

## **“I Speak After The Manner Of Men”**

*“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man’s covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed no one maketh it void or addeth thereto ...”* (Gal. 3:15). There is found in this passage the statement, *“I speak after the manner of men.”* By this the apostle means to say that what he is about to say is based upon accepted conclusions from man’s reasoning. Other passages which have similar statements are Romans 3:8; 6:19 and 1 Corinthians 9:8.

The word “covenant” found here is found in many New Testament passages although not always with the same shade of meaning. One notable example of this is Hebrews 9:15-17. There in the sacred text the Greek word *diatheke* (same word found in the Galatian Text) appears four times. However, the translators of the American Standard Version use two different English words in translating the same Greek word. *“And for this cause is the mediator of a new covenant (diatheke), that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant (diatheke), they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament (diatheke) is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made for. For a testament (diatheke) is of force after there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth.”*

Why two different English words from the same Greek word? The word “covenant” can mean an agreement; it also can signify a testament or will as we may more commonly call it. In the Hebrew passage, translators of the ASV felt that it was used in two different senses so they so distinguished that meaning with two different English words. I am persuaded they were correct in that translation.

When Paul wrote *“after the manner of men”* he showed that when a covenant had been confirmed, it could not be voided or added to by another. Since men universally accept the principle in regard to men’s covenants, how much more so is it true regarding a covenant made and confirmed by God! The covenant of which Paul wrote was that which God made with Abraham. He wrote, *“Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ”* (Gal. 3:16). This promise of which Paul spoke is recorded in Genesis 13:15; 17:8. That promise was that in Abraham’s seed all families of the earth would be blessed.

I believe it was Foy Wallace, Jr. who first observed from this passage that the scriptures are regarded so final that men may make arguments based

upon either the tense of the verb or the case of the noun: is the noun singular or plural? Paul did use such reasoning. Because the word "seed" is singular, not plural, he reasoned that it must have reference to Jesus Christ, not to the Jewish nation as a whole. Such conclusions did not please the Jews who felt that Gentiles had to become in fact a Jews by circumcision, but Paul's reasoning was valid.

Since the covenant God made with Abraham had been confirmed (God had sworn by Himself he would fulfill it (Heb. 6:13f)); then any subsequent dealings God had with Abraham's physical descendants would not override His earlier promise to Abraham. Thus he wrote, "*now this I say: a covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul so as to make the promise of none effect. For of inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise, but now hath God granted it to Abraham by promise*" (Gal. 3:17-18). What could be plainer than this? The law did come but it did not set aside nor abrogate God's earlier promise to Abraham. God's blessings for all nations through Abraham's seed comes through Christ (Abraham's seed) and not through the law.

NEXT: "What Then Is The Law?"

Jim McDonald