tendency...the intention is simply to show that tendencies and patterns of thought repeat themselves. By his keeping of Saturday rather than Sunday as a holy day, and by his refusal to eat bacon, a Seventh Day Adventist is heterodox, in that he differs from the great mass of Christians. He has a perfect right to adopt these practices for himself and his co-religionists if they arise from his personal vision of the will of God whom he loves and whose commands he believes these to be. However, were he to insist that salvation could only be won by obedience to these sections of the old Jewish Law, he would be classed as a heretic and a modern Judaizer. For this would indeed be to replace the living Spirit by a dead letter" (Christie-Murray, 20)
      - 3) Of course, what makes a Seventh Day Adventist is more convoluted than just Judaizing tendencies. They follow a "prophetess" in Ellen G. White. So, their motivation to bind portions of the OT are extra-canonical teachings, not purely for the sake of an authoritative Old Testament, itself.
      - 4) While a first century Jewish Believer might have continued in Torah observance and added Christian Faith and worship at conversion, he wasn't at liberty to exclude, neglect, or replace Christian Faith and worship for Torah observance.
      - 5) As this touches upon Christie-Murray's example of Seventh Day Adventism, it seems "heterodox" is too generous a term for a Seventh Day Adventist, even if he does not promote or bind his views on others. They certainly follow a different gospel but there's a lot more error than Judaizing going on. And it is not apples to apples with the Galtian problem.
    - b. Seed of Abraham Fellowship in Merritt Island, FL ([www.soafellowship.com](http://www.soafellowship.com))
      - 1) "A Christian Hebraic Heritage Congregation"
      - 2) "Christian Hebraic Heritage, also called Jewish Roots of Christianity, is an acknowledgment that the Christian faith sprang from a biblical Hebrew beginning, and remains firmly and organically connected to it... At Seed of Abraham Fellowship we seek to rediscover a Believer's faith-walk more consistent with what Christ and the Apostles advocated and lived. That means to set aside manmade tradition, however familiar and comfortable it might be, and instead to re-embrace the commandments of God as well as to
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observe His biblically ordained holy days and appointed times. We are a new 21st century church that reflects the ancient ways, ideals, spirit and first love that was the hallmark of the 1st century church: the ways and ideals of Our Messiah... The bible that Paul carried under his arm on his many missionary journeys was the Hebrew Old Testament (the Tanach). There was no New Testament until about 200 A.D., more than 100 years after Paul died. Yeshua of Nazareth (Jesus's given Hebrew name) proved His divinity and His identity as the Messiah using the Prophets and the Torah. The Gospel was taught, and thousands of gentile and Jewish Believers brought into the fold, using the Prophets and the Torah. Therefore our aim is to be a whole-Bible church that believes God's Word from Genesis to Revelation, and accepts it all as truth, light, and forever relevant... Gentiles have been grafted in to God's covenants. Israel and the Jewish people remain as God's precious treasure, chosen and unique. Christian Hebraic Heritage advocates that while we have been commanded to take the Good News to the entire world (a world of mostly gentiles), the world also includes the Jewish people. Jews do not have to give up their Jewishness to accept Christ, anymore than gentiles have to become Jews to accept Christ. Therefore Seed of Abraham Fellowship takes the Good News to our local community in modern American cultural terms, and we take the same Good News to the Jewish people of Israel in their Hebrew cultural terms, and in their Hebrew language... Christian Hebraic Heritage is by nature family oriented and our congregations are a healthy mix of Jews and gentiles."

([http://www.soafellowship.com/christian\\_hebraic\\_heritage](http://www.soafellowship.com/christian_hebraic_heritage))

3) Some doctrinal distinctions from their Statement of Faith page

- a) "The Body of Christ is commanded by God to stand with and beside Israel, and is spiritually connected to Israel, but has not replaced Israel as His Chosen People. While God makes a physical distinction between Jews and gentiles, He makes no spiritual distinction as both need Messiah Yeshua for Redemption (Salvation). (Joel 2:27; Ex. 3:16; Lev. 18:2; Deut. 27:9; Rm. 11:17; Acts 11:1; Acts 13:48; Rm. 9:24; Rm. 15:9; Gal. 3:4)" ([http://www.soafellowship.com/our\\_statement\\_of\\_faith](http://www.soafellowship.com/our_statement_of_faith))
- b) "Shabbat (Sabbath), the 7th day of the week, was ordained as a holy day by God at the end of Creation and was reaffirmed in the Law of Moses and later by Christ (Yeshua, Jesus). Nowhere in the Bible has this been repealed or dismissed. Therefore we honor the 7th day of the week, from Friday at sunset to Saturday at sunset, as Shabbat, the Day of Rest. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 31:14, 14, 17; Isaiah 56:6, 7)" ([http://www.soafellowship.com/our\\_statement\\_of\\_faith](http://www.soafellowship.com/our_statement_of_faith))

- 4) This is just one example of a movement of intentionally Judaistic expressions of the Christian message in America today. At least by binding Sabbath, if not all this other, they clearly Judaize seemingly apart from self-appointed prophets or prophetesses.

G. Our Bibles contains two Testaments because God wills it so. The Holy Spirit through Paul shows believers their complementary relationship and how that the Law is especially the trusted slave, *Paidagogos*, that brings men to Christ. Once we receive the Promise though, and have come to Christ, the Law holds no more blessing or promise for the saving of our souls. The hope of the Law is Christ. The hope of Christ is heaven.

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**IV. The Promise Delivers What The Law Cannot (Galatians 3:26-29)**

- A. The Promise delivers sonship for all (Gal. 3:26).
1. What are you? – children of God
  2. How are you children of God? – by Faith, not by the Law of Moses but by God’s promise.
  3. Where are you children of God? – in Christ Jesus, not the earthly lineage of Abraham.
- B. We receive God’s Promise and grace in baptism (Gal. 3:27).
1. When were you united with Christ? – when you were baptized into Jesus Christ.
  2. Baptism is the moment you become a child of God. That’s when you’re born again into God’s family.
  3. “By Christian baptism a man entered into Christ. The early Christians looked on baptism as something which produced a real union with Christ. Of course, in a missionary situation where men were coming direct from heathenism, baptism was for the most part adult baptism and the adult would necessarily have an experience a child could not have... the Christian convert was united with Christ (cp. Romans 6:3ff; Colossians 2:12). Baptism was no mere outward form; it was a real union with Christ.” (Barclay, 32)
- C. This mention of sonship and baptism also harkens back to the *Paidagogos* metaphor for the Law. (Saltz, 42-43)
1. Children were considered youths and under the guardianship of the *Paidagogos* until both his father and the state considered him to reach maturity.
  2. In Roman society, a sacred family festival called *Liberalia* was held for the youth who had attained maturity. The *Liberalia* marked the formal acceptance of the youth as son and heir.
  3. Part of the ceremony involved a change of clothes. The child took off the *toga praetesta* and donned the *toga virilis*. Now he is a man.
  4. As per Galatians 3:24-27, we see that Christ’s coming compares to the *Liberalia* and the end of the work and authority of the *Paidagogos*. Baptism is one’s participation in this spiritual *Liberalia* where instead of being robed in the *toga virilis*, believers are robed in Christ.
- D. Distinctions that some Jews celebrated are erased by oneness in Christ (Gal. 3:28).
1. What “one in Christ Jesus” means. In Christ, there are no national, social, or gender distinctions.
    - a. God’s spiritual family is one, all are one.
    - b. “The Pharisee would pray each morning, ‘I thank Thee, God, that I am a Jew, not a Gentile; a man, not a woman; and a freeman, and not a slave.’ Yet all these distinctions are removed ‘in Christ.’” (Wiersbe, 704).
    - c. “[F.F.] Bruce, *Galatians*... writes, ‘Paul’s threefold affirmation corresponds to a number of Jewish formulas in which the threefold distinction is maintained, as in the morning in which the male Jew thanks God that he was not made a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.’ This threefold thanksgiving can be traced back as far as R. Judah ben Elai, c. AD 150, or his contemporary R. Me’ir. Both have rather than

‘slave’ the phrase ‘brutish man.’...Bruce would see this not as any positive disparagement of Gentiles, slaves, or women as persons but indicative of the fact that they were disqualified from several religious privileges that were open to free Jewish males.” (Hailey, 162 footnote 109)

