

Israel Coming To Maturity
Galatians 4:1-4
August 22, 2012

The overall theme of the book of Galatians is Justification by Faith. Justification is not by works and specifically justification is not by keeping the Jewish Law. Justification is by faith in Christ alone.

In Chapter three of Galatians, Paul has proven the inability of the Mosaic Law to justify. He openly stated that “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God.” (Gal.3:11) And furthermore, if justification by a law were possible, then it should have been so. (Gal.3:21) It is reasonable that if man could have been saved by a law, then he should have been, for why should Jesus Christ undertake such a horrific mission of suffering if justification could have been accomplished in any other way?

The simple truth is that law cannot save a man. And to be more specific, the Mosaic Law cannot save a man. Now we might all readily agree that Roman law could not save a man. Greek law could not save. All manner of pagan law could save. But what about God’s Law? What about that Holy Law of God? What about those Ten Commandments given to Moses? Surely they could save.

But no, even God’s Law does not save a man. Because man is a sinful creature, God’s Law serves as a ministration of death (II Corinthians 3:7) and a ministration of condemnation. (II Corinthians 3:9)

Furthermore, in chapter three Paul proved that salvation comes through another covenant. It did not come through the Mosaic Covenant to Israel. Rather, it came through the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham was not a member of the nation of Israel. There was no nation of Israel in Abraham’s day. Abraham was a member of the world. And God came to Abraham and promised a seed through whom the nations of the world would be blessed. Salvation through Jesus Christ was the great promise to Abraham. And God told Abraham, “In thee shall all nations be blessed.”

Furthermore, Paul proved in chapter three that salvation under this Abrahamic Promise was a faith kind of salvation. Salvation does not come by works. Salvation comes by believing the promise of God. Salvation is by grace. It is a pure gift of God on undeserving sinners.

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Galatians 3:6

The very nature of the Abrahamic Promise was grace. Under that Promise Abraham took a deep breath and he breathed in the soothing air of grace. There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1) The foul stench of death and condemnation is the air we breathe under law, but under grace the air of forgiveness is pure and clean and refreshing.

So, Paul contrasts the gracious Promise to Abraham against the legal contract that was made with Israel. And the Promise is found to be much better.

Now we learned last time that there are several characteristics of the Mosaic Law. It was in the nature of a curse. (3:10) It was a works system of religion. (3:10) It was not a faith kind of a system, rather it was a doing kind of a system. (3:10) The Law was powerless to save. (3:11) The Law could not undo the Promise. (v.17) And the Law was temporary. (3:19)

The Law was designed to demonstrate that man needs a Savior. The Law was designed to prove that grace is the only hope for a sinner. The Law was designed to magnify the gospel promise that was made to Abraham.

The Law came along in the infancy of Israel. In fact, the Law gave birth to Israel. The Law created the nation. And so, Israel grew up under the dictates of the Law. The Law dominated every movement that the Jews made. When they got out of bed in the morning there were things that they could do and things that they couldn't do. When they got hungry, there were things that they could eat and things that they couldn't eat. When they went to worship, there were things that were required and things forbidden. They had to go to school and learn these laws. There

were civil laws and ceremonial laws and moral laws. And they could barely take a step without fear of violating these precepts.

Example: Have you ever seen a television show where a burglar is trying to rob an art museum. And there are priceless pieces of art in the building. And when the burglar wants to enter the room, he puts on special glasses and he sees that the Museum has a laser security system. And these laser lines are in a criss-cross pattern across the entire room. And if the burglar touches any of these lines in the grid, it will set off the security alarm.

That's the way it was for the Jews. They were under the Law. And the requirements of the Law were impossible for sinful men to navigate.

Now God put Israel under the Mosaic Law. He didn't put other nations under the Law. But he put Israel under the Law. Why only Israel? I would suggest that God had a universal purpose in putting Israel under the Law. God designed to teach all men everywhere that men are sinners and that justification does not come by the Law.

Example: If you want to test the water in the well, you draw out a bucket of water and you test it. And if the water in the bucket is contaminated, then the water in the well is contaminated.

