

Did God Change Between The Old And New Testaments?

Galatians 3

Have you ever heard someone say, “God is not the same God in the Old and New Testament?”

The Old Testament is about rules, and the New Testament is about grace.

In the Old Testament, God is angry, and in the New Testament, God is loving.

Many people believe that the Old Testament and New Testament contradict each other.

But do they?

In Galatians 3 & 4, you see how great Paul’s mind is in explaining the gospel and debating with the Judaisers.

What Does The Bible Say?

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. ² Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³ How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? (Galatians 3:1–3 NLT)

In Galatians 3, the apostle Paul uses six arguments to prove that salvation is through faith in Christ, not following the Old Testament's laws.

Paul's Six Arguments:

Personal argument (Gal. 3:1–5)

Scriptural argument (Gal. 3:6–14)

Logical argument (Gal. 3:15–29)

Historical argument (Gal. 4:1–11)

Sentimental argument (Gal. 4:12–18)

Allegorical argument (Gal. 4:19–31)

Let's examine the Scriptural argument to see how the Old Testament does not contradict the New Testament.

6 In the same way, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” 7 The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. (Galatians 3:6–7 NLT)

6 And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith. (Genesis 15:6 NLT)

Even in the Old Testament, You became right with God because of faith. The New Testament just gave you a deeper understanding.

Many think that God was not compassionate and merciful in the Old Testament. However, remember Jonah?

10 When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. 2 So he complained to the Lord about it: “Didn’t I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. (Jonah 3:10–4:2 NLT)

Jonah did not want to preach to the Assyrians because He knew God was merciful and compassionate, slow to get

angry, and filled with unfailing love. He hated the Assyrians and did not want God to renounce His judgment on them.

So in the Old Testament, we came to God through faith, and God was a loving God in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, God deals with us as children. First, we were given rules; then, in the New Testament, we are treated as adults and are given more explanations for those rules.

Therefore, the Bible is a unified book; in many ways, they are complementary. The Old Testament is foundational; the

New Testament builds on that foundation with further revelation from God.

God did not change between the Old and New Testaments.

How Can You Obey?

Paul asked four questions to the Galatians that you and I need to remember.

2 Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? (Galatians 3:2 NLT)

3 How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? (Galatians 3:3 NLT)

4 Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? (Galatians 3:4 NLT)

5 I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

(Galatians 3:5 NLT)

Remember that our faith in Christ saves us.

We obey Christ because of our gratitude for Christ; our obedience demonstrates our love for Christ and helps us navigate this world better.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

This week's Talking Theology is from Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 84- 98.

Explore:

Where is Galatia?

Galatia is a Roman province in Asia Minor. The area splits north and south.

Northern Galatia is a mountainous area of Asia Minor, where Celts from Gaul settled in the 3rd century bc. It is called 'Galatia' after the Gauls.

Southern Galatia is a district added by the Romans, including the cities of Antioch (known locally as Pisidia, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria) and Iconium. These are places Paul and Barnabas visited in ad 47–48, on their first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14). We don't know if Paul visited the north, nor to which part of Galatia he wrote this letter.

Explore:

Chapter 3, according to many scholars, is the heart of the Galatian letter. Paul used this chapter to defend faith in Christ as the only means of salvation. Much of his defense hinged on the truth that faith has always been God's way of saving His people.

Right Standing With God Has Always Been by Faith, Not by Works (Galatians 3:1-20)

Paul accused the Galatians that were turning back to the Law of Moses of being foolish and bewitched (verse 1). They had received the Spirit by faith in the beginning, but now were foolishly casting that aside to go back to the deception of relying on keeping the Law. The Greek word for bewitched carried the idea of being misled by flattery or false promises, even to the

point of having a spell cast on a person. The apostle's question was intended to expose the Judaizers, a group of Jews who had come along behind Paul, teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law in order to be saved. They taught that faith in Christ was not enough. The term foolish spoke of unwillingness to obey, not to a lack of intelligence. Apparently, many were so blinded and mesmerized by the false teachers that they were turning back to the Law, even though they had accepted the preaching of Paul and the others who were publicly declaring Christ crucified.

There is little doubt that Paul regarded the Galatians as fellow believers based on the wording here. He asked them if their receiving of the Holy Spirit had come by keeping the Law or by faith (verse 2). Already knowing the answer, Paul followed up with the word foolish in verse 3, the same term, repeated for

emphasis, as used in verse 1. Paul was astounded that the Galatians could know the answer to these questions, yet still be drawn to the teaching that a relationship with God could be developed as a result of one's works. The foolishness comes when people think they can do for themselves what only Christ could do for them through the crucifixion.