- d. “What is being ruled out for Christians is the kind of ‘with whom do I associate’ taboos that the Pharisees regularly imposed. In our church associations, we do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, or sex. We do not (for example, like the Judaizers did) make people feel unwelcome simply because they are Greeks, or women, or slaves.” (Reese, 167 note 126)
2. What “one in Christ Jesus” does not mean.
    - a. “Now, the primary purpose of Gal. 3:28 is not really at issue. Common exegesis understands Paul here to be advocating that access to God is open to all through faith in Christ, without regard to race, social standing, or gender. The principal question which arises, however, is whether the disregard for these categories extends beyond spiritual salvation into social and ecclesiastical dimensions.” (Hailey, 132)
    - b. “Difference of race or condition or sex is indeed taken away by the unity of faith, but it remains embedded in our mortal interactions, and in the journey of this life the apostles themselves teach that it is to be respected...For we observe in the unity of faith that there are no such distinctions. Yet within the orders of this life they persist. So we walk this path in a way that the name and doctrine of God will not be blasphemed.” (Augustine, *Epistle to the Galatians*, IB.3.28-29)
    - c. Galatians 3:28 and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Egalitarian Debate within Christendom.
      - 1) “In the last quarter century, what the Bible teaches about the roles of men and women has been debated. Feminism’s use of Galatians 3:28 to abolish such gender roles is possible only if one drags the passage out of context.” (Reese, 167, note 126)
      - 2) Egalitarian perspective on Galatians 3:28 sees it as an “absolute statement that abrogates all differences and governs the interpretations of all other New Testament texts on women.” (Tucker and Liefeld, 453)
      - 3) *Egalitarians* are those who promote the removal of gender role distinctions in church and society, while *hierarchicalists* are those who take a more traditional view that gender restrictions are valid in church and society. (Hailey, 133)
      - 4) It’s hard to imagine many Egalitarians would make such bold statements as Tucker and Liefeld, nevertheless to take Gal. 3:28 as the NT mandate on gender is to read the sentence in a complete vacuum. It is alarming eisegesis and proof-texting.
    - d. “We must be careful not to read into Scripture more than the writer intended. A Jew or a Greek, a Scot or a Hopi may still take pride in his human ancestry and heritage. A citizen of Christ’s kingdom can still be a citizen of the United States or Ghana, and he owes allegiance to his earthly nation (Romans 13:1-7). Christian slaves were still slaves and Christian owners were still slave masters, and Paul gave instructions to each class (Ephesians 6:5-9). Christian men and women were still men and women, and Paul had different instructions for husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). But in the matter of justification there is no difference. All

who come to Christ come in the same way. All of them alike are children of God (Root, op.cit., 20).” (Reese, 167 note 126)

- e. “This does not mean that all (men or women) could indiscriminately perform all the work and duties in the church (Lipscomb, op.cit., p.237).” (Reese, 167 note 126)
- E. Abraham’s family are the people of faith, in Christ (Gal. 3:29).
1. The promise that “all nations would be blessed” is fulfilled in Christ.
  2. Those “in Christ” inherit the blessing that God promised.
  3. Anyone, from “all the nations,” can be in Christ.
  4. Christians are “children of promise” like Isaac and the “Israel of God” (Gal. 4:28, 31; 6:16). Not by Torah observance but by Faith.
- F. “Foolish Galatians,” indeed (Gal. 3:1). How could they even consider giving up their spiritual station of accepted heirs in God’s family to return the rule of a *Paidagogos*? While a *Paidagogos* is duly respected in society for his work, it would be bizarre and humiliating to see a grown man being spoken to and treated as a child by his *Paidagogos*. That’s exactly the spiritual reality of the Judaizing movement. It is spiritually perilous and it is practically shameful. Don’t fall for the Judaizing movement and don’t forget you have the Promise!
- G. Note: It’s interesting to me to see how the Apostolic approach to the Law, especially Paul’s treatment of it in Galatians fared in the successive generations of believers. The following two points show that fierce debate continued over the next 3 centuries between Jews and Christians, as well as among Christians themselves, over a proper understanding and authority of the Law. We see the practical significance of Galatians as well as the “bewitching” power of Judaizing that continued to pull at the hearts of men and the fabric of Christian fellowship.
- V. **Beyond Galatians 3: What Were Positive Approaches to The Law of Moses Among Early Christians?**
- A. “For Christians, Christ was the key to the interpretation of Scripture. Irenaeus expressed this with reference to the Old Testament.” (Ferguson, 2004, 200)
    1. “If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures attentively, he will find in them a discussion of Christ and a foreshadowing of the new calling... When the law is read by Christians, it is a treasure hidden in a field [Matt 13:44], revealed and explained in the cross of Christ, enriching the understanding of human beings and showing the wisdom of God, manifesting his dispensations for human beings.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.26.1 in Ferguson, 2004, 200)
  - B. Now that we have considered the New Testament about the relationship of the OT to the NT, it is interesting to see how this was understood by other early Christians following apostolic times.
  - C. Reading *The Apostolic Fathers*, one finds that quite early on there were questions about the Christian’s relationship to the Law of Moses. How should it be interpreted and applied? What is interesting is how quickly attitudes toward the Law of Moses among Christians seem to shift.
  - D. Below are quotations from 3 early works with some comment.
  - E. *The Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. AD 70-135)

