

## THE APPOINTED TIME

### **TEXT: GALATIANS 4:1-12**

#### **Introduction:**

1. Last week I mentioned that in the Old Testament, believers are referred to as "servants of God."
2. For example, Joshua 1:2 says, "Moses my servant is dead."
3. However, in the New Testament, believers are called "sons." John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (cf. Gal. 3:26).
4. I pointed out that in this dispensation of grace, there are many advantages. It is a great privilege to being a servant of God, but it is a greater honor to be a son of God...and a servant.
5. As we move into Galatians 4, the picture presented to us is of a father who intends to turn over control of his estate to his son once the son reaches maturity.
6. However, as long as the son is still a child, his status is like that of a servant (cf. Gal. 4:1).
7. In some respects he was even lower than a servant because the servants were his "tutors and governors" (4:2). The servants taught him, managed his affairs, and even disciplined him at times.
8. This was the way it was for the "heir," until the "time appointed of the father" (4:2).

#### **I. THERE WAS NO SONSHIP UNTIL THE APPOINTED TIME**

1. The apostle Paul says "that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all" (4:1).
2. This was a temporary arrangement -- "until the time appointed of the father" (4:2).
3. Paul is describing the condition of the Jews under the Mosaic Law. "Even so we, when we were children..." (4:3).
4. "In bondage under the elements of the world" (4:3) refers to the elementary principles of the Jewish religion with all of its ceremonies and rituals.
5. Since God gave them the law, it does seem strange that Paul would refer to it as "the elements of the world" (4:3). However, it was a worldly system, in that God came down from heaven to the world's level when He gave the law to Moses.
6. "The elements of the world" (4:3) means the basics, the "ABC's" of this world. When our children are very little we teach them the ABC's. But

when they are older we expect them to go much further. To read the Bible and Shakespeare and great literature.

7. They should not have to go back to the ABC's when they are older.
8. The word "bondage" (4:3, cf. vs. 9; 2:4) indicates the restriction the Jews were under before the appointed time.
9. Peter said in Acts 15:10, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"
10. The appointed time brought deliverance.
11. The law appealed to the externals -- "days, and months, and times, and years" (4:10). The Gospel appeals to the inner man.
12. Things changed dramatically at the appointed time. From shadows to substance.
13. "The fulness of the time" (4:4) refers to the time appointed by God the Father to send forth His only begotten Son. Galatians 4:4 teaches that God's eternal Son was "made of a woman."
14. All men are "made of a woman." This Scripture teaches the two natures of Christ -- very God and very man.
15. This is referred to as "the hypostatic union."
16. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."
17. Not only was Christ "made of a woman," but He was "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Christ was born an Israelite to Jewish parents.
18. Christ voluntarily placed Himself under the law, and He is the only person who ever perfectly obeyed it.
19. Thus Christ was an acceptable Substitute. Only the sinless Son of God could redeem us from our sins (Gal. 4:5; cf. 3:13).
20. The expression, "the fulness of the time was come" (4:4) means that our Lord came at God's appointed time. The world was being prepared for the coming of the Messiah, just as it is now being prepared for His Second Coming.
21. The great generals and other leaders of the Roman Empire, did not know it but they were being used by God to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah (cf. Luke 2:1).

## **II. THERE WAS NO ADOPTION UNTIL THE APPOINTED TIME**

1. Adoption in Roman culture was different from adoption in modern life. The Roman father put a special toga on his son when he reached maturity. At

that point he was adopted as a full-grown son, with all the privileges that go with it.

2. In the New Testament, the term "adoption" is used only by the apostle Paul. It is used five times, and it refers to God putting believers into the position of mature sons with all the privileges and responsibilities of that position.
  - "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15).
  - "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).
  - "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Romans 9:4).
  - "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5).
  - "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5).
3. Strictly speaking, adoption is a future transaction (Rom. 8:23). However, believers have already been adopted positionally, and "have received the Spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15), i.e., the Holy Spirit, which we received at conversion.
4. The Scofield Bible says, "Adoption ("placing as a son") is not so much a word of relationship as of position. The believer's relation to God as a child results from the new birth (John 1:12, 13), whereas adoption is the act of God whereby one already a child is, through redemption from the law, placed in the position of an adult son (Gal. 4:1-5). The indwelling Spirit gives the realization of this in the believer's present experience (Gal. 4:6); but the full manifestation of the believer's sonship awaits the resurrection, change, and translation of saints, which is called 'the redemption of the body' (Rom. 8:23; I Thess. 4:14-17; Eph. 1:14; I John 3:2)" (p. 1250).
5. There is a distinction between the new birth and adoption. When a sinner repents and trusts Christ as his Saviour, he is saved. Practically speaking, he is a baby in Christ and needs to grow spiritually. But positionally, he is an adult son capable of understanding divine truth.
6. Warren Wiersbe said, "We *enter* God's family by regeneration, but we *enjoy* God's family by adoption."

