

(21) Tell me, you who desire to be under the Law, do you not listen to the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

(24) Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants.

(24b) One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

(26) But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” (Isaiah 54:1)

(28) Now you, brothers, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit --- so also it is now! But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Think on these things:

- 1) What is the real problem with trying to follow God’s Laws as passed down through Moses? See Galatians 3:10-11 and James 2:10.

- 2) Abraham had children with three women, but this passage’s discussion is about his primary wife and her servant girl. Who were these two women? See Genesis 16:1-4, 15-16 and 17:15-17.

a. Was Ishmael’s birth normal or unusual? _____

b. What was unusual about Isaac’s birth (Genesis 21: 1-7)? _____

c. Genesis 21:8-11 – What prompted Sarah to demand Hagar and Ishmael be sent away?

d. From Genesis 17:18, 20, and 21:11, how would you describe Abraham’s feelings for Ishmael, his firstborn son?

e. In this matter of Ishmael, who did God back (Genesis 17:19, 21 and 21:12)? _____

3) Paul now says that Abraham's personal life experiences with the two women and his two sons also have an allegorical application for today's believers (v. 24). The division of the two represents God's first and second covenants. Which woman/son represent the Covenant of God's Law, and which woman/son represent the Covenant of God's Promises of Freedom?

4) God's first covenant on Mount Sinai was given through Moses. Do you know who brought us the second, new, covenant of freedom (from our sins)? See Hebrews 9:15.

5) Whose children are we (v. 28), and do we belong to the first or second covenant?

6) According to question 2c above, what does Paul say happens to believers today who stress their freedom in Christ Jesus instead of focusing on obeying all of God's Laws (v. 29)? Remember that it IS important to obey God, but the purpose of the Law was explained in Galatians 3:24-25. What is the purpose again?

7) What did Jesus have to say about this topic in Matthew 22:34-40? How do Christians fulfill (obey) God's Laws while also living in God's freeing grace and forgiveness? Would you agree that religion by rules has been replaced by religion of relationships?

8) What phrase should we remember when it comes to choosing to live by obeying God's Laws or living by faith in God's promises (v. 30)? Realize that Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-4), and that the just shall live by "faith" (Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 10:38).

People and situations I want to pray for this week: