

Sunday, May 14, 2023—Galatians 3:17-20 Wherefore Then Serveth The Law?

### **Galatians 3:17**

- **And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.**
- In verse 17, Paul picks up the idea that he started in verse 15, the unchangeableness of both human and divine covenants.
- The first thing we see in verse 17 is that the Law was added 430 years after the promises were given to Abraham.
  - Genesis 12:40
- Notice that when God confirmed (validated or ratified) the Law covenant, that Christ was associated with it.
- We also see that when the Law was added, it did not have any effect upon the promise God made to Abraham. The Law could not “disannul” or make “of none effect” what God had already said to Abraham. In other words, the giving of the Law did not deactivate the promises God made to Abraham.
- By way of summary, we see that the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant was not affected in any way by the giving of the Mosaic Law (conditional covenant). Have the promises that God made to Abraham and his seed all been fulfilled? No. So, the Law clearly could not have disannulled the promise without making God a liar.

### **Galatians 3:18**

- **For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.**
- Abraham’s ability to inherit the promise cannot be based upon a conditional and unconditional system at the same time.
- If the inheritance comes to Abraham through the Law, then it is not of promise. But God gave it to Abraham by promise.
- Regarding verse 18 Charles F. Baker states the following in his book *Understanding Galatians and the Law*:

- “The promise covenant was unconditional. Abraham was not required to do anything but accept it by faith. Therefore, the covenant of works which came 430 years later cannot change in any way the promise by faith. Since the principles of faith and Law/works are opposites, the inheritance could be only through one or the other. Paul has clearly shown that no one could ever inherit eternal life through trying to observe the Law, and besides, God gave it to Abraham by promise.” (Baker, 45)

### **Galatians 3:19**

- **Wherefore then serveth the law?**
- Based on what he just said in verse 18, Paul asks the following question, “If the inheritance cannot come through the Law, what then is the purpose of the Law?” What is the intent of the Law? Why did God give the Law in the first place?
- **It was added because of transgressions,**
- The Greek verb rendered “added” in the King James Bible means to “place additionally, i.e. lay beside.” (*Strong’s Concordance*) Therefore, the Law was not added to the Promise and mixed together like an ingredient in a cookie recipe. Rather the law was “added” in the sense that it was placed alongside the Promise like you would place a scoop of ice cream alongside a piece of pie.
  - Romans 5:20
  - Romans 7:7
- It was added on account of transgressions. The purpose of the Law, as we have seen many times in our study of Galatians, is to manifest sin and make the one under the Law conscious of his or her sin.
  - Romans 3:19-20
- Men do not become sinners when they do something wrong. Mankind sins because we are sinners by nature.
  - Romans 3:23
  - Romans 5:12-13
  - Ephesians 2:3
- **till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;**

- Notice the use of the word “till.” This word is a time word, and it tells us that the Law was never designed to be permanent. Paul says that the Law was given “till” which means the Law would function up to a given time.
- The verse defines when this time would be. When the seed came to whom the promise was made. Based on our studies of verse 16, who is the seed this verse is referring to? Jesus Christ.
- So, we see here that the Law was only temporary from the time it was given under Moses until Christ.
- John 1:17—grace comes through Jesus Christ. Does this mean that when Christ came that men were no longer under the Law? No. We have already seen that when Jesus came, He was very interested in having Israel follow the Law.
  - Matthew 23:1-3—the Law did not just go away when Christ came into the world.
  - Galatians 4:4-5—Christ “was made of a woman, made under the law,” for the purpose of redeeming “them that were under the law.”
- Regarding this portion of verse 19 Pastor Baker stated the following:
  - “The Law was brought alongside the promise only until the One should come to whom the promise was made, that, until Christ came. The temporary character of the Law dispensation was indicated by the fact that Moses put a veil over his face so the Israelites could not see the radiance of his face fade away (2 Cor. 3:7, 13). The ministry of the Law was glorious, but it was temporary and could not compare with the exceeding glory of the ministration of righteousness.

It seems significant that in their epistles neither James, Peter, nor John state that the Law system has been done away. It was apparently a part of the special revelation given to Paul, and while they knew about it, it was reserved to Paul to write about it.” (Baker, 46)
- **and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.**
- God did not talk directly with the children of Israel when He gave them the Law. Angels gave it to Moses and then Moses brought it down to the people.
  - Exodus 19:1-8; 20-25
  - Deuteronomy 33:1-2
  - Acts 7:35

### Galatians 3:20

- **Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.**
- Once again, Pastor Baker makes some interesting points regarding the verse 20.
  - “. . . we see that the Law was ordained (arrangement made for the giving of it) through angels as intermediaries in the hand of a mediator (Moses). The thousands of angels assisted in the giving of the Law (Deut. 33:2). But what is the writer getting at when he writes, “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one?” He is showing that the Law involved a contract between two parties who were each responsible for carrying out the arrangement through Moses as a mediator. It is something like mediator between labor and management in the business world. But when we come to the Abrahamic promise there was not mediator. There was just one responsible party—God. Since the fulfilment of the promise depends upon God alone, we may be very certain that it will be carried out (Heb. 6:17-20).” (Baker, 47)
- You do not need a middleman unless you have two parties involved.
- I Timothy 2:5—Christ is the “one mediator between God and man,” but once a man is saved and has been baptized into Jesus death, burial, and resurrection, there is no more need for a mediator.
- Ephesians 2:6—once we are saved, we are one with Christ, He is in us and we are in Him.
- God deals with us just like He did with Abraham.
  - Genesis 15:6-13—God deals directly with Abraham whereas He dealt indirectly with Israel.
- Galatians 3:20—Paul’s argument here is that what God gives directly is better than what He gives indirectly. Thus, we see that the Abrahamic Covenant is superior to the Mosaic Law because God Himself directly gave it to Abraham.
- Galatians 1:11—how did Paul receive his gospel and apostleship? By direct communication from Jesus Christ.