

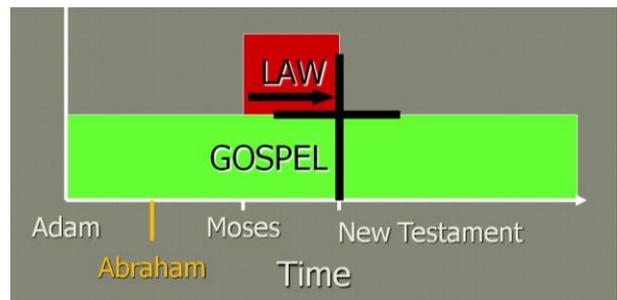
## Biblical Theology: Covenants, Commandments and Curses

### Galatians 3

- What do you learn about the Abrahamic covenant?
- What do you learn about the Mosaic Law?
- What do you learn about blessings and curses?
- What happened at the Cross?

Learn 6 things about the Abrahamic covenant/promise:

1. The Abrahamic covenant was a faith covenant – justification by faith from the beginning (v6, 11); the descendants of Abraham have always been those who share his faith (v7, 29)
2. We (Gentile New Testament believers) are blessed *along with* Abraham (v9), blessed under his covenant as his descendants (v7, 29); the blessing *of Abraham* comes to us (v14). Cf. Romans 11:17-24 – the one tree of people of faith.
3. The Abrahamic covenant = the gospel (v8); the Abrahamic covenant blessings are justification (v6-9), the gift of the Spirit (v14), and adoption (v26)
4. The Abrahamic covenant is with Christ from beginning (v16-18) – he is not only the fulfilment of the covenant but a party to the covenant from the start
5. The Abrahamic covenant is underwritten/paid by Christ (v13-14)
6. The Abrahamic covenant is everlasting (v17) – it comes before (Gen. 12, 15, 17<sup>1</sup> before Ex. 20), underlies (Gal. 3:11), and outlives the Law (Gal. 3:15-29).



Learn 6 things about the Mosaic Law Covenant:

1. Doesn't bring Spirit (v2)
2. Doesn't bring righteousness (v21)
3. Cursed if do not do all of the Law and none of us does so all under a curse (v10)
4. It's promises are conditional on obedience (v12)
5. Comes hundreds of years after the promise and does not cancel it out (v17). The period of Law as master/guardian is now ended (v24-25).<sup>2</sup> So it turns out that the period of the Law was really a parenthesis overlaying the continuing Covenant of Grace (see diagram above from [Glen Scrivener](#)).
6. Was given to expose sin and helplessness and need of Christ (v19, 24; cf. Rom. 7:7; 1 Tim. 1:8-11).<sup>3</sup>

At the **Cross** Christ was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). He summed up the legal curses against us and bore them in his body on the Cross. He took the wrath of God that we

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly circumcision is not actually from the Mosaic Law.

<sup>2</sup> There is a sense in which the Law continues in operation (cf. Rom. 13:9-10; Gal. 5:14) but our relationship to the Law (and to God) is now radically changed. Our Master is Christ and his righteousness, we are under grace, and we are sons of God filled with Spirit.

<sup>3</sup> This is what is known as the First Use of the Law and is the one emphasised by Luther, particularly in his early years. The other two uses are the restraint of sin (Rom. 13; 2 Thess. 2:6) and the direction of godliness for those in Christ (Rom. 13:9-10; Gal. 5:14).

deserved, all the penalties of the Law, hell itself. In this way we were rescued from under the curse of the Law.

He was also the perfect Law keeper (Gal. 4:4). He was righteous in our place that we might receive his perfect righteousness by faith (Gal. 3:6 cf. Phil. 3:9).