7. In order that those who are sons might realize the dignity of this position, God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us and guide us and teach us, etc. Scofield says, "The Spirit actualizes the believer's sonship."
8. The Holy Spirit creates an awareness of sonship (Gal. 4:6; cf. Rom. 8:15).
9. "Abba" literally means "papa" or "daddy." We are told that William Tyndale, and later on the King James translators, had such reverence for the Word of God that they would not dare translate this word into English. Therefore they put it in the way it is in the original Greek text -- *Abba*.
10. No servant would address the head of the family in this manner, but a son certainly would. The believer is "no more a servant, but a son" (4:7).
11. We are no longer under the law; we are sons of God, and heirs of God through Christ (4:7).
12. All that God has is ours by faith in Christ. First Corinthians 3:22, 23 says, "All are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."
13. None of these blessings come by the law.
14. There are many advantages of being a son:
  - The son has the same nature as the father, but the servant does not. The law could never give a person God's nature. The best it could do was reveal to the sinner his need for God's nature.
  - The son has a father, while the servant has a master. The servant could not say, "Abba," but a son could. It is a much closer and more intimate relationship.
  - The son obeys out of love, while the servant obeys out of fear. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
  - The son has a future, while the servant does not. Many masters provided well for their servants, but it was not required of them. But the father was expected to provide for his son. Second Corinthians 12:14 says, "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."

### **III. THERE WAS NO GOSPEL OF GRACE UNTIL THE APPOINTED TIME**

1. The Galatians had been idolaters (Gal. 4:8).
2. The Galatians were not saved under the law. They were Gentiles saved under the Gospel preaching of the apostle Paul. He wanted to know why they were turning "to the weak and beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9).
3. They were turning away from the true Gospel to "weak and beggarly elements." From riches in Christ (they were "heirs" -- 4:7; 3:29) to "beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9).

4. It might seem like a contradiction for Paul to refer to the law as "weak and beggarly," because he says in Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."
5. Furthermore, Paul says in I Timothy 1:8, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."
6. But the Judaizers were not using the law lawfully. They were mixing law and grace. Paul says to do this is to preach "another Gospel" (1:6-9).
7. Paul says to do this is to "frustrate the grace of God" (2:21).
8. Paul says to do this is as bad as going back to their idolatry (4:8, 9).
9. They were observing the Jewish feast days and ceremonies (4:10). This is still practiced today by Orthodox Jews, and to a certain extent by liturgical, ritualistic churches.
10. The Roman Catholic Church has deceived the multitudes by their formalism and empty rituals. Their so-called Season of Lent (not taught in Scripture) is preceded in many Roman Catholic cities by the Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday"), when revelers indulge in all sorts of drunken debauchery and immorality.
11. Paul expressed fear for those he ministered to, wondering if they were even saved (4:11).
12. Paul says in Galatians 4:12, "Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am..." In other words, Paul is saying that he himself used to be a devout Jew before he was saved. Therefore, he is encouraging them to avoid the Judaizers who were trying to put them under the law.
13. "For I am as ye" (4:12) -- i.e., you were never under the law, and now I am no longer under the law. Paul was now free from the law, and they needed to understand that they were too.
14. "Ye have not injured me at all" (4:12b). Paul took no offense at their behaviour. They were not hurting him; they were hurting themselves and the cause of Christ.

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. There is a tendency in religion to impose strict rules and regulations upon members.
2. I am all for good, sensible Bible standards, but some Christians and some churches go far beyond what the Bible teaches.
3. The Bible teaches we should be separated from sin and worldliness, but some churches are unreasonable, and tend to be overly strict.

4. I heard about a pastor who was unable to get to church one Sunday morning because heavy snow had blocked all the roads.
5. He really wanted to get to church so he decided to skate up the river. When he arrived at the church he thought the deacons would be pleased.
6. But they were upset with him because they thought it was a sin to skate on Sunday!
7. They called for a special meeting to discuss the matter. At the meeting the pastor explained that he had a choice: it was either skate to church or miss the services.
8. Finally, one man spoke up and asked the pastor, "Did you enjoy skating to church this morning?"
9. The pastor answered, "No."
10. Since he answered "no" they decided it was alright!