

Galatians

THE GOSPEL OF FREEDOM

Bible Toolkit Steps for all 9 studies

Pray: Ask God for eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Pray for grace in group discussion as you listen and share.

Step 1: What Does it Say?

Look Closely: This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

- Repetitions and Contrasts, Commands and Promises, Connecting words: *for, therefore, but, so that*, Characters and audiences, actions and emphasis

Look Structurally: This step is for looking at the whole passage and how the ideas are grouped together. Ask:

- What part of Scripture is this? Is this narrative, poetry, prose discourse (letters, speeches, etc.)? How does this influence how to read this text?
- What is the flow of thought? Give each group a **HEADING** and note what this says about the author's **MAIN IDEA(S)**.

Step 2: What Does it Mean? This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

Look at the Context: Read the passages before and after.

- How do they impact the meaning of the immediate text?
- Are there themes from the whole book that are in your passage?
- What big Bible themes are addressed? What do they add to the message of the whole book?
- What other OT or NT passages connect to this passage?

Step 3: What Does It Reveal? This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?
- What part does this have in God's larger story?
- What is the **MAIN IDEA**.

Step 4: What Does It Mean for Me? This step is for responding in faith, considering how these revealed truths will change how we live:

- Is there sin to confess?
- Repentance called for?
- A promise to claim?
- An example to follow?
- A command to obey or knowledge to embrace?
- Grace to receive and be gripped by?

Praying from the Passage: With words, phrases, and the main idea(s) from this passage, pray for God to work in you and through you. How does this passage invite you to love the **LORD** your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and to love your neighbor as yourself.

