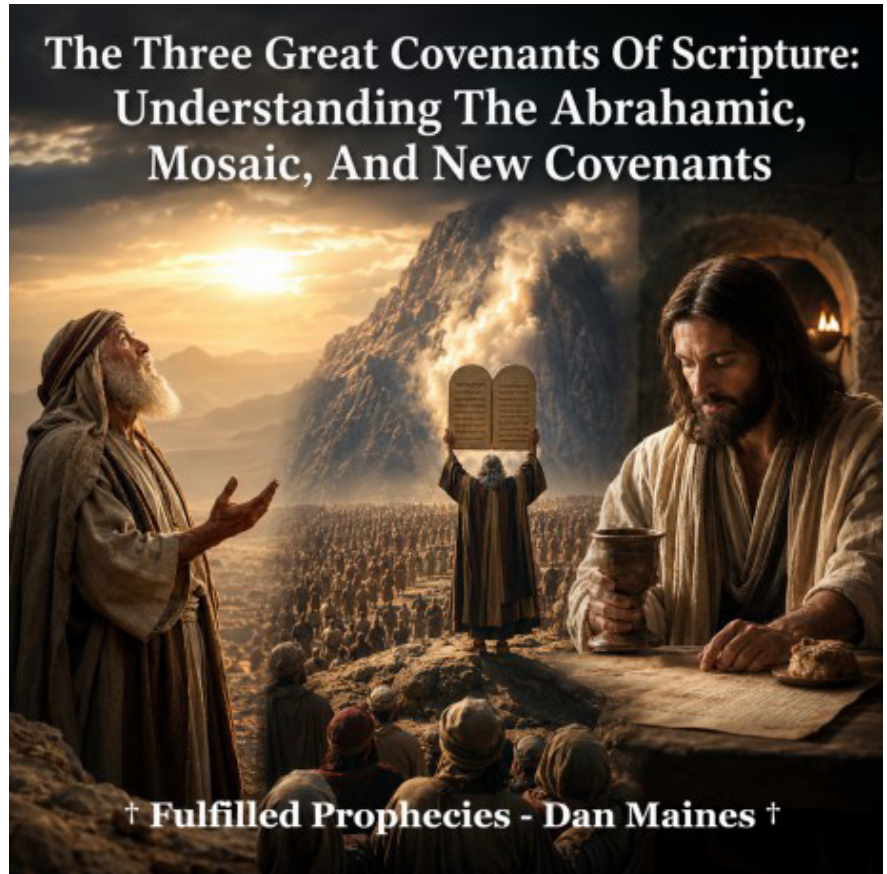


The Three Great Covenants Of Scripture: Understanding The Abrahamic, Mosaic, And New Covenants



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the greatest sources of confusion in Christianity is failing to distinguish between the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

† Many people blend the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants together even though Scripture carefully separates them.

† Paul devoted much of Galatians to explaining that God's promise to Abraham was never canceled by the Law of Moses.

† Understanding these three covenants helps us see why believers today live under the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:16-18

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

† Paul clearly distinguishes the Abrahamic Covenant from the Mosaic Covenant. The Law came 430 years after God's promise to Abraham. (Galatians 3:16-18)

† The promise was never based on keeping the Law. It was always based on God's grace and His faithfulness. (Romans 4:13-16)

† The promised Seed was Christ, not the nation of Israel. Everything God promised Abraham ultimately pointed to Jesus. (Galatians 3:16)

Romans 4:13

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

† Paul again separates the promise made to Abraham from the Law of Moses. The inheritance was never based on keeping the Law. (Romans 4:13)

† Abraham was declared righteous by faith long before the ~~Mosaic~~
Covenant existed. (Romans 4:1-5)

† This proves God's plan of salvation has always been by faith, not by works of the Law. (Galatians 3:6-9)

Exodus 24:7-8

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it as the people listened; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

† The Mosaic Covenant was made with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, not with Abraham. (Exodus 24:7-8)

† This covenant required Israel's obedience to the Law and contained blessings for obedience and judgment for disobedience. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15)

† Unlike the Abrahamic Covenant of promise, the Mosaic Covenant was conditional and temporary. (Galatians 3:19)

Deuteronomy 5:2-3

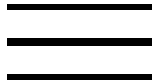
The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, all of us who are alive here today.

† Moses plainly says the covenant made at Horeb was not the covenant made with the fathers such as Abraham. (Deuteronomy 5:2-3)

† This is one of the clearest passages proving the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants are distinct covenants. (Galatians 3:17)

† Confusing these two covenants creates many doctrinal errors about the Law today. (Romans 4:13)

Galatians 3:24-25



Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

† The Law was never given as God's final plan for salvation. It was a tutor preparing people for Christ. (Galatians 3:24-25)

† The Law exposed sin but could never remove sin or make anyone righteous before God. (Romans 3:20)

† Once Christ came and fulfilled its purpose, believers were no longer under the Mosaic Covenant. (Galatians 3:25)

Galatians 3:19

Why the Law then? It was added on account of the violations, having been ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator, until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

† Paul explains exactly why the Law was given. It was added because of transgressions. (Galatians 3:19)

† The Law was always temporary because it lasted only until the promised Seed, Christ, came. (Galatians 3:19)

† Once Christ fulfilled His work, the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant had been completed. (Galatians 3:24-25)

