

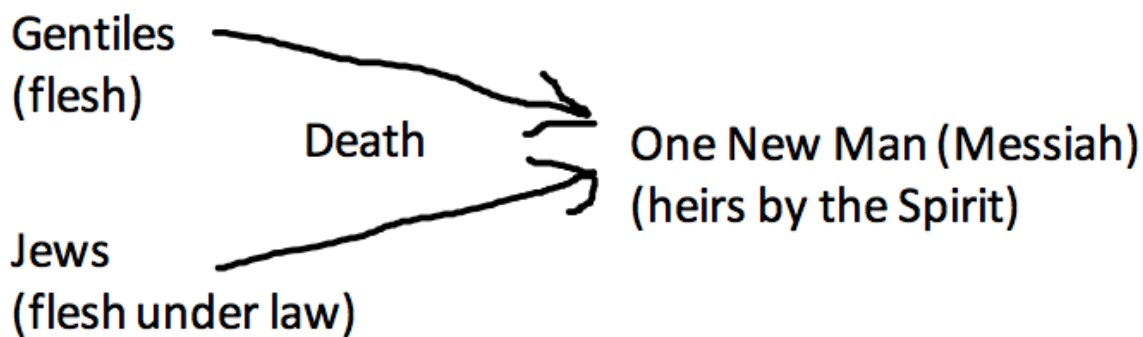
### **(3:15-18) One seed, not by law but by promise**

*“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. 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. 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. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.”*

### **(3:19-20) The law because of transgression**

*“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. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.”*

Summarize 3:6-14:



- V. 15 – Paul prefaces this section with the statement, “I speak according to men” – the best way to take this I think, is to see that he’s almost apologizing in advance for the absurd conclusions that he’s leading his opponents into – similar to Romans 3:5. He’s basically saying, in v15-18 that if God added the law as a stipulation to the promises of Abraham, then he would be acting illegally, which is absurd.
- The un-annullable and un-modifiable covenant
  - Even among men, Paul reasons, a previously ratified covenant cannot be annulled or added to.
    - Example: cf. Joshua 9 & 2 Sam 21:1-14 for an example between human parties
  - The promises spoken were made to Abraham in Genesis 17
  - However, it was Abraham’s obedience in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac that resulted in the ratification of the covenant and God binding himself under an oath to fulfill the promise.
  - In essence, the conditional “walk before me and be blameless and I will bless...” had now become “I will surely bless...”
  - This understanding of the covenant ratification in Genesis 22 is critical to following Paul’s logic in this passage.
- The promise to the offspring
  - The debate: singular or collective, how is Paul reasoning here?
  - The Genesis background
    - The plural and singular seed
    - Clear singular: Genesis 3:15; 22:17-18; 24:60
    - Ambiguous but possibly singular: Gen 26:4; 28:14; cf. 12:3; 18:18
    - Biblical development of the single seed: Gen 49:8, 10; Num. 24:17–19; 2 Sam 7:12–13; Ps 72:4, 9, 17; Luke 1:68–79; Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:8, 13–14
    - The collective component of “Messiah” in the NT

- The logic of v17-18
  - The law cannot annul the promise
  - Promise = promise to Abraham that all nations (including Sarah's children) would be blessed
  - This is the promise, ratified by Abraham's faithful, the law cannot invalidate it (by cursing) or establish it (by blessing). The inheritance does not come about by the law at all, but has already been given through the promise.
- The logic of v19-20
  - The law cannot be added to the promise
  - Promise = promise to Abraham's single seed
  - The mediator is not the mediator of the one true seed because the law divides
  - But God is one cf Rom 3:28ff; 1 Tim 2:5
- The purpose of the law:
  - Exposing sin and forcing those under it to rely on faith
  - Forcing Jews to escape the curse through uniting with the Messiah in his death and resurrection
  - Ultimately, demonstrating all (both Jew and Gentile) as under sin and in need of redemption'

To sum up the reading:

V16 – The promises were for Abraham and his single promised offspring, identified by and summed up in the Messiah, and to include “all the nations of the earth” in them. Essentially, the “one new man” of Ephesians 2.

V17-18 – It is not possible for the law to come along and annul the promise, which has already been given. The law plays no part in determining those who receive the promises.

V19a – Why the law at all? To bring about transgression and solidify the case against sinful flesh

V19b – It was given through angels by the hand of Moses, a mediator (certainly not as immediate as the promise).

V20 – The mediator (Moses) is not the mediator of that single worldwide offspring which was to come in Christ, but God is one and is God of all and will have one people.

Bringing the law into the picture for deciding who is to inherit the promises of Abraham would functionally nullify the already granted promises because the law sets its own conditions (blessings and curses).

Additionally, the law served a narrowing and dividing function, so it would serve to add to the covenant ratified in Genesis 22, which envisioned a worldwide offspring of Jew and Gentile. Thus the primary point of the passage is that the law plays a different kind of role in the story than the Galatians are being told.