

Bible Study – Galatians 4:21-31

August 26, 2020

Note – The fact that Paul (along with Barnabas) had gone out, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, preaching salvation by grace through faith is found in the records of the missionary trips in Acts. Particularly, in **Acts 13** we find this, along with the response of the people. Verses **42-43** reveal the attitude of the Gentiles upon hearing the Good News. We learn in verses **44-52** how the Jews responded in contrast. You might want to take a moment and read **Acts 13:16-52** in light of what we have been studying here in Paul’s letter to the believers at Galatia.

Let us continue now with **Galatians 4:21-31** where Paul presents the concept of two covenants as he presents an analogy from Abraham’s life.

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

Have you ever felt like you deserved to get into heaven because you’ve done more good things than bad? Or perhaps you have tried to keep the Ten Commandments, so surely, you’ll be accepted into heaven when you pass on. Yet, there’s a little concern that you might not make heaven you hope because you haven’t exactly been perfect. What now? To these points and much more, Paul asks, “*Haven’t you read the word of God?*” *Haven’t you really considered and understood it yet?*

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was *born according to the flesh*, and he of the freewoman *through promise*, ²⁴ which things are **symbolic**. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which *gives birth to **bondage***, which is **Hagar**—²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to **Jerusalem which now is**, and *is in bondage* with her children—²⁶ but the **Jerusalem above is free**, which is the mother of us all.

Paul contrasts two things here in a subtle way:

Translated as “**Law**” & “**Law**” – what’s the difference?

He continues to by considering the life of Abraham:

Gen. 12:1-3 -

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, “**Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house**, to the land which *I will show you*; ²And *I will* make you a great nation, and *I will* bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ³And *I will* bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you *I will* curse. And **in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.**”

How old was Abraham when he was called by God to leave Haran, to leave all that he was familiar with, and head out in trust of the Lord?

If you felt like God told you to leave all you had and far away to a place you didn’t know about yet, would you?

In **Gen. 15:1-3**, Abraham reminds God that **He had not** – *as of yet* – **kept His promise**. And, since he was the head of a large clan, he would need someone to take his place... and provide leadership to the people. *He needed an heir.*

What was Abraham’s attempt at correcting this problem?

Yet, God tells him in **Gen. 15:4**, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”

*After about a decade, what was **their second attempt to help God out** and bring about His promise?*

What were relations like between Hagar and Sarah? Between Ishmael and Isaac?

In what way is the relationship of Hagar and Sarah (or Ishmael and Isaac) like that of the Jews and the gospel believing Church?

What is ironic about the what Abraham (the father of the Jews) and the Judaizers / Jews gained their salvation?

What has been the result of the Jews rejecting grace, and place their trust in the Law?

What does "Jerusalem which now is" refer to?

What does "Jerusalem which is above" mean?

How did Sarah who was barren conceive?

How did Jerusalem, which was barren conceive?

Consider: John 1:12-13 (NIV) –

¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to become **children of God**— ¹³ children born not of *natural descent*, nor of *human decision* or a husband's will, but born of God.

Can you make any connections between those of this passage, and those of Hagar or Sarah?

Continuing with **Galatians 4:27** -

²⁷ For it is written:

"Rejoice, O barren,

You who do not bear!

Break forth and shout,

You who are not in labor!

For the desolate has many more children

Than she who has a husband."

Galatians 4:28-31 -

²⁸ Now we, **brethren**, as Isaac was, are children of promise. ²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so it is now. ³⁰ **Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."** [Gen. 21:10-12] ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

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