

## Galatians Chapter 4

### Verse 21

1. This verse states in very clear terms exactly what the problem was at Galatia.
2. Many of these converts who had been saved out of a life of pagan religion, now wanted to place themselves under the religious system of the Law of Moses.
3. False teachers had crept into these churches and painted a rosy picture of the law and what it would produce.
4. For four chapters Paul has laid out one doctrinal argument after another proving that the law can only bring a curse, not a blessing.
5. He is about to embark on one final doctrinal argument in verses 22-31.

### Verse 22

1. Paul begins with, "*For it is written...*" Whenever we see this phrase, Paul is going to refer to the Old Testament Scripture.
2. Just as he did in Chapter 3 with Abraham, Paul will use an Old Testament story to prove his teachings of grace. By using prominent Old Testament characters, he is beating the Judaizers at their own game.
3. Paul is going to use the two sons of Abraham as an illustration. We must remember Paul's purpose in all of this - it is to prove that the believer today is not under the law (verse 21).
4. What is Paul referring to when he says that Abraham had two sons?
  - Ishmael - born of Sarah's handmaid, Hagar (the bondmaid).
  - Isaac - born of Sarah, Abraham's wife (the freewoman).

### Verse 23

1. Why was Ishmael born after the flesh and Isaac by promise?
2. God had promised Abraham a son by his wife Sarah. From Abraham's seed would come a great nation, and by him all nations would be blessed. Abraham was 75 years old, but the promise from God was clear. **Genesis 12:1-3**
3. Ten years later they had no child and there were no signs that they would be able to bear a child. Sarah decides to take matters into her own hands. **Genesis 16:1-4**
  - God was nowhere to be found in all of this. All of this was done in the energy of the flesh. Ishmael was born after the will of the flesh.
  - Ishmael was born as a result of the unbelief of Abraham and Sarah.
4. If we fast-forward to **Genesis 21:1-7**, Isaac is born of Sarah. This child is born as a result of God's direct promises to Abraham and Sarah.
  - Abraham is 100 years old and Sarah is 90.
  - Isaac was a miracle baby given by the promise of God. **Romans 4:19-21**
5. But, even though the child of promise (Isaac) is now present, let's not forget that the child of the flesh is still there. Ishmael is now about 13 or 14 years old.

- When Isaac is born and is weaned (he would have been 2 to 5 years old), there is great contention between the child of the flesh (Ishmael is now about 15 to 18 years old) and the child of the promise (Isaac). **Genesis 21:8-10**
  - Sarah said to cast out this bondswoman (Hagar) and her son (Ishmael), and that is exactly what happened. The two could not dwell together. Abraham didn't just move them next door or down the road, he had to cast them out all together. There could be no union between the two.
6. So Abraham had two sons. Ishmael was born after the flesh, and Isaac was born by promise.

#### Verse 24

1. Paul will now use this story as an allegory.
  - An allegory simply means a symbolic representation.
  - In other words, the people and actions in this story symbolize a great truth for the body of Christ today.
2. It is important to note that Paul makes allegorical application of this story under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  - No person has the right to go to the Bible and try to find "hidden meanings" and develop their own private interpretation of Scripture.
  - When people employ this kind of a reckless approach, they can make the Bible say whatever they want it to say.
  - We must always take the Bible in its literal meaning unless God clearly reveals a hidden meaning in His Word. (Example: a vineyard is used allegorically in **Isaiah 5:1-7**, but God clearly tells us that it represents the nation of Israel.)
  - We would not go **looking** for a hidden meaning to the stories of Sarah and Hagar, but God (through Paul) will reveal one to us.
3. *"For these (the two sons) are the two covenants..."* Paul now gives us the meaning.
  - Ishmael represents God's first covenant - the Law of Moses given on Mount Sinai. Hagar and Ishmael were both slaves and represent the bondage that the Law of Moses gave birth (gendereth) to. **Acts 15:10**
  - Isaac represents God's second covenant which was made possible on Mount Calvary when Christ died for the sins of the world.
4. Both of these covenants are discussed in **Hebrews 8:6-13** and they both have their primary application to the nation of Israel. By grace alone, and because of Christ's death, God will one day fulfill all of the promises of the new covenant to Israel.
5. But this new covenant also has great implications for Gentiles. Because Israel rejected this new covenant, we have been offered grace and peace with God if we will simply place our faith in Jesus Christ, believing that He died for our sins. It is all of grace, not of works.
6. This dispensation of grace was promised in Christ before the world began (**Ephesians 1:4, 3:11**), but was kept secret until God revealed it to Paul (**Ephesians 3:2-3**).
7. Here's the bottom line: The first covenant gave birth to bondage and condemnation. The second covenant gave birth to grace and freedom from sin. Ishmael and Isaac are a picture of these two covenants.

## Verse 25

1. Hagar is a picture of Mount Sinai.
  - From Hagar came Ishmael.
  - From Mount Sinai came the law.
2. At the time Paul wrote Galatians, earthly Jerusalem was still under bondage to the law. The temple was still there and the sacrifices of the temple were still operative.
3. They were willingly ignorant of the fact that Christ had offered a final, once for all sacrifice for sin.
4. The law and earthly Jerusalem were still in union (this is the idea of "*answereth to*") and therefore in bondage.