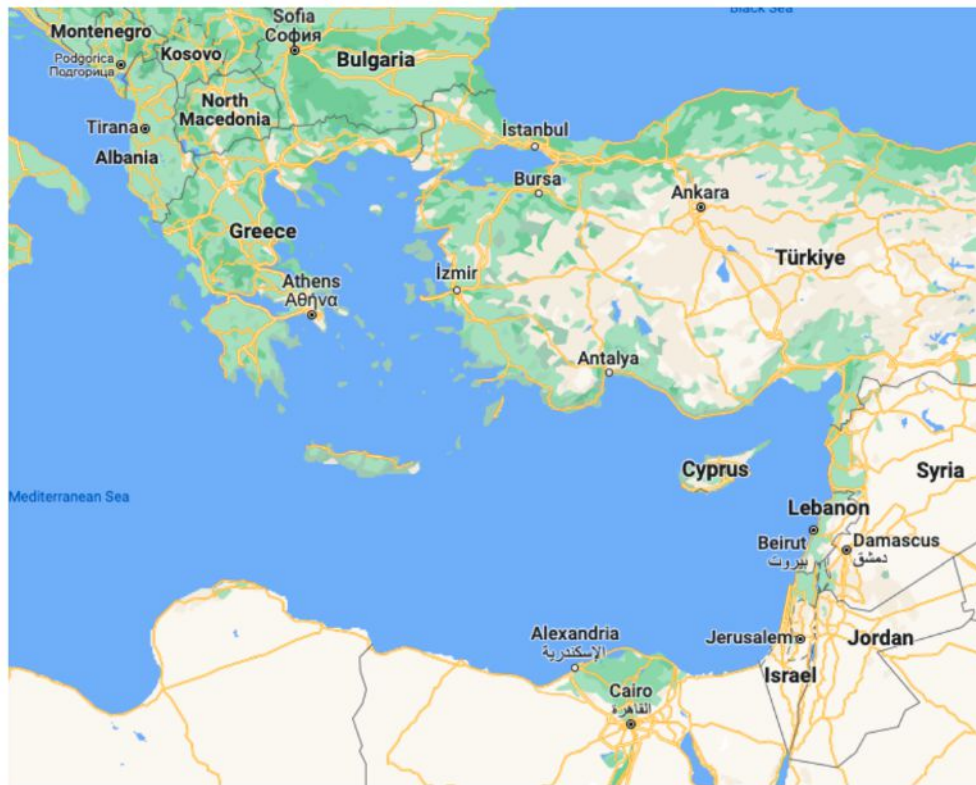
Introduction - Planting the Churches

'Galatians' is the 1st Epistle Paul wrote, not to one church, but to churches located in various cities in the province of Galatia: Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium. Paul (accompanied by Barnabas) had preached the Gospel of 'salvation by faith' to a population who were of Gentile race (i.e., not Jews). The Galatians had welcomed them, and many had been converted; but later visit(s) by Jewish-minded Christian teachers had maintained that faith in Jesus Christ alone was insufficient: it was necessary for men to be circumcised, and for all to adopt and follow the Law of Moses. These teachers had cast doubt upon Paul's Apostolic credentials and sought to undermine his authority. With sorrow, indignation, anger, and deep concern Paul writes, to refute the teaching of the legalists and defend his position, and especially to confirm the truth of the Gospel message he had proclaimed. The question at issue assumes a different *form* today, since our historical context is different; nevertheless it is still crucial: 'Is acceptance with God to be obtained by any effort of ours, or is it, as the Gospel declares, the Free Gift of God's grace through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, obtained by faith alone?' Related to this is a second question: is the gospel sufficient for the Christian life, or do we need "more" than the gospel to live and grow?

1. **Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-52).** How & where did Paul & Barnabas meet with people here? (vv. 13-15). What was the core content of the message Paul communicated? (vv. 23, 38-39). Who received their message? (vv. 42-43, 48-49). Who rejected their message? (vv. 44-47, 49-52). Why did Paul & Barnabas leave this town?
2. **Iconium (Acts 14:1-6).** How & where did Paul & Barnabas meet with people here? What was the core content of the message Paul communicated? Who received their message? Who rejected their message? Why did Paul & Barnabas leave this town?
3. **Lystra & Derbe (Acts 14:8-20).** How & where did Paul & Barnabas meet with people here? What was the core content of the message Paul communicated? (vv. 15-17). Who received their message? Who rejected their message? Why did Paul & Barnabas leave this town?
4. **Returning:** After going through Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas turn around and head home (Acts 14:21-23). What did Paul and Barnabas *do* on their second journey through these cities? What did Paul and Barnabas *say* on their second journey through these cities - what did they stress as they spoke with people in the churches? What challenges do you think these congregations will face in the future? - think of who is in their churches, and consider that Paul & Barnabas have left them and have returned to Antioch.
5. **Reporting back:** (Acts 14:24-28). After planting and further establishing the Galatian churches, Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch in Syria (where this journey started), and give their first missionary report. What did they do when they arrived in Antioch? What news did they report to their home church? Does their report surprise you? What news might you have reported if you were them?

Timeline

- **AD 30/33** Jesus was crucified & resurrected. The Christian mission begins.
- **AD 37/37** Paul is converted to Christianity and goes to Arabia & Damascus. (Acts 9:19-22, 26:20; Galatians 1:16-18)
- **AD 37** Paul meets with Peter in Jerusalem to confirm his gospel. (Acts 9:26-30, Galatians 1:18)
- **AD 37-45** Paul ministers in Syria, Tarsus, Cilicia and Antioch. (Acts 9:30, Acts 11:25-26, Galatians 1:21)
- **AD 44/47** Paul's second visit to Jerusalem. (Acts 11:27-30, Galatians 2:1-10)
- **AD 46/47** Paul and Barnabas' First Missionary Journey: They plant churches in Galatia - Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra and Iconium (Acts 13:4-14:26)
- **AD 48** Paul writes **Galatians, perhaps from Antioch.** (Acts 14:26-28)
- **AD 48/49** The Apostolic Council in Jerusalem. After the council, Paul returns to Antioch. He and Barnabas part ways. (Acts 15:1-29, 30, 36-40)
- **AD 48/49-51** Paul's Second Missionary Journey (with Silas and Timothy): They visit the Galatian churches and then go on to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens & Corinth. (Acts 15:36-18:22)
- **AD 52-57** Paul's Third Missionary Journey: He visits the Galatian churches again and then goes on to Ephesus and Greece. (Acts 18:23 - 21:17)
- **AD 57** Paul is arrested in Jerusalem, and held in prison in Caesarea.
- **AD 62** Paul arrives in Rome and lives under house arrest.



Modern Map of the Mediterranean (Source: Google Maps)



Ancient Map of the Mediterranean (Source: Baker Exegetical Commentary - 2 Corinthians)

Galatians 1:1-10

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

² and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Study 1 - Galatians 1:1-10 'Don't Desert the Gospel'

In Acts, we see the historical account of Paul's first missionary journey, where he preaches in cities like Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, all located in the region of Galatia.

1. Why is Paul writing to the Galatians?

2. What tone does he take - how does he greet them in vv. 1, and 3-5. What does he remind them of? (see Exodus 6:1-8; Col. 1:9-14).