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1. This epistle has two parts, the first doctrinal and the second more practical. The first part deals with the questions: How ought Christians to interpret the Jewish Scriptures? What is the nature of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism?
    - a. The *Epistle of Barnabas* is a Christian commentary on properly interpreting the Old Testament.
    - b. The writer clearly puts forward the Allegorical approach which is ancient and well-respected by the time of this epistle.
    - c. Philo of Alexandria was interpreting the OT in allegory a generation or two before this letter was penned.
    - d. “Developed by the Greeks, the allegorical method assumes the existence of and seeks to uncover the hidden spiritual meaning of a text, which may be quite different from (and at times, seemingly unrelated to) the apparent (and often considered to be superficial) meaning” (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 159).
    - e. “This does not mean, however, that the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas* denies the historical character of the Old Testament. On the contrary, most of the narratives of the Old Testament are historically true, and Pseudo-Barnabas does not doubt them, although he does affirm that they point to Jesus...All these things really happened, but their deeper significance was in the fact that they announced Christ.” (Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 84-85)
    - f. In the following excerpts we note:
      - 1) Awareness of the OT giving way to the NT.
      - 2) Animal sacrifices are abolished for spiritual sacrifices.
      - 3) The Jews are an example of God’s people who broke their covenant so Christians must not be like them.
      - 4) The OT has been given to Christians. Christians are able to properly interpret it, having proper hearts and faith in Jesus.
      - 5) Abraham is the father of those with faith, even those who’ve not been circumcised.
  2. “For he has made it clear to us through all the prophets that he needs neither sacrifices nor whole burnt offerings nor general offerings, saying on one occasion: ‘What is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?’” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 2.4)
  3. “Therefore he has abolished these things, in order that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is free from the yoke of compulsion, might have its offering, one not made by man.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 2.6)
  4. “To us, therefore, he says this: ‘A sacrifice to God is a broken heart; an aroma pleasing to the Lord is a heart that glorifies its Maker.’ So, brothers, we ought to give very careful attention to our salvation, lest the evil one should cause some error to slip into our midst and thereby hurl us away from our life.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 2.10)
  5. “For this reason, brothers, he who is very patient, when he foresaw how the people whom he had prepared in his Beloved would believe in all purity, revealed everything to us in advance, in order that we might not shipwreck ourselves by becoming, as it were, ‘proselytes’ to their law.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 3.6)
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6. “Be on your guard now, and do not be like certain people; that is, do not continue to pile up your sins while claiming that your covenant is irrevocably yours, because in fact those people lost it completely in the following way, when Moses had just received it...By turning to idols they lost it. For thus says the Lord: ‘Moses, Moses, go down quickly, because your people, whom you led out of Egypt, have broken the Law.’ And Moses understood and hurled the two tablets from his hands, and their covenant was broken in pieces, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart, in hope inspired by faith in him.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 4.6-8)
7. “Observe what a wise lawgiver Moses was! But how could those people grasp or understand these things? But we, however, having rightly understood the commandments, explain them as the Lord intended. He circumcised our ears and hearts for this very purpose, that we might understand these things” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 10.11-12)
8. “Now let us see whether this people [Christians] or the former people [Jews] is the heir, and whether the covenant is for us or for them... Observe how by these means he has ordained that this people [Christians] should be first, and heir of the covenant... ‘Behold, I have established you, Abraham, as the father of the nations who believe in God without being circumcised.’” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 13.1, 6-7)