And it was not necessary for God to put all of mankind to the test of the Mosaic Law. God took a sampling of mankind – one tiny nation of Israel. And God demonstrated, by the sampling of Israel, that every man in the whole world was contaminated by sin. And when God demonstrated that no man in Israel could be justified by the Law, this was good enough to prove that all of mankind was contaminated and could not be justified by the Law. God's dealings with Israel served as an example for all men and proved that with regard to all men the Law cannot justify.

But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Galatians 3:22

Notice that the Scripture, that is, the Old Testament or The Law, concludes that all are under sin. Israel was a sampling of mankind in general. And whatever is concluded of Israel is concluded of the whole of mankind. And the Law concluded that everyone in Israel was a sinner and so, it is concluded that everyone in the world is a sinner.

The Figures That are Used to Describe Israel in this Passage

You will notice that,

I. Israel under the Law was compared to a child under a schoolmaster.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:24

Israel under the Law was like a child. And the Law served as a chaperone. (The translation schoolmaster is a little misleading. The idea is not so much a teacher as a disciplinarian. The Law served as a 24 hour-a-day nanny.) The people had not come to Christ, but the Law was bringing them there by hard discipline.

The next figure that is used to describe Israel is found in Galatians 4:1-3.

II. Israel under the Law was compared to an heir in his minority.

A. The principle asserted.

The principle which Paul asserts is found in the first two verses of chapter four.

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all. But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Galatians 4:1, 2

Now here is the way it normally works if you are fortunate enough to be born to a wealthy father. When you are a

child you barely can tell that there is any benefit whatsoever. When you are two years old your father doesn't hand you a hundred thousand dollars and say, "Here, go out and have a nice time," does he?

Rather, the father hires tutors and governors for the child. Every time the child would like to play with his legos here comes his tutor to sit him down at the table of instruction and teach him Latin and Greek and Mathematics and Science. And if the child doesn't want to learn Latin, then the governor (nanny) gets out a switch to make the child do his lessons.

And what does the child say when the governor pulls out the switch? Why, the child says, "I am no different than a servant. This is slavery around here! I can never do what I want to do. I always have to do my lessons. Every time I turn around the tutor and the governor are looking over my shoulder."

This is why it says,

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all. But he is under tutors and governors.

B. The principle applied.

This is the way it was for the nation of Israel under the Law. They were heirs in Christ (that is, those who were really Israel were heirs) but under the Law they were treated like children. It was a time of infancy. And they had very few of the benefits of heirship during their infancy. It was actually more akin to a time of bondage.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Galatians 4:3

By using the pronoun "we," Paul is speaking of Israel and he includes himself. When "we" were children, we were in bondage. Now before Christ came, Paul was an heir. He was elect before the foundation of the world in Christ. He was separated from his mother's womb to be a servant of Christ for the gospel. And yet, before Christ appeared, Paul was in

bondage to the Law. He did not have the liberty that comes with heirship. He was stuck in bondage to the requirements of the Law.

Now Paul says that he (along with the Jewish nation) was in bondage under “the elements of the world.” Now what are the “elements of the world.”

It is clear from the context that when Paul says, “The elements of the world,” he is speaking of the Law. In verse nine, he calls the Law the “weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage.” The Galatians were tempted to go back under those old worldly elements of the Law.

Religion under the Law could be characterized as earthly. It involved performing rituals and ceremonies. It involved doing this and doing that. It was a very tangible religion. It was a religion of types. And it was elementary. It was teaching the rudiments of religion. It was the ABC’s of religion. “See that lamb over there - that is a sacrifice. See that man dressed up in ornate clothing - that is a priest. See the tabernacle – that is where God lives.” It was earthly and elemental. This is why Paul referred to the Law as the elements of the world.

But look at verse two. With regard to heirs, there is a time appointed by the father when the heir becomes of age and inherits. The father determines that at such and such an age, the tutors and the governors will be taken away. Maybe it is when the child turns 18 or 21. It is up to the father.

As for Israel, there was a time appointed at which the schoolmaster would be taken away. There would be a time when the tutor and the governor would no longer discipline the child. In short, there was an appointed time when that old disciplinarian, the Mosaic Law, would be removed in favor of the liberty which comes with adulthood. And when was this appointed time when Israel would come out from under the Law?