3. How does his greeting tie in to his discussion about the Gospel in vv. 6-9; why does he highlight these truths *before* outlining his concerns?

4. What does Paul say about
 - a) God;

 - b) Christ;

 - c) the Gospel?

- Notes.

- 8

Galatians 1:11-2:10

¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³ For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

¹⁵ But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)

²¹ Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God because of me.

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ³ But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

⁴ Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Study 2 - Galatians 2:11- 2:10 'Why? Because it's God's Gospel'

Last week we learned that the people in the Galatian churches were in danger of deserting the gospel which was preached to them by Paul. He is angry and astonished (1:6), and calls down curses on anyone who preaches a different message (1:8-9)! In order for them to understand how important this is and why he's reacting so vehemently, Paul provides a series of arguments explaining why they should hold onto the message which they heard from him. His first argument is autobiographical. Paul tells them the story of how he personally came to understand the Gospel, and how he confirmed that his understanding was true. Because he's building an argument by telling a story in these verses, questions structure around sections of the story.

1. Throughout this passage, Paul alludes to his own history. More information is provided in other books and letters in the Bible. Look up the following passages to see what biographical data you can discover:
 - a) **Acts 8:1-34, 9:1-25;**
 - b) **Acts 21:37-22:5;**
 - c) **Acts 26:1-11;**
 - d) **Philippians 3:1-7.**
2. Verses.11-14. How does Paul show that the Gospel is a revelation of God?
3. How does he describe his actions and motives *before* he heard the Gospel, and then afterwards? What happened to change him? (Acts 9.1-9). What direct significance has this for a Christian?

4. How do vv. 15-16 support Paul's 'thesis statement' in vv. 11-12?

5. In verses 17-24 Paul carefully lays out a) what he did, and b) what he did *not* do, following his conversion. How do his actions reveal the radical changes he's undergone? What specific autobiographical details does he disclose, which have bearing on the trajectory of his ministry in Galatia?

6. What do we learn from Paul, in 2:1-10, about
 - a. where he went;

 - b. why he went;

 - c. and what opposition he encountered;

 - d. and what was at stake?

Notes

- 1 Vv. 2, 5. 'By hearing with faith': this is an abbreviated expression for hearing the word of the Gospel and receiving it with responsive or obedient faith. Cf. Rom 10:8-17.
- 2 V. 7. 'The sons of Abraham': in the sense of spiritual likeness. Cf. Jn 8:39.
- 3 Vv. 8, 9. Paul interprets the promises of Gen 12:3b to mean that just as Abraham received the blessing of justification by faith (Gen 15:6), so a time would come when men of all nations would, 'in Abraham', i.e. through his seed which is Christ (vv. 14,16), receive the same blessings in the same way.

Galatians 2:11-21

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Study 3 - Galatians 2.11-21 'Why? Because a Lot is At Stake'

As we have learned so far, people in the Galatian churches were in danger of deserting the Gospel, which was preached to them by Paul. As he began this letter, he stated emphatically, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed." (1:8). In our passage this week, Paul is serious about confronting *anyone* who distorts the Gospel, regardless of their position in the church.

1. What did Peter (Cephas) do wrong, according to Paul?
2. Why did he act this way?
3. What are the potential consequences of Cephas' actions?
4. How does Paul respond to Cephas? How justified and appropriate is this *public* confrontation?
5. What is the concern about eating with the Gentiles? And why would Peter withdraw from eating with them when "certain people" came to town? See Deut 14:1-3: What are the rules about in this text?
6. Why are God's people supposed to follow these rules according to verses 1-2? Who is not expected to follow these rules?

7. In Galatians 2, Paul doesn't accuse Peter of not understanding the Gospel, but of acting hypocritically when he knows better. Why does Paul make this differentiation?

8. Compare Peter's actions with those described in **Luke 22:31-34, 54-62; Acts 11:1-18**: what apparent consequence is now at play for the Apostle, which did *not* appear earlier?

Luke 22:31-34, 54-62

Acts 11:1-18

9. "...a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ..." (16). Paul will go on to explain this truth in great depth in this letter, but for now we focus on what the Galatians should have known already. **Acts 13:1-41** records Paul's first sermon to the people who live in the region of Galatia. What does he tell them in verses 38-41? What do "justified", and "works of the Law", mean?

