

I. Introduction.

II. Abraham had two sons by two women. 4:21-23

- A. Do those of you who want to be under the Law understand the Law? v. 21 2 Co. 3:14**
- 1. Paul has already shown that the Law rightly understood shows us the impossibility of being saved by works. 2:16 3:21-24**
 - 2. Listen to what the history recorded in the Law says about living under the Law!**
- B. Abraham had two sons by two women in two different ways.**
- 1. God had promised that Abraham would be the father of a great multitude. Gen. 12:2 15:2-6**
 - 2. Abraham became impatient and had a child (Ishmael) through the flesh with Sarah's maid, Hagar. Gen. 16:1-4**
 - 3. God miraculously enabled Abraham and Sarah to have Isaac who was to be the true heir. Gen. 17:15-21 18:10 21:1-7**
- C. These two sons represent two entirely different approaches to religion.**
- 1. Ishmael was born according to the flesh -- sin-tainted human effort.**
 - 2. Isaac was miraculously born through faith in God's promise. Rom. 4:16-22**
- D. Paul's shocking conclusion is that many of the physical children of Sarah (like Isaac) are spiritual children of Hagar (like Ishmael).**
- 1. The Judaizers took pride in their physical descent from Abraham and Isaac.**
 - 2. Paul shows that those who are under the Law are like Ishmael because they seek to gain God's promise through fleshly effort.**
 - 3. The true sons of Abraham are not those who are physical descendants, but those who are of faith. 3:6,9,14,29 Rom. 9:6-8 2:28-29 Mt. 3:9 John 8:37-44**
 - 4. The new birth, like the birth of Isaac, is not of the flesh but is a supernatural work of God. 4:6 John 1:12-13 3:6-8 1 Jo. 5:1 Ro. 4:18-21**

III. Two mothers, two covenants, and two Jerusalems. 4:24-27

- A. In what sense is Paul speaking allegorically? v. 24a**
- 1. Paul is using Old Testament history to illustrate the contrast between those who seek salvation by fleshly effort and those who are saved by God's grace.**
 - 2. This is very different from the allegorizing practiced by many false teachers in church history.**
- B. Hagar represents the Old Covenant of the present Jerusalem which is enslaved under the Law. v. 24b-25 Acts 15:10 2 Co. 3:6**
- 1. The slave woman can only give birth to children who are slaves like her.**
 - 2. Those who rely upon the law are Hagar's spiritual children. 4:8-9**
- C. Sarah represents the New Covenant of the heavenly Jerusalem which is free. v. 26-27**
- 1. The true Jerusalem is spiritual. 6:16 Heb. 11:10,14-16 12:22-24 Col. 3:1-4 Phi. 3:20 Rev. 3:12 21:2,10 Ps. 2:6 122:3 78:68-69 132:13-14 48:1-3 Isa. 62:1ff**
 - 2. The children of the heavenly Jerusalem are born from above and enter through faith. 4:29 John 3:3 1 Pe. 1:23**
 - 3. Those who dwell in the heavenly Zion are truly free. 4:7**
 - 4. The Jerusalem above is both already present and not yet completely fulfilled.**

- D. Isaiah's prophecy speaks of New Covenant blessings on the barren. Isa. 54:1 51:2**
- 1. God promised the exiles that the barrenness of Jerusalem would end. Isa. 54:4-8**
 - 2. That which was partially fulfilled in the return from exile comes fully to pass with the coming of Christ. Isa. 54:9-10 40:3 52:13-53:12**
 - 3. As barren Sarah was given a multitude of descendants, the new Jerusalem will have many children. 3:16 Gen. 11:30 17:16 1 Sa. 2:1-10**
 - 4. These numerous children include Gentile believers who are born of the Spirit and will fill the new Jerusalem. Isa. 54:9-17 49:11-12 Hos. 1:6-9 Ro. 9:25ff 1 Pe. 2:10**

IV. Live as children of promise. 4:28-31

- A. Remember who you are! v. 28 4:7**
- 1. You are like Isaac -- children of faith born from above. v. 28**
 - 2. You are heirs of God's promises. 3:29**
- B. You who are born of the Spirit will be persecuted by those who are of the flesh. v. 29**
- 1. Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Gen. 21:8-9**
 - 2. So it has been throughout history. Ge. 3:15 4:8 1 Jo. 3:12 Lu 11:47-51**
 - 3. Christ was persecuted by the children of the flesh. Mt. 23:37 27:22-25**
 - 4. We should not be surprised when we are persecuted by fleshly religious legalists. Jo. 16:2,33 15:20 Acts 13:45,50 14:2,5,19 1 Tim. 3:12 Mt. 5:11 Rev. 12:13**
- C. Those who are of the flesh are shut out from the inheritance. v. 30 3:29 Gen. 21:10-13**
- D. Remember who you are and stand firm. 4:31-5:1**
- 1. You are blessed to be children of the free woman. 4:7**
 - 2. Christ died so that you might be set free. 3:13 4:5 Mt. 11:30**
 - 3. Stand firm against those who would enslave you again. 5:1 1 Thess. 3:8 Phil. 1:27**

V. Conclusion: Who is your mother?

Contrasts in Paul's allegory

Righteousness by the law = slavery

The slave woman (Hagar)
 Abraham's son of the slave woman (Ishmael)
 Born of the flesh
 Mount Sinai = Hagar = slavery 4:24
 Present Jerusalem (Judaism) = slavery 4:25
 Children of the present Jerusalem (legalists)
 Children of the flesh = persecutor
 Son of slave cast out
 We are not children of slave woman

Righteousness by faith = freedom

The free woman (Sarah) 4:22
 Abraham's son of the free woman (Isaac) 4:22
 Born of the promise 4:23
 New Covenant = Sarah = freedom
 Jerusalem above = free = our mother 4:26
 Children of the Jerusalem above 4:27
 Children of promise = persecuted 4:28-29
 Son of free woman will inherit 4:30
 But children of free woman 4:31

Discussion questions

- 1. What is an allegory? How can allegories be properly or improperly used?**
- 2. Why does Paul use this allegorical argument?**
- 3. Whom does Ishmael represent?**
- 4. Whom does Isaac represent?**
- 5. What are the differences between the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above?**
- 6. Explain the use Paul makes of Isaiah 54.**
- 7. Why does the one born of the flesh persecute the one born of the Spirit?**
- 8. What does Paul want his hearers to do as a result of reading this section?**
- 9. How does this passage apply to us?**