

The Epistle to the Galatians
Lesson #16 • Galatians 4:19-23

“An Old Testament Allegory • Part 1”

• The Two Sons of Abraham •
• H A N D O U T •

Now, in this current study passage, Paul tries a more analytical and comparative approach to his teaching. He begins to compare the Judaizers' attitude and motive toward them against his own attitude toward these people. He first makes it clear he has not come to build up a cadre of personal disciples as the false teachers were doing. Instead, he had come to help them, to make sure that they understood the Gospel message, and show them how to act on its message. He desperately wanted them to receive Jesus as Lord and to experience the wonders of a new spiritual birth.

Paul opens up this passage with “my dear children.” As we noted previously, it is only in this letter that Paul uses this expression, though others like John, often used it.

Galatians 4:19-20 • My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Q: What does Paul mean when he says he was “in pains of childbirth?”

Q: Considering the culture in Paul's day, why do we find this statement a surprise?

Q: Where else in Scripture do we find this kind of imagery?

Q: Why does Paul say he was “**again**” in the pains of childbirth?

Q: What does it mean: “Christ being formed in you?”

►NOTE: Martin Luther made a comment about this scripture passage, which seems quite insightful: This is a pattern found in all Biblical ministry. “The Word of God falling from the lips of the apostle or minister enters into the heart of the hearer. The Holy Ghost impregnates the Word so that it brings forth the fruit of faith. In this manner, every Christian pastor is a spiritual father who forms Christ in the hearts of his hearers.”

- Q: Paul said that if he could be with the Believers in Galatia again, he would change “his tone.” What does he mean by that?
- Q: Why do you think the Galatians were even interested in returning to the Law with its legalism when God's Grace was so freely available to them?

Paul begins to conclude his argument by illustrating and reviewing his main points. As he has been doing throughout this letter, he uses Abraham as his example. But, this time, he uses an Old Testament Allegory to challenge his readers ...

Galatians 4:21 · Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the Law says?

- Q: Paul previously made numerous statements about the inadequacy of Law, so what is Paul's purpose for asking this question?

Paul's Allegory about Abraham takes an unexpected turn. Jews are very prideful of their heritage through Abraham and his son, Isaac. But Paul reminds them Abraham had two sons:

Galatians 4:22-23 · For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.
His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise

- Q: In Chapter 3, Paul asked the question: “*who are the true sons of Abraham?*” Paul's answer was: “*Those who have put their faith in Jesus are the true sons of Abraham.*” So why does Paul returned again to the subject of Abraham and his son and then confuse the issue by bringing up a second son?
- Q: Why would Paul continue to use Abraham's name to make his point about the Gospel?

Q: Why do the Jews refer to themselves as children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? The Covenant was made with Abraham. So why the three names?

Q: Who were the two sons of Abraham whom Paul referenced?

Q: Obviously these two sons had the same father – Abraham. But Paul argues that it is more important to look at the differences in their heritage through their respective mothers. What are the significant differences between the mothers of Abraham's two sons?

HAGAR		SARAH	
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	

Q: Both women became pregnant as a result of sexual activity. So why does Paul say Ishmael was born from a slave woman in the ordinary way but Isaac was born from the free woman as the result of a *promise*?

THE SLAVE, HAGAR:

THE FREE WOMAN, SARAH:

Q: Why is it important that we compare these two births?

ISHMAEL		ISAAC	
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	

Q: Why did Sarah think that Abraham having a son through her slave Hagar would solve her barren problem and fulfill the Covenant God had made with her husband?

Q: If it was legally and culturally acceptable, why was Sarah's solution so wrong? After all, Sarah's biological clock had virtually quit and it would accomplish God's promise to give Abraham an heir!

Q: What did God really desire from Abraham and Sarah?

In the end, God's interaction with Abraham and Sarah provides us with the foreshadows of the miraculous events to come ...

Q: What does Sarah's conception foreshadow?

Q: What does Isaac's birth foreshadow?

**We have now looked at Abraham's two sons.
In Part 2 of this study, Lesson #17, we will look at the two mothers of Abraham's sons.
It will be around these two women that Paul expands and deepens his Allegory ...**

Next Time • Lesson #17

~~ An Old Testament Allegory ~~

Part 2 • Two Women – Two Covenants

Galatians 4:24-31