

GOD'S COVENANTS WITH ABRAHAM AND ISRAEL (through Moses)**GOD'S NEW COVENANT****Galatians 3–5; Ephesians 2:11–3:13**

Memory Verse: *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ* (Eph. 2:13 ESV).

Background Helps:

This week's lesson brings together the teaching on God's covenant with Abraham, his covenant with Israel through Moses (the old covenant), and God's new covenant. In his extended discussion of the doctrine of justification by faith in Galatians, Paul demonstrates the following:

- God's covenant with Abraham was based on faith: he received the covenant promises and was declared right with God (justified) by faith (Gal. 3:6-9, 14-18).
- The law (the old covenant) was introduced 430 years later and does not nullify God's covenant with Abraham (3:15-18). We cannot be justified by the law (3:10-13).
- The law was given to reveal and condemn our sin and to lead us to Christ, in order that we might be justified by faith in him (3:19-29).
- Hagar and Sarah, allegorically, represent two covenants: the old covenant and the new covenant (God's covenant with Abraham is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ). Notice the following contrasts (4:21-31):

Slave woman (Hagar)	Free woman (Sarah)
Slave woman's son (Ishmael)	Free woman's son (Isaac)
Born of the flesh	Born of the Spirit
Old covenant: law	New covenant: promise
Children of slavery	Children of freedom
Earthly Jerusalem	Heavenly Jerusalem
No inheritance	An inheritance

- A lifestyle under the law (the old covenant) is very different from a lifestyle in the Spirit (new covenant): Galatians 5:13-26.

In Ephesians 2:11–3:13, Paul shows us that the Gentiles, who were formerly “strangers to [God's] covenants of promise,” have now been included as fellow-citizens with the Jews. This passage includes our memory verse, Ephesians 2:13.


Lesson Helps:

Again, teachers have several alternatives for their lesson this week:

1. A lesson based on Galatians 3. In children's classes (and adults!), this lesson would give you the opportunity to review the Old Testament story of how God established his covenant with Abraham and how Abraham was justified by faith. You could also review the giving of the Law, the Ten Commandments (the old covenant), 430 years later on Mt. Sinai. Then use the law as it was intended to be used: to convict us of sin and lead us to faith in Jesus Christ, in order that we might be right with God (Gal. 3:24).

2. A lesson based on Galatians 3 and 5. Follow the same plan as in #1 above but add the teaching about walking in the Spirit in Galatians 5. Under the new covenant we are not only justified by faith in Christ but God writes his law on our hearts and enables us, by the Spirit, to live a life of love for our neighbor.
3. A lesson based on the allegory in Galatians 4:21-31. Review the relevant stories in the Old Testament, and use the material in the Background Helps above to teach the contrast between the old and the new covenants. This lesson would be a challenge for teachers of the adult classes!
4. A lesson based on Ephesians 2:11–3:13. Show how God’s covenant promises to Israel have now been extended to the Gentiles. Use the memory verse.

Home Assignment:

 Read Hebrews 8:1–10:25; 13:20-21.

 Memorize Hebrews 10:12 ESV.