More rhetorical questions came from Paul in verses 4 and 5. These questions were designed to force the Galatians to consider the consequences of their beliefs and their actions. The Greek word for suffer or suffered in verse 4 could refer to those believers suffering for the sake of the gospel or possibly in a generic sense of their experiences. While there is no specific mention of suffering or persecution for the Galatian believers, passages such as 1 Peter 4:12-19 indicate this was a common experience for all believers in that era. In the case of the latter,

Paul could have been saying that their entire spiritual “experience” would be wasted if they continued down the path upon which they were being led. Another question is given in verse 5. A paraphrase could read this way, Did the one who gave you the Spirit and has worked miracles among you do it on the basis of the Law or on the basis of faith? While the Galatians knew the obvious answers to these questions, this use of rhetoric would also set the stage for the arguments to follow throughout chapter 3.

Verse 6 serves not only to answer the rhetorical question of verse 5, but also to provide an illustration of a person receiving justification by faith alone. Paul used Abraham and his faith as an example. This was an important example since the Judaizers taught that only the descendants of Abraham were God’s children. For the Jew, this typically alluded to circumcision,

meaning that only the circumcised could be saved. To the contrary, the apostle quoted from Genesis 15:6 and reminded the reader that it was his faith, not circumcision, that caused Abraham to be counted as righteous before God. The true children of Abraham are those who have faith as Abraham did (verse 7). Paul reminded the Galatians that justification by faith was the plan of God from the beginning and was taught in the Old Testament Scriptures (verses 8-9).

Abraham believed God, and God credited his faith as righteousness. Everyone who trusts Christ receives that same blessing. The means by which the covenant has been imparted has never changed. We cannot rely on our own good works. Just one sin causes us to fall short of God's standard, and all have sinned. Jesus, the righteous offspring of Abraham, provided salvation by dying in our place.

Paul reminded the Galatians that Deuteronomy 27:26 teaches that all who rely on the works of the law for salvation are actually under a curse because they are not able to perfectly abide by everything written in the Law (verse 10). The idea behind a curse is not only a present condition of alienation from God, but also a final banishment of the sinner from the presence of God.

Together, verses 11 and 12 highlight the impossibility of pleasing God and attaining a relationship with Him by keeping the Law. To illustrate this fact, Paul quoted from Habakkuk 2:4, that teaches this same truth that the righteous live by faith.

In verse 13, Paul introduced the concept of redemption to illustrate the work Christ did on behalf of all people. The word

carries the connotation of buying out of slavery and pictured Christ being able and willing to redeem mankind through His death. This redemption was from the “curse” of the Law. Again, Deuteronomy 27:26 speaks of a curse being placed on everyone who does not fully and completely perform the works of the Law. Deuteronomy 21:23 anticipated the work of Christ on the cross bearing the curse of sinful mankind. As a result, the same blessing that came to Abraham would come to the Gentiles and all those who come to God by faith (verse 14).

Paul revealed his care and compassion for these believers by calling them brothers, in spite of their foolishness (verse 15). To further illustrate his point, Paul borrowed from a human understanding of a covenant. He reminded the reader that a ratified covenant between two parties could not be altered. The point is that God made a covenant with Abraham and his

offspring or seed, a covenant of faith. This term offspring or seed was not plural; it found its ultimate fulfillment in Christ (Matthew 1:1), the true heir to the first covenant's promises (verse 16).

In verses 17 and 18, Paul explained that a covenant made so long ago could not be altered by a later giving of the Law. God had been acting on the basis of faith up to that point and the giving of the Law would not change this fact. So why then was the Law given (verses 19-20)? It was given as means of exposing sin and unrighteousness until the offspring (Jesus) came. Then He would serve as a Mediator, and through faith, mankind could be brought into right relationship with God.

Explore:

Referenced several times throughout Galatians was a group known as the Judaizers (1:7; 2:4-5, 12-14; 3:1, 10; 4:17; 5:7-12; 6:12-13). A Judaizer was one who lived according to Jewish customs and tried to impose those customs on Gentile Christians. They often contradicted the ministry of Paul and others by teaching a combination of God's grace and human effort. They went so far as to say that for an individual, Jew or Gentile, to be right with God, he or she must conform to the Mosaic law, including specific elements such as circumcision.

Explore:

Matthew fulfills the OT's hope for a Messiah, a Christ, an anointed son of David who would save God's people (1:21).

