THE PROMISE AND THE LAW

Galatians 3:15 Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

The Greek word translated covenant here does not imply a mutually agreed upon agreement, but a binding promise made by one to another. It is translated "covenant" in Hebrews chapters 8&9 and in Hebrews 9:16&17 it is translated "will."

Galatians 3:16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Genesis 22:15-18 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me."

"Seed" like the word "offspring" in English is a uniplural noun, it has no plural form and can refer to one individual or to many. The Hebrew word is translated "descendants" twice and "offspring" once in Genesis 22:15-18 in the NIV. Paul says that the promise that "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" refers to Christ.

Acts 3:24-26 "Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

The Land and the Offspring Promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Genesis 13:14-17 The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.

Genesis 26:2-5 The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions."

Genesis 28:13&14 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you ae lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

The Law and the Land

Deuteronomy 28:1&2 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

Verse 3-15 list the blessings.

Deuteronomy 28:15 However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you.

Deuteronomy 28:16 - 68

Deuteronomy 29:64&65 Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods - gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.

Deuteronomy 29:66-68 You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning! - because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

The Law Does Not Set Aside the Promise of the Land

Galatians 3:17&18 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

God's PROMISE of the Land Kept

Isaiah 11:11(ESV) In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

About one-third of the Jews in Israel are secular, about one-fourth are traditional. Only about 13% are ultra-orthodox, committed to keeping the law. It was not the keeping of the Law that brought the Jewish people back to the land of Israel. God kept His Promise.

God's Promise of a Descendant of Abraham Being a Blessing to All Nations Kept in Jesus.

Acts 3:25&26 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.'"

This was spoken by Peter to Jewish people who for the most part prided themselves on keeping the Old Testament law. He told them God wanted to give them the blessing promised to Abraham by "turning each of you from your wicked ways." It is possible to keep the Old Testament law and still be wicked. The only way to truly become what God wants us to be is through Jesus.

Romans 8:3&4 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Peter says the message was sent first to the Jews. Now it is sent to everyone.

Things to Remember

The law doesn't invalidate the promise to bless all nations through a Descendant of Abraham.

The Promise to Abraham included both the blessing through Christ and the possession of the Holy Land.

When the Jewish people put themselves under the Law at Mount Sinai, the possession of the Holy Land became conditional upon obedience.

When they didn't obey, they were punished by being scattered all over the world and by being persecuted wherever they went.

God kept His promise to Abraham and brought them back to the land. They came back in disobedience and unbelief.

Trying to relate to God by keeping the law is like the Jews trying to keep possession of the land by obeying the law. It ends with failure and punishment.

The whole point of this section of Galatians is that we, like Abraham, need to relate to God by faith, not by keeping the law.