F. *Epistle to Diognetus* (ca. AD 150-225)

1. This epistle is actually an open letter to the world introducing and defending Christianity to the empire.
  - a. The letter explains how Christians are unique from pagans and Jews. The author lays out what Christians find objectionable about paganism and Judaism and then proceeds to speak of what Christians do believe and practice.
  - b. This is really the first apology, brief and well written.
  - c. These selections are limited to show what *Diognetus* says about Jews and Christians.
  - d. In the following excerpts we note:
    - 1) The author casts aspersions on Jews for Torah observance.
    - 2) There is no appreciation that Jews sacrificed animals or observed the other statutes because they were found in the Scriptures.
    - 3) Any unifying attitude of 1 Cor. 10 or Rom. 14 is missing and the message comes through that Jews only persist in such things because they are mistaken, foolish, hypocritical and fussy.
    - 4) Christians are in the world but not of the world and their ability to live within the culture while being persecuted by it is contrasted with Jews who isolate themselves from the culture.
    - 5) Yet, Christians have suffered persecutions from Jews.
    - 6) Yet, The church sings the praises of the law and exalts the prophets: The OT is as much the Church’s Scripture as the Gospels or the traditions of the apostles.
2. “Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, that you are extremely interested in learning about the religion of the Christians and are asking very clear and careful questions about them – specifically, what God do they believe in and how do they worship

him...neither recognizing those who are considered to be gods by the Greeks nor observing the superstition of the Jews.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 1).

3. “And next I suppose that you are especially anxious to hear why Christians do not worship in the same way as the Jews. The Jews indeed, insofar as they abstain from the kind of worship described above, rightly claim to worship the one God of the universe and to think of him as Master; but insofar as they offer this worship to him in the same way as those already described, they are altogether mistaken...the Jews, thinking that they are offering these things [burnt offerings, blood, animal sacrifices] to God as if he were in need of them, could rightly consider it folly rather than worship.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 3.1-3)
4. “But with regard to their qualms about meats, and superstition concerning the Sabbath, and pride in circumcision, and hypocrisy about fasting and new moons, I doubt that you need to learn from me that they are ridiculous and not worth discussing. For is it not unlawful to accept some of the things created by God for human use as created good but to refuse others as useless and superfluous? And is it not impious to slander God, as though he forbids us to do any good thing on the Sabbath day? And is it not also ridiculous to take pride in the mutilation of the flesh as a sign of election, as though they were especially beloved by God because of this?... So then, I think you have been sufficiently instructed to realize that the Christians are right to keep their distance from the thoughtlessness and deception common to both groups and from the fussiness and pride of the Jews.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 4.1-4, 6)
5. “For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country, language, or custom. For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric life-style... But while they live in both Greek and barbarian cities, as each one’s lot was cast, and follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, at the same time they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own citizenship. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 5.1-2, 4-5)
6. “By the Jews they are assaulted as foreigners, and by the Greeks they are persecuted, yet those who hate them are unable to give a reason for their hostility” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 5.17)
7. “Then the reverence of the law is praised in song, and the grace of the prophets is recognized, and the faith of the Gospels is established, and the tradition of the apostles is preserved, and the joy of the church exults.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 11.6)

G. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr (AD 100-165)

1. Justin Martyr is one of the classic apologists.
  - a. In *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin the Christian is talking everything over with Rabbi Trypho.
  - b. They argue for their own faith and against their opponents, both being well versed in the Bible.
  - c. In the following excerpts we note:
    - 1) Justin recognizes two covenants and says he knows that the former foretold the establishment of the latter. Jesus Christ is the final and trustworthy covenant.