Mark fulfills the OT's hope for a coming Son of God who would inaugurate God's kingdom (1:1, 14–15).

Luke fulfills the OT's longing for God to come and set right the world's injustices—reversing rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed, satisfied and hungry, outsider and insider (19:10).

John fulfills the OT's longing for the tabernacle/temple to do decisively what it was always meant to do—unite God and man in restored fellowship (1:14; 2:21; 14:6).

Acts fulfills the OT by bringing God's mercy to the nations (1:8; 9:15).

Romans fulfills the OT by showing the supreme manifestation of the righteousness of God, in Jesus, bringing resolution to the constant OT tension between God's justice and his mercy (1:17; 3:21–26).

1 Corinthians fulfills the OT by showing, in Christ, the climactic way in which God destroys the wisdom of the wise (1:19).

2 Corinthians fulfills the OT's repeated pattern of strength through weakness (12:9–10), supremely in Christ (13:4), in whom all the promises of God are clinched (1:20).

Galatians fulfills the OT by showing that Jesus' atoning work (3:13) at just the right time (4:4–5) is the reason that the real children of Abraham are those who are of faith (3:7–9).

Ephesians fulfills the OT by revealing the “mystery” long hidden—that Christ, by virtue of his death and resurrection, unites Jews and Gentiles in one renewed people of God (3:5–6).

Philippians fulfills the OT by showing that the church is the real circumcision (3:2–3).

Colossians fulfills the OT by showing that another Adam, likewise made in God’s image (1:15), has fulfilled the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28 to bear fruit and increase, so that we who are united to this second Adam can now do what the first Adam failed to do—bearing fruit and multiplying (1:10).

1 and 2 Thessalonians fulfill the OT's hope of judgment on God's enemies by showing that Jesus received this judgment, so that God's punitive judgment, which is surely coming, now will fall only on those who reject Jesus (1 Thess 5:1–10; 2 Thess 1:5–12).”

1 and 2 Timothy fulfill the OT by showing that the true warfare of God's people is not against the Amalekites and Amorites and others but against sin and Satan (1 Tim 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:3–4), a war that cannot be lost because of the Savior anticipated in the OT (2 Tim 3:15).

Titus fulfills the OT's underachieved efforts to redeem a people for God who are his own possession, zealous for good works (2:11–14).

Philemon fulfills the OT's insistence that love be from the heart (v. 14).

Hebrews fulfills the OT's longing for a perfect priest and final sacrifice to usher in the new covenant (8:1–13).

James fulfills the OT's call for obedience to the law by showing that such obedience is fulfilled in one thing—active love (1:12; 2:8–26).

1 and 2 Peter fulfill the OT's calling to Israel to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation (1 Pet **1:4–12**)—**a corporate fulfillment that happens only because of another fulfillment that is not only corporate but also individual, this time of Isaiah 52–53 (1 Pet 2:22–25).**

1, 2, and 3 John fulfill the OT by showing that through Christ we are once more, like Adam, sons of God, and now able to fulfill the OT law through love (1 John 3:1 and passim).

Jude fulfills the exodus in the OT by showing that ultimately it was Jesus who provided this rescue (Jude 5; cf. 1 Cor 10:4).

Revelation fulfills the OT by showing that Jesus has conquered our great enemy, death, which was introduced in Eden (Rev 1:18; 21:4)

Dane Ortlund, “The New Testament’s Multi-Dimensional Fulfillment of the Old,” in Strawberry-Rhubarb Theology (blog), October 26, 2011, <http://dogmadoxa.blogspot.com/2011/10/new-testaments-multi-dimensional.html>.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

Right Standing With God Has Always Been by Faith, Not by Works.

God's Laws and Commands Show Us We Fall Short of His Standard.

BIBLE BASICS: What is justification? Answer: Justification is the act whereby God declares the sinner forgiven of his sins and in right standing with Him (Romans 5:1). When we place our faith in Christ, His righteous life and death become ours. He paid to God what we owed and could not pay (Romans 3:21-25; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the Bible: In this section of his letter to the believers in Galatia, written while on his second or third missionary journey, the apostle Paul declared that we are made righteous by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

What does God's name—YHWH—tell us about his character?

Question 2 of 5

What does it mean to live by faith after trusting Christ?

Question 3 of 5

How do God's laws and commands show us we fall short of God's standard?

Question 4 of 5

Why can good works not cancel out our sins?

Question 5 of 5

How is obeying out of appreciation for what Christ has done different from obeying to earn right standing with God?