Galatians 3:1-14

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Study 4 - Galatians 3:1-14 'Why? Because of Your Experience and Abraham's Experience'

Last week we learned about Paul confronting Peter's hypocritical actions, which distorted the truth of the gospel. He used that example to explain a key idea for the next section: that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith in Christ alone, not through works of the law. He will now work through a series of arguments defending this Gospel truth through the next couple of chapters. This week, we start with two lines of reasoning: the Galatians' own experience; and the testimony of Scripture.

1. What words does Paul use to describe the Galatians?
2. What does this reveal about how Paul is thinking, and feeling about them?
3. What is the tone of this entire section of the letter?
4. What does Paul say the Galatians have experienced? (vs. 1-5).
5. What should these experiences convince them of, regarding
 - a) the law;
 - and b) faith?
6. Why do you think Paul used a series of open-ended questions in this section, instead of statements?
7. How was Abraham made righteous? Who are the sons of Abraham, according to Paul?

8. How was “the Gospel” preached to Abraham “beforehand”? What was he promised?
9. What do you think it means to be blessed along with Abraham (v. 9) or to receive “the blessing” of Abraham (v. 14)?
10. Why does Paul point to the Galatians’ experience with the Spirit (in verses 2-5) as an argument that they are justified (saved) by faith, and not by the flesh?
11. In 3:11 Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4. The prophet has heard that judgement is coming on his people because of their sin. He questions God about when He will make things right, and God says that things are going to get worse instead of better; yet, “the righteous will live by his faith.” Read **Habakkuk 3:16-19** to see his personal response to God’s judgement. How is Habakkuk an example of faith in God?
12. By drawing on the writing of this prophet, what is Paul teaching in Gal 3:11 about what it looks like, for the “righteous” to receive eternal life?

Notes.

1. *Galatians 3:1-14* is a threefold argument in support of 2:16:
 - a) vv.1-5, an argument from experience;
 - b) vv. 6-9, an argument from Scripture (teaching about Abraham);
 - c) vv. 10-14, an argument from the meaning of Christ’s death.
2. Verse 3:6 Abraham was the forefather of the Jewish people. He is introduced in the Bible in Genesis 11:31, and his story is found in Genesis 12-25. He was the man God chose to bless with covenant promises, and to whom God began revealing His plan of redemption.

Galatians 3:15-29

¹⁵ To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

¹⁷ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

¹⁹ Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

²¹ Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Study 5 - Galatians 3:15-29 'Why? Because of the Law and the Prophets'

Last week we saw Paul confronting the Galatians for the utter foolishness of adding anything to their faith in Christ. He clearly teaches them that no one can be justified by works of the law or flesh, and it is only by faith that Christians receive the Spirit and are made righteous. He points to the example of Abraham's belief, and seems to portray the Law in somewhat negative terms, but yet affirms the Law is not at all useless, nor contrary to God's plan of redemption.

1. Some questions about "the Law", the dominant subject of this passage: When did the Law come, in relation to God's covenant with Abraham?
2. Why was it given; and how is this relevant to Paul's theological problem with the Galatians?
3. In vv. 19-24, what images does Paul use to describe features of the Law?
 - a) What effect do they have on people?
 - b) Were these features all meant to be permanent?
 - c) Could the Law lead to righteousness and eternal life?
4. A key word anchoring Paul's teaching is 'promise' (16,18,22). What does he teach about God's promise to Abraham?

5. How are the Law and the promises complimentary?
6. How does someone receive the promise of an inheritance?
7. Read Romans 7:7-12. How does Paul explain the interaction between the law and sin?
8. In Gal 3:19-21, how does the power of sin in our lives help in understanding the purpose of the Law?
9. The Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20:1-17 were followed by many, many more which gave specific instruction - from food and ceremonial and religious laws to moral requirements about marriage and war. Why would God give Israel these laws, *after* they had left Egypt? What do they reveal about God, and what He desires for His people?

Notes

1. Verses 3:19-20. 'Added because of transgressions': *i.e.*, the Law gave to sin the form of transgression and so made men conscious of guilt before God when they sinned, Cf. Rom. 3:19, 20; 5:20; 7:7, 13. 'It was ordained by angels through an intermediary': Paul introduces these words to show that the Promise is superior to the Law even in the very manner of its promotion and distribution. In the case of Abraham, God Himself spoke the promises directly whereas the giving of the Law was through intermediaries on both sides - God being represented by angels (cf. Dt. 33:2, LXX; Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2), and the people by Moses.