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- 2) Justin is tolerant of Jewish Christians who observe Torah so long as they don't bind it.
  - 3) Justin's perspective accords with the Book of Acts very well, as well as Galatians and the balance of the NT.
  - 4) Yet Justin and Trypho are both aware of other Christians who say that souls will be lost for practicing Torah at all.
2. "We [Christians] have not believed through Moses nor the Law; otherwise we would act the same as you [Jews]. Now I have read, Oh Trypho, that there would be a final law and the best covenant of all, which it is now necessary for all people to observe who are seeking after God's inheritance. For the Law given at Horeb is already old and is yours [Jews'] alone, but this law is for everyone in general. When one law is placed against another, it annuls the previous one, and a testament [covenant] that comes afterwards likewise brings to an end the former one. Christ was given to us as the eternal and final law and as the trustworthy covenant." (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 11.1-2)
  3. This next quote is quite lengthy, but Trypho and Justin discuss that there are Jewish Christians who remain Torah observant. Justin judges that so long as they don't press their Torah observance upon their Christian brethren then they'll be saved and welcomed in the fellowship. However, it is clear that Trypho believes Justin is lost for not being a Torah observant Jew and Justin believes Trypho is lost for not being a Christian.
    - a. "[Trypho, a Jew, is speaking]: If some wish now to live in observance of the ordinances laid down by Moses and also believe on this Jesus who was crucified, acknowledging that he is God's Messiah who will absolutely judge all and to whom belongs the eternal kingdom, can these also be saved?..."
    - b. "[Justin replies]: As it seems to me, O Trypho, I say that such a one will be saved, if he does not strive to persuade other people (I mean those from the Gentiles who have been 'circumcised' from their error through Christ) to observe these practices with him by saying they will not be saved unless they observe in every respect these practices, even as you said at the beginning of our discussion when you declared that I would not be saved unless I observed these things..."
    - c. "[Trypho said]: Why then did you say, 'As it seems to me, such a one will be saved,' unless there are some who say that such persons will not be saved?..."
    - d. "[Justin answered]: There are, Trypho, and they do not attempt to have fellowship by keeping company with or welcoming to their houses such [Jewish believers]. I do not agree with them. But if those [Jews] through weakness of judgment wish to continue to observe the ordinances from Moses that they are still able to keep, which we understand to have been appointed on account of the hardness of heart of the [Jewish] people, after placing their hope on this Christ and observing the eternal natural laws of righteousness and godliness, and choose to live together with the faithful Christians (as I said before) without persuading them to be circumcised like themselves, to keep Sabbath, or to keep any other such ceremonies, then I declare that we ought to welcome and have fellowship with all these as kinsmen and brethren..."
    - e. "If some of your race, Trypho," I said, "who say they believe on this Christ, compel those from the Gentiles who believe on Christ to live in every respect according to the law laid down by Moses or choose not to have fellowship in
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associating together with them, of these, in the same way, I do not approve... Those from the seed of Abraham who live according to the law and do not come to faith in Jesus as the Christ before the end of life I likewise declare will not be saved, especially those who cursed and do curse those who believe that Jesus is the Christ” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 46-47)

H. Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* (ca. AD 265-339)

1. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Eusebius’ work (likely completed AD 325) sets a tone of agreement and continuity with what we read in *The Apostolic Fathers*.
2. Eusebius explains that the morality, lifestyle, and principles by which Christians of his day live are not new at all but go back to Abraham.
  - a. “And indeed, though we are evidently a new people, this new name also of Christian has lately become known to all nations. The practice, however, and the walk and conversation, the principles of piety prevalent among this people have not been recently invented but were established, we may say, by the Deity in the natural dictates of pious men of old from the very origin of our race...” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.4.4)
  - b. Then he turns to the Old Testament (and not Greek mythologies) to show how one God has led men like Noah and Abraham, who were not practicing Jews, and yet righteous men. Likewise, Eusebius explains that Christians are righteous and God-pleasing through Christ and not Torah observant. Eusebius readily welcomes and accepts Old Testament history as genuine world history. Furthermore, his explanation echoes Paul’s arguments in Galatians 3.
  - c. “5 That the Hebrew nation is not new, but is universally honored on account of its antiquity, is known to all. The books and writings of this people contain accounts of ancient men, rare indeed and few in number, but nevertheless distinguished for piety and righteousness and every other virtue. Of these, some excellent men lived before the flood, others of the sons and descendants of Noah lived after it, among them Abraham, whom the Hebrews celebrate as their own founder and forefather. 6 If anyone should assert that all those who have enjoyed the testimony of righteousness, from Abraham himself back to the first man, were Christians in fact if not in name, he would not go beyond the truth. 7 For that which the name indicates, that the Christian man, through the knowledge and the teaching of Christ, is distinguished for temperance and righteousness, for patience in life and manly virtue, and for a profession of piety toward the one and only God over all—all that was zealously practiced by them not less than by us. 8 They did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we. They did not care about observing Sabbaths, nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things. But they also clearly knew the very Christ of God; for it has already been shown that he appeared unto Abraham, that he imparted revelations to Isaac, that he talked with Jacob, that he held converse with Moses and with the prophets that came after. 9 Hence you will find those divinely favored men honored with the name of Christ, according to the passage which says of them, “Touch not my Christs, and do my prophets no harm.” 10 So that it is clearly necessary to consider that religion, which has lately been preached to all nations through the teaching of Christ, the first and most ancient of all religions, and the one discovered by those divinely favored men in the age of Abraham. 11 If it is