So we must be very careful not to teach Deut. 28 and the OT blessings and curses as if they are still in force for Christians in the same way.<sup>4</sup>

### Genesis 12

- What are the elements of the Promise given to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-8?
  1. People / Nation
  2. Place / Land
  3. Blessing / being a blessing to the nations (cf. 11:4) – the word ‘bless’ x5 in Gen. 12:1-2 compared to “curse” x5 in Gen. 3:11 – also reminder of Gen. 1:28
  4. Great name (cf. Gen. 11:4 but then he calls on the Name – 12:8)
  5. Offspring/descendants/posterity/Seed – goes back to Gen. 3:15 – ‘seed’ mentioned 48 times in Genesis!

### Genesis 15

- Read chapter together with Jeremiah 34:18-19 – what is going on?

Gen. 15 is a key chapter in Genesis (and in the whole Bible) because it is here that we find:

- Covenant – God gave Abram a promise at Gen. 12 and here in chp. 15 the LORD formally ‘cuts’ (makes) the great covenant of grace (v18). Most amazingly, when we compare the events of this chapter with the covenant ceremony described in Jer. 34:18-19 we see that one party is sleeping (cf. Gen. 2:21) and meanwhile God *alone*, in the form of fire (cf. Ex. 3:2; 13:21; 19:18), passes through the halves animals, taking on the full responsibilities of covenant keeping and of being torn apart if it is broken.
- The Word of the LORD comes to Abram – the first use of the phrase in the Bible – something (or someone) who will become hugely important as we move through Bible history.
- Stars – The first mention of these since the opening verses of Genesis; suggesting a new creative work (cf. Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 4:6).
- Faith – the first use of the word in the Bible.
- Righteousness – We have already heard that Noah was righteous (Gen. 6:9) but here for the first time we find out that righteousness is something that can be credited to someone who simply believes God’s promises.
- Great Land - v18 – the promise is of far more than Canaan (cf. Psalm 72:8; Zech. 9:10; Rom. 4:13).



<sup>4</sup> For more on blessings and curses see <http://utumishicourse.blogspot.co.ke/2013/10/be-blessed.html>

Genesis 17

- With a marriage covenant what are the:
  - Parties? ○ Terms?
  - Promises? ○ Duration?
  - Sign?
  
- What things do we notice about this covenant in Genesis 17?
  - Parties? ○ Terms?
  - Promises? ○ Duration?
  - Sign?
  
- Father of a multitude of nations – spiritual international descendants
- Kings – v6, 16 – we need a king to restore the kingdom
- Offspring, generations, household – v7, 9-14
  - Covenant sign given even to those outside covenant choice – v18-27
- Everlasting covenant – v7, 13, 19 – do really believe it is an *everlasting* covenant?

Compare Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 32:37-41; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:25-26; Luke 1:32-33, 54-55, 71-75 – notice Israel, King, Land, Multitude in the new everlasting covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-35

- What are the two covenants being compared?
- What are the differences?
- What are the similarities?

Martin Luther: Very important distinction – **Law** / Gospel

**Conviction of Sin** / Forgiveness of Sin

**Showing our deadness and powerlessness** / Giving spiritual life and power

Law cannot save and Mosaic administration has passed away

But Gospel living is keeping the Law – it is the Law which is written on our hearts (v10)

So what is 'new' about the New Covenant? (Jer. 31:31)

- It is new in contrast to the Mosaic Law covenant (Jer. 31:32)
- In the outpouring of Spirit (Joel 2) and priesthood of all believers (Jer. 31:34)
- The Abrahamic covenant reworked/reloaded/expanded – opened wide to Gentiles
- The Abrahamic covenant underwritten / fully-activated as a testament/will – the covenant is paid for and enacted through the death of Christ (Heb. 9:16-17).

→ Are there 2 peoples of God – Israel who physical inherits land (Abrahamic covenant) and the Church which is promised spiritual blessings (New covenant)?

→ Compare Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 32:37-41; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:25-26; Luke 1:32-33, 54-55, 71-75 – notice Israel, King, Land, Multitude in the new everlasting covenant.

→ So what is the relationship between the Abrahamic everlasting covenant and the 'new' everlasting covenant? Who are they for? Are they two or one?