2. Verse 29. Sometimes, Christians can have a tendency to disconnect the Old Testament and God's dealings with Israel, from the New Testament and our own lives today. There may be a temptation to assume the Old Testament stories are irrelevant for us. But Paul says the very opposite in this passage. He connects not only Christ, but all Christians, to Abraham and the covenant God made with him. When God began His plan of redemption with promises to Abraham, He had the Church in mind as well.

Galatians 4:1-11

¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years!

¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Study 6 - Galatians 4:1-11 'Why? Because you were slaves and now are sons'

Last week Paul introduced the concept of being 'an heir', and in this week's text he fleshes out this idea, teaching how in Christ we move from slavery to sonship, through a Gospel inheritance.

1. What does Paul teach about the following people in this passage:

God;

Jesus (the Son);

the Galatians;

Paul himself?

2. How is a child no different from a slave according to Paul's opening illustration? (vs. 1-3). When does a child become an heir? How does someone go from being a slave to an heir? (vs. 4-7).
3. What connections do you see between being adopted as 'sons' in this passage, and becoming Abraham's offspring (3:29)?

4. Read the following two passages and note how Old Testament prophets viewed the "gods" of other nations:

Isa 37:14-20 (How do the Assyrian gods compare to the LORD?);

Jer 2:4-13 (What two evils did Israel commit according to verse 13?).

What do the images symbolize? How are the false gods described? And, how is the description similar to Gal. 4:9?

5. "...so that we might receive adoption as sons." (verse 5). Paul is the only author to use the term "adoption" in the New Testament. In two other places it's used, which helps to better understand what this means for us as believers:
 - (a) **Romans 8:12-17**. What is the role of the Spirit in our adoption? How should we live differently, by the Spirit, since we are now adopted?
 - (b) **Romans 8:18-24**. What are we still looking forward to, groaning for, and hoping for?
6. "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God" (verse 9). What does Paul mean by distinguishing between these two, relational descriptions?
7. Pointing to the need for divine initiation for our salvation, note (a) how our part in salvation is described, and (b) how God's part is described: (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4-6, 13-14; 1 John 4:7-19 (note especially verses 10 & 19).

Note Verse 9. The "elementary principles" could point to the ancient understanding of the elements of nature: earth, air, fire, water (metaphorically speaking of this world order and culture, the old creation) or they could refer to the fundamental rules of life, or they could refer to angelic/demonic powers. Either way, Paul is using this term in connection with his discussion about the Law and also seems to be integrating it with the paganism of the Galatians' past.

Galatians 4:12-20

¹² Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.

¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first,

¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

¹⁷ They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Study 7 - Galatians 4:12-20 'Why? Because of our relationship'

So far in our study of this book, we have gained a sense of Paul's passion and zeal for the purity of the Gospel, the true Gospel of God. Last week we learned of a transformation of all believers from slaves to heirs, from servants to children — now redeemed and adopted. But a temptation to return to our former slavery follows us, as it did the Galatian church.

1. Who are Paul's opponents? What two actions does he accuse them of; what were their motivations (Cf. 2Cor 11:23-29; Acts 20:17-35)?

2. What does Paul command the Galatians to do?

What is his reasoning?

Considering the previous section (4:8-10), what could Paul mean by his command, in verse 12? *Nb*: this is the *first command* in the entire letter.

3. "Become as I am, for I also have become as you are" (verse 12). This is not the only time Paul desires for his readers to become like him. What does he mean by it?

And how did he become like them? (Cf. 1Cor 9:19-23; Acts 26:28-29).

4. In the 4.12-20 Paul uses his relational currency with the Galatians to call them to returning and repentance. Look back and read Paul's initial comments in Gal 1.6-7 — what is he calling them back to?

What is at stake, and what was Paul willing to risk, for the sake of the truth of the Gospel?

5. "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?"(verse 16). How was Paul willing to risk relationship and people's approval of him as their Apostle, for the sake of convincing them to remain in the truth of the Gospel? (*See the similarities with Eph 4.11-16; Prov 27.5-6*).

Note. 4.17,18. A reference to the new teachers, who were eager to win the favour of the Galatian believers in order to cut them off from Paul and his Gospel, so that they would have no-one to turn to but themselves. If these teachers had really come to do good, Paul would have raised no objections whatsoever (v.18).

Galatians 4:21-5:1

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²

³ But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

²⁴ Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

²⁵ Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written,

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;

break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!

For the children of the desolate one will be more

than those of the one who has a husband.”

