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Primary Argument: Why Gentiles Are Not Required to Keep the Law

§ 1 • Those Who Believe In Jesus—Not Those Who Obey the Law—Are The Heirs of the Life Promised to Abraham

§ 1.1 • Being In Jesus by Reason of Belief Defines the Child of Abraham Who Will Receive the Promise of Life—Whether Jew or Gentile

**PART 7**

12 Just as Abraham “**believed** God and it was credited to him, resulting in *dikaioisune*,”<sup>1</sup> so then, you should understand that those who look to find acceptance by reason of their belief, these are the sons of Abraham.<sup>2</sup> 2•Now the Scripture, foreseeing that God would decree the Gentiles *dikaiois* by reason of their belief, announced the good news to Abraham in advance, saying, “*In you all the peoples will be blessed*”<sup>3</sup>—the upshot being that those who look to find acceptance by reason of their belief are blessed with the believing Abraham.<sup>4</sup>

3:6–9

13 Now however many there are who look to find acceptance by reason of their doing what the Covenant requires are under a curse.<sup>5</sup> 2•Indeed, it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the book of the Covenant to do them.*”<sup>6</sup> 3•Now, that no one is decreed *dikaiois* in the presence of God on the basis of the Covenant is evident, because “*The one who is dikaiois by reason of his belief shall attain Life.*”<sup>7</sup> (4•Yet, the Covenant is not excluded by belief; rather, “*The man who does these things shall attain Life by them.*”<sup>8</sup>) 5•When he became the curse on our behalf, the *messiah* bought us our freedom from the curse presupposed by the Covenant. (6•Indeed, it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.*”<sup>9</sup>) 7•As a result, the blessing of Abraham comes to Gentiles *who are in Messiah Jesus*. 8•As a result, we receive the Spirit’s promise *through our belief*.

3:10–14

§ 1.2 • The Blessing of Abraham Promised To Those Who Are In Jesus Is Not Superseded by the Mosaic Covenant

**PART 8**

14 Brothers, I speak as a man—no one sets aside or adds to a covenant that has been ratified, even though it is of man. 2•Now the promises were promised to Abraham and to his seed.

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1. *Genesis* 15:6.

2. Literally, “that the by-reason-of-belief ones, these are sons of Abraham.”

3. *Genesis* 12:3.

4. Literally, “that the by-reason-of-belief ones are blessed with the believing Abraham.”

5. Literally, “Now as many as are the by-reason-of-works-of-*nomos* ones are under a curse.”

6. *Deuteronomy* 27:26.

7. *Habakkuk* 2:4.

8. *Leviticus* 18:5 (loosely). See also *Ezekiel* 18:1–32, and *Ezekiel* 33:10–20.

9. *Deuteronomy* 21:23.

3•It does not say, “and to his seeds,” as to many. 4•Rather, it was as to one—“and to your seed.”<sup>10</sup> 5•This one seed is the *messiah*.

3:15–16

- 15 Here is what I am saying: the Law,<sup>11</sup> which came into existence four hundred and thirty years later, does not negate a covenant established earlier by God such that it nullifies the promise. 2•But if the inheritance is derived from the Mosaic Covenant, then no longer is it derived from the promise. But God granted it to Abraham by way of the promise.

3:17–18

§ 1.3 • The Mosaic Covenant Had A Temporary Role And Was Never Intended to Be the Ultimate Determiner of Who Would Receive Life

## PART 9

- 16 Why the Mosaic Covenant then? 2•It was added because of our transgressions, having been ordained through *angeloi* at the hand of a mediator until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. (3•So the mediator is not for the one seed.) 4•But God is one. 5•So is the Covenant in conflict with the promises of God? 6•No, of course not!

3:19–21a

- 17 Now if a covenant that was able to impart Life had been given, then *dikaioisune* would indeed be by reason of that Covenant. 2•But, instead, the Scripture<sup>12</sup> has classed all under sin categorically, to the end that the promise might—by reason of their belief in Jesus, the *messiah*—be given to those who believe.

3:21b–22

- 18 But before this belief came, we were put in protective custody under the Covenant, confined for the belief that was about to be unveiled. 2•Therefore, the Covenant has been our caretaker up to the time of the *messiah*, to the end that we might be decreed *dikaiois* by reason

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10. This is not a direct citation of any particular statement in the Scripture. Paul is offering this “statement” of God’s promise simply as a way to capture the gist of what it is that God had promised Abraham. God promised Abraham that he was going to bless Abraham and his seed. However, God never intended his promise to be a promise made to anyone and everyone who could trace his line of descent back to Abraham. Rather, God had one specific line of descent in mind—or, more accurately, he had one specific connection to Abraham in mind—as the thing that would qualify a person to share in Abraham’s blessing. What was that “connection”? It was to be akin to Abraham in one’s openness and receptivity to God and his promises. A person who shared Abraham’s openness to believing God was a member of the one “seed” of Abraham that was destined to be blessed with the blessing promised to Abraham.

11. Here I use ‘Law’ to translate *nomos* in order to make it clear that it is a different word from *diatheke* (covenant) in this same sentence. Nevertheless, *nomos* is being used to denote the Covenant that God made with Israel in the time of Moses.

12. Here Paul uses ‘Scripture’ as a synonym for ‘Covenant.’ It can serve as a synonym for ‘Covenant’ because Paul and his contemporaries have access to the terms of the Covenant only in and through what was recorded in the Scriptures. So far as Paul and his contemporaries are concerned, the Covenant is found in the Scriptures. The Scriptures include more than just the Covenant. But Paul uses ‘Scripture’ here to denote the portion of them that contain the Mosaic Covenant.