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† Jesus established the New Covenant, making the Mosaic Covenant obsolete. (Hebrews 8:13)

† The Old Covenant was already growing old during the first century and was about to disappear completely. (Hebrews 8:13)

† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 marked the public end of the Old Covenant system centered on the temple, priesthood, and sacrifices. (Luke 21:20-22)

Jeremiah 31:31-33

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord: "I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

† Jeremiah foretold that God would establish a New Covenant that would not be like the covenant made when Israel came out of Egypt. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

† The New Covenant didn't renew the Mosaic Covenant, it replaced it. (Hebrews 8:6-13)

† Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by establishing the New Covenant through His blood. (Luke 22:20)

Galatians 3:26-29

For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

† Everyone who belongs to Christ becomes Abraham's seed through faith, not through physical ancestry. (Galatians 3:26-29)

† The promise made to Abraham reached its fulfillment in Christ and now includes believing Jews and Gentiles alike. (Ephesians 2:11-19)

† The inheritance comes through God's promise fulfilled in Christ, not through the Law of Moses. (Galatians 3:29)

Ephesians 2:11-16

Therefore remember that previously you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision" which is performed in the flesh by human hands - remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the people of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the hostility, which is the Law composed of commandments expressed in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two one new person, in this way establishing peace; and that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the hostility.

† Christ united believing Jews and Gentiles into one people through the New Covenant. (Ephesians 2:11-16)

† Gentiles became heirs of Abraham's promise through Christ, not through becoming Jews or keeping the Law. (Galatians 3:29)

† The dividing wall created under the Mosaic Covenant was removed through Christ's work on the cross. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the destruction of Jerusalem and the ~~temple~~ in AD 70, bringing the Old Covenant sacrificial system to its historical end. (The Jewish War, Book 6)

† Eusebius recorded that the Christians remembered Jesus' warning and fled Jerusalem before its destruction. (Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5)

† Irenaeus taught that Christ fulfilled the Law and brought believers into the New Covenant. (Against Heresies, Book 4, Chapter 13)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't live under the Mosaic Covenant because Christ fulfilled its purpose.

† We rejoice that God's promise to Abraham has reached all nations through Jesus Christ.

† Our relationship with God is based on grace through faith, not on earning righteousness by keeping the Law.

† We can confidently say we are Abraham's seed because we belong to Christ.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did the Mosaic Covenant replace the Abrahamic Covenant?

A: No. Paul specifically says the Law, given 430 years later, did not cancel God's promise to Abraham. The promise remained until it was fulfilled in Christ. (Galatians 3:17)

Q: Who are Abraham's true descendants today?

A: Everyone who belongs to Christ is Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise, whether Jew or Gentile. (Galatians 3:29)

Q: Why don't Christians live under the Law of Moses today?=====

A: Because Christ fulfilled the purpose of the Law and established the New Covenant. Believers are no longer under the tutor but under grace through faith. (Galatians 3:24-25; Hebrews 8:13)

Q: Didn't God make an everlasting covenant with Abraham?

A: Yes, and that everlasting promise was fulfilled in Christ. The Abrahamic Covenant was never replaced by the Mosaic Covenant. Instead, it reached its fulfillment in the New Covenant through Jesus. (Galatians 3:16-18; Galatians 3:29)

Q: How many covenants are found in the Bible?

A: The Bible contains many covenants, not just two. Among the major covenants are the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:8-17), the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:1-8), the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:3-8; 24:7-8), the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16), and the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20). This study focuses on the three covenants that are central to understanding the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

Q: If there were several covenants, why does the Bible only speak of the Old Testament and the New Testament?

A: Because the words "Old Testament" and "New Testament" refer to the two covenant administrations that govern the Bible's overall story, not to the total number of covenants God made. The Old Testament contains several covenants, including the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants, while the New Testament reveals the fulfillment of God's promises through the New Covenant established by Christ. (Hebrews 8:6-13)

Q: If there were three major covenants, why isn't the Bible divided into the Old Testament, a Middle Testament, and the New Testament?

A: Because the Abrahamic Covenant was never a separate testament replacing another one. It was a covenant of promise that continued through the Old Testament and reached its fulfillment in Christ. The Mosaic Covenant was added 430 years later and was temporary until Christ came. The New Covenant fulfilled God's promise to Abraham while bringing the Mosaic Covenant to its intended end. That's why the Bible is correctly divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament, not three separate testaments. (Galatians 3:17-19, 24-29; Hebrews 8:13)

Q: In a nutshell, what was the Abrahamic Covenant?

A: In a nutshell, the Abrahamic Covenant was God's unconditional promise to Abraham that through his Seed, Jesus Christ, all nations would be blessed. It was a covenant based on God's promise, not on Abraham's ability to keep the Law. That promise was fulfilled in Christ, and everyone who belongs to Christ is Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise. (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15:5-6; Galatians 3:16; Galatians 3:29)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies. †

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Source Index

† Galatians 3:16-18, Romans 4:13, Exodus 24:7-8, Deuteronomy 5:2-3, Galatians 3:19, Galatians 3:24-25, Hebrews 8:13, Jeremiah 31:31-33, Galatians 3:26-29, Ephesians 2:11-16

† Historical Writers: Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 4, Chapter 13

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