said that Abraham, a long time afterward, was given the command of circumcision, we reply that nevertheless before this it was declared that he had received the testimony of righteousness through faith; as the divine word says, "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." 12 And indeed unto Abraham, who was thus before his circumcision a justified man, there was given by God, who revealed himself unto him (but this was Christ himself, the word of God), a prophecy in regard to those who in coming ages should be justified in the same way as he. The prophecy was in the following words: "And in thee shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed." And again, "He shall become a nation great and numerous; and in him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." 13 It is permissible to understand this as fulfilled in us. For he, having renounced the superstition of his fathers, and the former error of his life, and having confessed the one God over all, and having worshiped him with deeds of virtue, and not with the service of the law which was afterward given by Moses, was justified by faith in Christ, the Word of God, who appeared unto him. To him, then, who was a man of this character, it was said that all the tribes and all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him. 14 But that very religion of Abraham has reappeared at the present time, practiced in deeds, more efficacious than words, by Christians alone throughout the world. 15 What then should prevent the confession that we who are of Christ practice one and the same mode of life and have one and the same religion as those divinely favored men of old? Whence it is evident that the perfect religion committed to us by the teaching of Christ is not new and strange, but, if the truth must be spoken, it is the first and the true religion. This may suffice for this subject." (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.4.5-15)<sup>3</sup>

d. It sure looks like Eusebius had studied Galatians 3!

- I. With these 4 examples we see a high view of Scripture and the OT canon. There is an understood continuity from OT to NT. The same God is in view of these religions and Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT. The NT is different and spiritual in its approach to worship and pleasing God. Among the Christians there is respect for Jesus and the Apostles as the "foundation" for the Faith.

## VI. **Beyond Galatians 3: What Were Heretical Approaches to the Law of Moses Among Early Christians?**

- A. Notice two second-century groups professing to be Christian yet they show little continuity with apostolic doctrine or practices. They are branded heretics by their contemporaries and Church historians.
  1. Ebionites and Marcionites. (Ebionites were introduced in the introduction. Here is more information about them).
  2. These two groups have a low view of Scripture. They change the canon all around to suit their teachings. They do not confess continuity between the Testaments.
  3. These two groups have a low view of Jesus. Both deny His identity as being fully God and fully man.

<sup>3</sup> From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Volume 1, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database  
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4. These two groups have a low view of the Apostles. Apostolicity was not valued or determinative of their canon or doctrines.
5. By definition they would be heretical. But they are early and stand out for their views on the Law of Moses.

B. The Ebionites (AD Second Century)

1. “Ebionites...who repudiated Paul as an apostate from the Law and rejected all the Gospels except a mutilated Hebrew edition of St Mathew. The majority of them also rejected the Virgin Birth and the divine nature of Jesus. They took the view that he was a man, like the great prophets of the past, the son of Joseph and Mary. At his baptism, ‘Christ’ descended upon him in the form of a dove and, because it was unthinkable that Messiah could suffer, departed from him before his crucifixion. The Ebionites, of whom there were several varieties, kept the Sabbath but, mixing fragments of Christian belief with scraps of Essene teaching, rejected marriage, wine and the use of oil to anoint the body, which they despised, believing matter to be basically evil (a Gnostic doctrine).” (Christie-Murray, 17-18)
2. The Ebionites are addressed in the writings of Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome.
3. These are ethnically Jewish or they are Judaized Gentiles who hold that salvation in Jesus is tied to Torah observance.
4. “Ebionite” comes from a Hebrew word meaning poor. These are the poor and downtrodden spoken of in the OT (especially Psalms) that God will deliver. Jesus encouraged His followers to be “Poor in Spirit.” And so, these Jewish believers likely took this name to themselves, envisioning themselves as the genuine, poor, remnant people that God will deliver.
5. In the following excerpts we note:
  - a. Ebionites reject 3 of the 4 gospel witnesses.
  - b. Ebionites reject the apostle Paul, calling him an apostate.
  - c. Ebionites reject the virgin birth or that Jesus Christ is “Son of God.”
  - d. Ebionites demand Torah observance as part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - e. Ebionites also practiced some NT rites, like Sunday assembly.
6. “The Ebionites use only the Gospel according to Matthew, and they reject the apostle Paul, saying that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetic writings, they endeavor to explain them in a peculiar manner. They practice circumcision, and they observe those customs that are according to the law. They employ a Jewish manner of life to such an extent that they adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.26.1).
7. “Vain are also the Ebionites who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but remain in the old leaven of (human) generation; and who do not wish to understand that the Holy Spirit came in Mary... therefore also what was generated is... the Son of the Most High God..., who wrought his incarnation and displayed a new generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this generation we might inherit life. Therefore do these men reject the commixture of the heavenly wine and wish it to be water of the world only; not receiving God so as to have union with him...” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.1.3).