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law . . .

Galatians 4:4

Fifteen hundred years of instruction was enough. Fifteen hundred years of tutelage under the Law was plenty. And Christ came to bring to a close that elemental religion and to bring in a more mature religion for Israel.

Now, remember in verse two that it referred to the time appointed of the father. And with reference to Israel under the Law, there was an appointed time for their maturity. And this appointed time is found in verse four.

But when the fullness of time was come . . .

There was always an appointed time for Jesus Christ to make his appearance. And this was it. There was always an appointed time for the dictates of the Law to end. And this was it. There was always an appointed time for the nation of Israel to grow up and become a man. And this was it.

God sent forth His Son . . . (v.4)

This moment in history was always designed to be the terminal point of the Law. It was the fulfillment of the types. It was the reality behind the ceremonies. When Jesus came, it was the moment when Israel would receive that which was promised. It was that moment when true Israel, all those who were saved within the nation of Israel, would reach maturity and receive full sonship. It was that moment when they finally came out from under the schoolmaster.

When Paul was converted and instructed in the gospel, he never offered another animal sacrifice. He did not go back to Jerusalem for three years. He stopped observing the Jewish days and feasts. He stopped eating only kosher foods. And he did this because the Mosaic Law was instituted only until the seed should come. And finally, God sent forth His Son.

It is interesting that Paul says Jesus was made of a woman. There are two thoughts inherent in this statement. First, Jesus was a real human being. He had a real human mother. And therefore, God sent His Son as a real human being. But, this statement also implies the virgin birth of Christ. He was not born of a man or begotten by a man. He was born of a woman.

And, it says he was born under the law. Jesus was born during the time of the Mosaic Law, just before its expiration. In fact, the fulfilling of the Law by Jesus Christ was the event that caused its expiration. Jesus was born under that system. Jesus was required to observe the Law and he was required to obey it in every point. And Jesus completely fulfilled the requirements of the Law.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:17

There are two ways in which Jesus fulfilled the law.

1. He obeyed it. From start to finish, from top to bottom every part of the Law was performed by Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Law proved beyond a doubt that Jesus Christ was righteous. Now remember that one of the purposes of the Law was to show that the Jews and therefore all men are sinners. And it demonstrated our sin very vividly. But on the flip side of the coin, the Law demonstrated that Jesus Christ was righteous. The Law could not find one violation in him. Therefore, Jesus was found to be a lamb without blemish. And since we were in Him, the Law finds no violation in us.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Romans 10:4

But Jesus also fulfilled the law when,

2. He accepted the penalty of the Law. The Law demanded death for all violators. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) And when Jesus stood in our place and suffered the wrath of God in our stead, the Law was satisfied. It was fulfilled. The penalty was levied against Jesus. The Law has no more complaint against those for whom Christ died.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 6:14

The Conclusion of the Matter

God sent His Son to accomplish something and here is what it accomplished.

1. It redeemed them who were under the Law.

Now note first who it is that is purchased out from under the Law. I take it that it is first and foremost the Jews. It is the Jews who were under the Law. And it says Jesus redeemed those who were under the Law. Jesus paid the price and took the Jews out from under that legal system.

This word redeemed is “exagarozo” or “to buy out of.” Jesus bought the Jews out from under the Law. He fulfilled the Law. He paid the penalty of the Law and thus brought the Jews out from under it.

2. It brought the Jews out of childhood and into maturity as sons.

That we might receive the adoption of sons.

Galatians 4:5

Remember, we are carrying forward the figure of the heir who is a minor child. And the minor child doesn't feel like an heir at all while he is a child. He feels like a servant. He has a schoolmaster and a tutor and a governor to discipline him. But, one day he comes of age and the schoolmaster doesn't show up any longer.

And this is what it means when it says we might receive adoption of sons. Paul says “we” because he is referring primarily to the Jews who were formerly under the Law. And he says that we might receive the adoption of sons. That is, Christ came to bring us to maturity. He came to bring us out of that old system for children and to bring us into the full benefit of sonship.