

99-04-11a

Let's begin our worship this morning by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this day. It's especially wonderful when we have great weather and springtime, and we see the product of all of your creative work.

We enjoy the wonders of nature and all of the things about us, and it makes us grateful to be alive and be included in your plan. We thank you for your sustaining grace, for the ways that you heal us when we are sick or injured. We thank you for the environment in which we live, where we are not oppressed.

We don't find ourselves displaced or driven from our homes and our country, as some in this world are. We thank you that because of all of these things, we have the opportunity, as well as the responsibility, to take advantage of the great situation that you have placed us in, to seek the truth of your word, to be nourished by it in our souls, to be transformed by it, to more closely reflect the image of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray this morning as we fellowship together and as we study your word that God the Holy Spirit will lead us closer to that goal.

We pray that the things we see in your word will be meaningful to us and will make a difference as we think and act in the days to come. We pray that not only will we benefit and fulfill our calling and our role in your plan, but also that our lives will be a reflection of your grace and your glory and that we can be a blessing to others in our periphery, even as you are a blessing to us. We pray that you will bless us as we worship, and we thank you for your many graces to us.

In Jesus' name, amen. Turn with me for our scripture reading this morning to the book of Galatians. It's always a happy turn of events when we come to a passage in the Old Testament that is addressed in the New, because we have spelled out for us many of the things that we need to observe and to learn from in the Old Testament passage.

We have come to, in our study of Genesis, the place where Sarah gives birth to Isaac. Now there are two sons, there are two wives in the household, and this morning when we return to our study of Genesis, we're going to see the departure of Hagar and Ishmael from the household of Abraham. Why does this take place? Why isn't there room in the household of Abraham? He's a rich man.

Why can he not keep both these wives? Jacob is going to do it with four wives. He will have Leah and Rachel and Bilhah and Zilpah. He will have twelve sons instead of two, and all of them seem to coexist in the same household.

Why is it necessary, and why does God approve of the idea, for Hagar and Ishmael to depart and to not be in the household, not be sustained by the wealth and the beneficence of Abraham? Well, this is a puzzler, and fortunately we have the Apostle

Paul, probably the greatest Old Testament scholar whose work we have access to. He spells this out for us in Galatians chapter 4. So this is going to be our reading this morning. In the book to the Galatians, and you will recall, it's always nice to kind of keep in mind the context of a passage of Scripture rather than just viewing it in isolation.

What is the book of Galatians about? Who was it written to? Believers in Galatia were having a hard time figuring out the place of the law of Moses in their newfound Christianity. There was a big change in the plan of God. There was a big change in the way that God dealt with believers, and a big change in their responsibility and in their relationship with God because Christ has come.

They are in union with Christ. There is a new order. There is a new way of doing things.

The law now has been fulfilled. The requirements of the law no longer occupy the place in the lives of believers that they did before Christ. Well, people wrestle with this.

You have 1,400 years of living under the commandments that came down at Mount Sinai, and you can understand that there would be a little bit of a transition. Many of us have gone through a big change in life where we relocate or the loved ones that have been in our life are no longer there, or we get married and have new loved ones we didn't have before, and there is a big change. Our whole life reflects an adjustment, and sometimes a very significant adjustment.

It takes us a little time to sort things out. Well, this is where the Galatians are, and unfortunately they have been convinced by people in their periphery, teachers and so forth, that things should stay the way they were, that the law still has its old place, and that they need to be following the commandments of Moses. Their children need to be circumcised.

They need to be observing the feasts and offering the sacrifices and looking at the letter of the law that Moses delivered to Israel. After all, it is the word of God, and it was good enough. It's kind of like they were singing the song, The Old Time Religion.

It was good enough for Grandpa and good enough for Dad. Well, it's good enough for us. Don't be removing the old landmark.

They can quote all kinds of Old Testament scripture, but Paul is teaching in the book of Galatians why this change has taken place, and we're going to see it foreshadowed. This is something Israel should have been able to see in passages such as the one we're studying this morning. So this is what Paul is talking about in Galatians.

He's saying, look, there's been a change. You need to study your Old Testament scriptures in addition to the passages mentioned about doing everything the same. There's many places in scripture that said that this change was coming, and you should have seen it coming, and you ought to recognize it now that it's here.