²⁸ Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

²⁹ But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”

³¹ So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Study 8 - Galatians 4:21-5:1 'How? Stand firm in your freedom'

Galatians shifts emphasis in today's text. As Paul began the letter, he warned the Galatians not to desert God's gospel. From Galatians 1:11 - 4:20, he explained *why* this warning is so important. Now, in Galatians 4:21-5:12 (the texts for this week and next), he focuses on application, on *how* to remain true to the Gospel. Paul's 'allegorical argument' in this chapter is built around the Old Testament story of Abraham and two of his wives: Hagar and Sarah.

1. How does Paul confront and challenge the Galatians as he begins writing this section?
2. What does Paul want them to know about their identity and status?
3. What does Paul command them *to* do, in light of their identity and status?
4. What does Paul command them *not* to do?
5. Read **Gen 16:1-16**. What details do you learn about Hagar (the slave woman) in this text? What details do you learn about her son?

Based on what Genesis 16 says about her son's conception and birth, what do you think Paul means in Gal 4:23 when he says that Ishmael was born "according to the flesh"?

6. Read **Gen 17:15-17**. What details do you learn about Sarai (the free woman) and her son in these verses?

What do you think Paul means in Gal 4:23 when he says that Sarai's son Isaac was born "through promise"?

7. In Galatians 4:28-29, Paul draws two parallels between Isaac, and the Galatians. How is their spiritual birth similar to this son's physical birth?

What parallel does he draw between their present-day experiences and what Isaac experienced?

8. In Galatians 4:21 - 5:1, Paul draws a parallel between the Old Covenant, ratified at Mount Sinai, and a New Covenant, ratified through the death of Jesus. Read **Exodus 19:16-20, 20:1-21, 24:1-8**. Where was Israel at this time? At what mountain?

What do they receive from God, and promise to obey, at this time?

What is their experience of this situation?

Read **Heb 12:18-25**. Where are believers situated in this text? At what mountain? How is their experience different from that of Israel at Mount Sinai?

Note: Scholars debate whether or not Paul is actually using allegory here, and whether the Greek word translated "allegory" here should be more accurately translated "figuratively". As Timothy George explains, "Allegorical interpretation seeks to discern a hidden meaning in a given story or text, a meaning that may be entirely divorced from the historical referent alluded to in the narrative itself. A good example of an allegory in English literature is John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress. This famous story is a Christian fantasy that Bunyan said came to him "under the similitude of a dream" and in which he depicted the various stages of the Christian life through a series of 'coded' characters, events, and places—Pliable, Faithful, Hopeful, Giant Despair, Doubting-Castle, Hill Difficulty, City Beautiful, and so on...Clearly Paul was not advocating the evaporation of biblical events or a departure from the basic meaning of Scripture as found in its natural and literal sense. What he here called allegory might be better termed typology: a narrative from Old Testament history interpreted in terms of new covenant realities."

Galatians 5:2-12

² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

⁸ This persuasion is not from him who calls you.

⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.

¹¹ But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Study 9 - Galatians 5:2-12 'How? Don't fall away from Grace'

Our text last week ended with an historic exhortation. Leading up to 5:1, Paul had developed a systematic argument, weaving together a variety of personal encounters with the Gospel and arguments from scripture, in order to prove that God has always and will always save people 'by grace through faith'. Throughout, he warned the Galatians that they are in great danger if they try to justify themselves before God 'through works of the law', and he ended his argument with the exhortation, "For freedom Christ has set us free: stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery". Paul now turns his attention to explaining this concept of Christian freedom; before he does, he wants to emphasize one specific truth.

1. What 'work of the law' are the Galatians in danger of accepting?
2. What are the potential consequences of accepting this 'work of the law'?
3. Why would they accept this 'work of the law'? What is their motivation, according to Paul?
4. What contrast is Paul drawing between the nature of true faith and false faith in 5:2-6?
5. What two things does Paul have confidence in? In what ways this reliance so surprising?
6. What do you think Paul means by "this persuasion" in Galatians 5:8? (e.g., what ideas in 5:2-12 is "this persuasion" referring to?).

7. Who is Paul referring to when he references 'him who calls you' in 5:8? What is the crucial message of 'Him who calls you', according to 1:6?

8. Read **Gen 17:1-14**, which describes God making a covenant with Abram and his descendants, and **Ex 12:43-49**, which describes God's rules for eating the Passover meal. What do you think 'the circumcision party' believed was necessary for Gentiles to become God's people?

