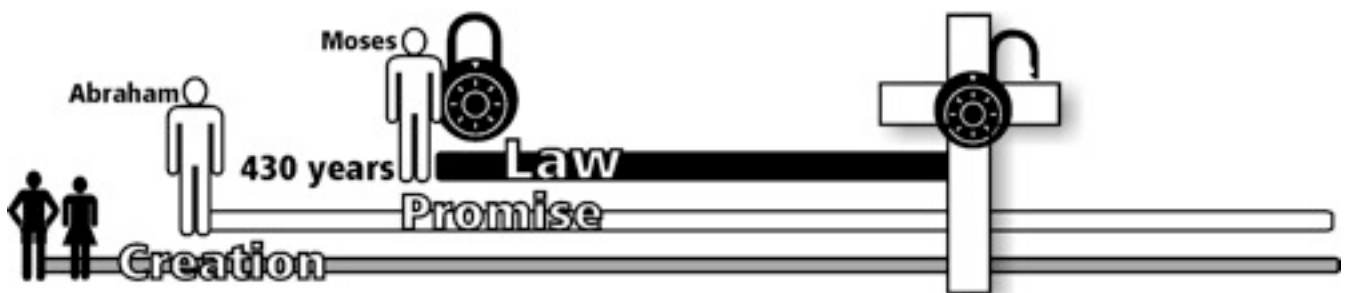


4. Don't Split the Family of Faith

Galatians 3:15-25

Paul has already spoken about the way he had to rebuke Peter for splitting the great 'family of faith' that God has called together. He's talking about the same thing here. The first time you read 3:15-25, it might seem a bit complex. And the second time, actually! Behind it all, there's the story of the history of Israel, and the two key figures Abraham and Moses. Let's put some building blocks in place before we dip in to the verses themselves.

A Bible Timeline...



Describe in your own words what you see in the timeline (above). Try to describe all the features in the diagram. Then read verses 15 to 25, and label each part of the diagram above with the verse number that describes it.





reconsider

All in the family

Don't you just hate it when preachers - or other "expert Christians" - make you feel dumb by referring to the "original Greek translation" of a tricky passage? Rest easy - the New International Version is a pretty reliable guide. The times when you need to dig behind it are rare. But this is one of those times. In an effort to make Galatians 3:16 clearer, the NIV has added some words that are not in the original. And by doing that, they've shifted the meaning a little. Here's the English translation, with the added words in bold print...

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The scripture does not say, "And to seeds," meaning many **people**, but "And to your seed" meaning one **person**, who is Christ."

That loads in the idea that "seed" refers to 'persons.' The original greek simply says "The scripture does not say "And to seeds," as to many; but as to one, "and to your seed."

So many what? One what? You'll notice in the next few verses Paul goes on to say that we are 'all one family in Christ' (See v 28 below). It has recently been suggested that a better interpretation comes if you plug in the idea of "**family**" instead - a common understanding of 'seed' or 'offspring.' This gives a slightly different reading. Write in 'family' and see what happens:

The scripture does not say, "And to _____s," meaning many, but "And to your _____" meaning one, which is Christ."

In other words, God's plan to bring blessing to the whole world wasn't going to create a bunch of different families (Jews vs Gentiles), but ONE FAMILY... in Christ. Exactly the same point is made in verse 28. Fill the gaps...

There is neither _____ nor _____, _____ nor _____, _____ nor _____ for you are _____ in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

So here's the big question. It's the same question Paul's been wrestling with over and over again. To be part of God's big family, do the Gentile Christians have to obey the Old Testament law? Or not? Surely, the fact that Gentiles are joining a family with some very long held rules and regulations means the Gentiles should take on the law as well? After all, it's only fair!



Read Paul's answer in verse 19, again replacing 'seed' with 'family'. What is his point?

Read Paul's answer again in verse 23-25. Both these verses share a key word. What is it?

L I U T N



Here's the bottom line. God's grand plan for the world was to bring together one great family of blessing made up of people from every nation. Israel was just the start of the project, and their Law was just a temporary prison to hold them in check *until* something happened to change our 'being' rather than just our 'doing.' What could have the power to do that? Why not read ahead to find out...