8. “They [the Ebionites] live conformably to Jewish customs saying that they are justified according to the Law. Therefore it was that he was named both the Anointed of God and Jesus, since not one of the (rest) kept the Law. For if any other had practiced the commandments of the Law, he would have been the Anointed. And they themselves also, having done the same, are able to become Anointed Ones; for they say that he himself was a man like all.” (Hippolytus, *Against Heresies* 7.34.2)
9. “The physical Jews, and the Ebionites (who differ little from them), reproach us for transgressing the commandments about clean and unclean meats.” (Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, Book XI.12)
10. “The Sabbath and the rest of the discipline of the Jews they observed just like them, but at the same time, like us they celebrated the Lord’s day as a memorial of the resurrection of the Savior. Wherefore, in consequence of such a way of life, they received the name Ebionites, which signified the poverty of their understanding. For this is the name by which a poor man is called among the Hebrews” (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.27.5-6).
11. “Since they [Ebionites] want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians.” (Jerome, *Epist.* 112.13)

#### C. The Marcionites (AD Second Century)

1. Marcion was a dynamic preacher and professed Christian.
  - a. He made his own Bible. Marcion rejected the OT from his Bible completely and the NT was limited to Luke and the Pauline letters.
  - b. He set the Law of Moses and the Gospel against each other & concluded that the God of the OT is not the God of the NT.
  - c. Marcion’s Christ did come to destroy the Law of Moses, nor fulfill it.
  - d. Marcion blazes a trail for various Gnostic leaders and sects to follow over the next 2 centuries.
  - e. Tertullian especially arose to answer Marcion and his followers. Yet clearly Marcion’s ideas and approach had legs to trouble Christians for generations.
2. In the following excerpts we note:
  - a. Marcion taught there are many gods.
  - b. Marcion taught animosity between the Creator and the Christ.
  - c. Marcion taught discontinuity in OT and NT instead of continuity.
3. “The separation of the law and the gospel is the special and primary work of Marcion... These are Marcion’s *Antitheses*, that is “Contrary Oppositions,” which endeavor to set forth the disagreement of the gospel with the law, in order to argue from the diversity of the principles and of the two documents that there is a diversity also of gods. Therefore, with this very separation of the law and the gospel it is suggested that the god of the gospel is other than and opposed to the god of the law.” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1.19.4-5)
4. “For certainly everything that Marcion has undertaken, especially by first erecting the *Antitheses*, he compiled with this in mind that he might establish a diversity between the Old and New Testament and thereby a separation of his Christ from the Creator as belonging to another god and alien to the Law and Prophets.” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.6.1)

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5. Interestingly, modern Rabbis Prager and Telushkin attack Paul for his writings on the Law. “This caricature of God which results from Paul’s caricature of the law, is the major source of the pernicious myth which contrasts the ‘vengeful Jewish God of the Old Testament’ with the ‘loving Christian God of the New Testament.’” But it’s really Marcion and other Gnostic heresies responsible for this error, not Paul or the book of Galatians. (Prager and Telushkin, 82 footnote)
  - D. With these 2 examples we see a low view of Scripture and canon. There is a disregard, if not hostility toward any continuity from OT to NT. It is not the same God in these teachings. Among these groups there is a low view of Jesus Christ and the Apostles are not the standard and source for true gospel information.
  - E. While early Christians had many challenges and changing fortunes due to persecutions without and false doctrines within, they are continually commended to the Word of God as the Truth and sustenance to guide them through it all (Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:14-4:5). The Word of God includes the Old Testament and the New Testament, The Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6-8).

**Conclusion:**

- I. It is the Promise and not the Law that makes you a son of Abraham, a son of God, and the Israel of God.
- II. Only by appreciating the proper relationship and interworking between the Promise and the Law do we see the fullness of God’s plan of salvation for all people and attain the freedom, rights, and privileges, of a maturity in Christ.
- III. Let us stand convicted in the Promise, appreciative of the *Paidagogos*, yet opposed to the foolish bewitching of Judaizing which perverts the gospel of grace unto anathema.

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