9. Read **Matthew 5:17-20**, **Luke 22:14-20**, **Hebrews 9:11-15**. What did 'the circumcision party' fail to grasp about the practice of circumcision, from Genesis onwards?

10. How does Paul's 'confidence' in the Lord (5:10) encourage or challenge you today, as you pray for yourself and for people who once were running well, but are now perhaps being hindered from obeying the truth (5:7)?

Notes

1. Vv. 5,6. 'The hope of righteousness': *i.e.*, the hope of future glory that springs from justification through believing on Jesus Christ. Cf. Rom 5:1,2; 1Pet 1:3, and notice the gathering here of 'faith, hope and love.'
2. V. 18. The Christian is free from the Law as a rule to be obeyed in order to gain life (*cf.* 3:12), yet, when led 'by the Spirit', can do all that the Law demands (see vv. 24,25; *cf.* Rom 8:4).
3. V. 24. Cf. 2:20; Rom 6:6

Galatians 5:13-26

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Study 10 - Galatians 5:13-26 'What now? Live free, by the Spirit'

Last week we wrapped up Paul's long argument against justification by works of the law. In order to change the emphasis of the letter, Paul summarized the transition with these words: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love" (5:6). As he begins his conclusion of Galatians, 'love' will become Paul's major theme. He will exhort the Galatians to become a community known for love, rather than doctrinal squabbles: what does faith working through love look like, and how will love influence our Christian freedom?

1. What does Paul say the Galatians are 'called' to in verse 13? What are the positive and negative commands which flow from this calling?
2. *Why* should they "through love, serve one another" according to Paul? And, *how* can they do this?
3. What insight do the warnings in verses 15 and 26 provide, about the 'spiritual state' of the Galatian churches?
4. What three things does Paul encourage the Galatians to do "by the Spirit"?
5. What do you think each of these instructions means? What do you think Paul is trying to communicate, by each verb phrase?
6. What do you think Paul means by the "flesh?" What do you learn about the desires of the flesh, and what are "the works of the flesh", according to this text?
7. What fruit does the Spirit produce in a believer?

8. How does 5:22-23 encourage or challenge you today? While the Spirit is the one who produces fruit, how might you position yourself for the Spirit's work, according to 5:13-26?
9. "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (5:13). What does this freedom look like, from this passage? (Cf. 1Cor 8:8-9; 1Cor 9:19-21; 1Pet 2:13-17; 2Pet 2:17-22).
10. "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (verse 14). As Paul sums up the Law, he goes back to the Old Testament, and then also alludes to the ministry of Jesus.
 - a. Read **Lev 19:9-18**. What does it look like to 'love your neighbour as yourself' according to these verses? What kind of things should a person do, and not do? What kind of person can do these things, according to Gal 5.13-26?
 - b. Read **Mark 12:28-34**. What does the scribe add to the discussion, which agrees with Paul's argument in Galatians?
 - c. Read **Rom 7:4-6**. What was true of us while we were living in the flesh? What has happened to those of us who now belong to another [Christ]? What two things are now possible for us to "do" because we belong to Christ?
 - d. Read **Rom 7:15-25**. Despite this new standing, Christians still have an on-going battle against the "flesh". How does Paul explain our warring motivations and desires? What emotions does he express as he summarizes this battle? To whom does he turn, as he summarizes this battle?

Note V. 16: 'But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.' Since all Christians struggle to conquer sin throughout our whole lives, these verses are challenging to understand and apply. Throughout history, people have argued that 'spiritual Christians' can live sinless lives, but that doesn't seem to line up with the scriptural witness. (Cf. Rom 7:4-6, 15-25; 8:5-8)

Galatians 6:1-18

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load.

⁶ Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Study 11 - Galatians 6 'What else? Bear each other's burdens, and Boast in the Cross'

Last week we studied Paul's practical exhortation to the Galatians to become a community known for love, rather than doctrinal squabbles. The passage was full of application - practical commands which contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. This week Paul will conclude his words of exhortation, and then summarize his main points once again.

1. How does Paul address the Galatian Church as he closes his letter? (vv. 1, 18). Why is this significant here, in the context of this letter?
2. Who do you think Paul means by "you who are spiritual"?
3. How are they to care for one another in verses 1-5? (2 ways).
4. What is the "law of Christ"? (look back to last week for a clue).
5. What commands does Paul give regarding how each person should view themselves?
6. What does Paul warn the Galatians not to be deceived about? What does one reap, if they sow to their flesh? What does one reap if they sow to the Spirit?
7. What should we never grow weary of? Why not?

8. "The Cross of Christ" (verses 12,14). How did the false teachers treat the Cross of Christ? How does Paul view the Cross?
9. How can we be 'ashamed of the cross' - or any other core aspect of the Gospel?
10. What does it mean to openly 'boast' in what Jesus has done for us?
11. "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." (verse 1). Part of living by the Spirit is caring for one another, especially when it comes to our spiritual walk. Sin puts us in a state of brokenness that requires restoration, and Paul says that instead of rejecting or judging each other we are to restore each other.
 - a. Read **Matthew 18:10–14**. How do you think the story of the shepherd and the sheep is connected to believers? What is God's will when it comes to straying "sheep"?
 - b. Read the passage that comes directly after this parable of the sheep: **Matthew 18:15–17**. What is the process to follow when a fellow believer sins against another member of the Church, and how does this apply to the Galatian Churches?
12. "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life"(verse 8). Paul continues to contrast the flesh and the Spirit as he has for much of his letter. In this passage he has a focus pointing to *the end result* of all our sowing. In Galatians Paul has been emphasizing justification through faith alone; how do we now reconcile what he seems to be teaching about the importance of our works? How do the two fit together? Why do you think it's important to understand the eternal results of our "sowing"?

Notes

- 1 V.2. 'The law of Christ': cf. Jn 13:34; 1Jn 4:21
- 2 V.11: 'Large letters': They are *not* due to Paul's poor eyesight or hands that are deformed, or to a crucifixion. They signify the importance of the conclusion, provoking the readers to pay special heed to Paul's final thoughts, which the Apostle writes in his own hand; the rest of the Epistle was written by an amanuensis (one who takes dictation and copies manuscripts), likely one of his mission team.

APPENDIX**The Relationship Between Old & New Testaments**

- **God's nature does not change.**
 - His character and priorities are consistent throughout scripture. The "God of the Old Testament" is the same as the "God of the New"
 - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - coexistent, coequal, coeternal.
- **God's plan does not change (Ephesians 1:3-10)**
 - but it was revealed to people in progressive stages. Covenant promises build on each other until they are fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus.
- **The nature of salvation does not change.**
 - In both the Old and New Testaments people are saved by God's grace, through faith, not by works (Exodus, Galatians, Hebrews).
 - But, in both the Old and New Testaments "true faith" is authenticated by works. Our lives must be in alignment with our profession, or our profession of faith is false.
- **God's Moral Law does not change.**
 - The 10 Commandments, and other laws which communicate ethics do not change. (e.g., Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbour as yourself).
 - Jesus teaches God's moral law and emphasizes that this isn't an outward show. Hearts must be right before God.
 - NT Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
 - 1 Peter 1:15 - You shall be holy for I am holy
 - Moral laws define sin
- **God's Ceremonial Law / Levitical Law is fulfilled in the New Testament**
 - OT Laws which highlight our need for purification, cleansing and atonement are fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus.
 - [In the old covenant] ... gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation." (Heb 9:9-10)
 - "Israel was to observe various ceremonial laws - for example those pertaining to clean and unclean food. To be ceremonially clean was symbolic of being morally holy. This explains why the text on clean and unclean food is bracketed by references to Israel being "a people holy to the LORD" (verses 2, 21).

- In the new covenant the requirement to observe these ceremonial laws has been abrogated (*repealed, revoked, rescinded*), because they have served their purpose of pointing to the perfect holiness of Christ (Col 2:16-23, Heb 9:1 - 10:26)
- The requirements of God's moral and ceremonial Law is fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus.
 - Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God's moral law
 - Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice
 - Jesus is now our prophet, our priest and our king

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Luke 22:19-20 (Ezekiel 36, Jeremiah 31).

• **The "mediator" changes under the new covenant.**

- In the OT, Moses "mediated" between God and the people (Deuteronomy 9:25-29). Through the Mosaic Law, God showed them how to live. The law stood between God and the people. To please God, one had to follow the law.
- In the NT, Jesus "mediates" between God and us (Hebrews 9:15, 12:24). Jesus has fulfilled the requirements of the ceremonial law. Jesus now stands between God and us. To please God, we have to follow Jesus: relying on the sufficiency of His sacrifice for our salvation, and by living in obedience to His teaching - the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2), (1 John 2:3-6).