Chapter 4 of Galatians, Now, I say that an heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, even though he is master of all. Now, that's a short verse, but right away we see that he's talking about the difference between the position that you occupy and the experience that you have. There is a difference between positional truth and experiential truth.

A child, when he's a little child, he is the heir. He is the son of the father. He's the one to whom everything is going to come in a patriarchal society.

He's the root and branch of the family, and everything is going to come to him. But while he's a child, he doesn't exercise those rights. He doesn't buy and sell and make decisions and so forth.

He's treated like a servant. He is given commands. He's trained.

He is disciplined. He doesn't enjoy the fruit of his position yet, because he's not yet qualified. But he is the heir.

So there's a difference in his legal position and in his daily experience when he is small. He is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so, we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

This is the nation of Israel, believers who were congregated in Israel. This is the place where God dealt with and provided for believers. If you were a believer in Old Testament days, you came to Israel.

That's where you got your nourishment and your growth and your blessing from God. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father.

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. But then indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

But now, after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements to which you desire again to be in bondage? Now this portion that we've just read, he's saying, look, your fullness of time has come. You're the infant child that had the position of an heir, the people of God. God made promises to them and so forth.

But in a national sense, in a corporate sense, believers under the Old Testament, there were some things they had to learn. They had to be under tutors and guardians. And this was the law of Moses and those who implemented it, the priests and the prophets.

And even the monarchy in Israel had the responsibility of shepherding the nation of Israel and getting them to learn the lessons that the law taught. What were the lessons of the law? We're sinful. By the law comes the knowledge of sin, Paul says in Romans.

The law was a schoolmaster, a trainer, to bring us to Christ, to show us that we needed a mediator. We've just seen this in our recent study of Job. Job comes to this understanding even before the law of Moses, which is an amazing thing.

And it tells you how great Job was as a believer and stands out even among his three or four friends there that he perceives in the midst of his calamity that the law of sacrifice, the family priesthood, and the promises of God that he's relying on for his daily life ultimately are insufficient to provide him a relationship with God where he can come before God and speak to Him, where God can communicate to him face to face. He says, I wish there was someone who could do that for me, but there's not. And Job comes to realize there's a need for a mediator, there's a need for a redeemer, there's a need for a savior, so that beyond the reciprocal arrangement, you be obedient and God will bless, that it's not just a mechanism, it's not just a way of life, it's a relationship that should exist between man and God, but there's this great gulf that can't be filled.

Job comes to that realization, this is what the law of Moses was supposed to teach the nation of Israel. They should have arrived at the realization the blood of goats and bulls cannot atone for sin. There needs to be a permanent solution.

This is only temporary. We keep having to come back and offer these sacrifices year by year. The high priest has to go in for the entire nation once a year because this is just representative, this just is an illustration and a symbolic representation of our situation, that we're constantly becoming defiled, we're constantly committing iniquity, and God has to constantly have these things covered over by the sprinkling of blood just so that we can continue as a nation.

But it is an explanation of the problem and of course you can't really appreciate a solution until you recognize the magnitude of the problem. This is why doctors spend time explaining physical maladies to patients. What patient wants to go under the knife and have surgery unless there's a sufficient reason.

A doctor may look inside and see that here's a tumor growing or here's a failure of an organ or something. Well, if the doctor just comes up to me and says, if I go in, I'm going to try to go in for a physical here before long, if I go in, the doctor comes up and says, Sam, I'd like you to come in day after tomorrow. We're going to prep you and go in for major surgery.

We're going to put you to sleep. We're going to go in and chop out several organs. You'll be in the hospital for six to eight weeks and then you'll have a convalescence of two to four months at home.

Well, I'm not just going to walk in there and let him do that without understanding why. What's the reason for this? What's the need for it? You're going to do something very radical here. Why? I need to understand the problem before I can appreciate the solution.

We as a human race and the nation of Israel in particular as believers needed to understand the problem to recognize the need for a savior. If just whacking a goat or a bull or a sheep every so often is going to keep God happy, well, what's the problem? We've got plenty of sheep. We've got plenty of bulls.

We do this for hundreds of years and the crops don't seem to be turning out very well. Just take another bull down there and sacrifice and appease God and everything will be great. Well, this is what the pagans do.

This is what the Greeks and the Romans came up with. Sacrifice some people. Take your young daughter and kill her on a mountaintop.

The Aztecs and some of these others came up with this idea. Put a coin in the slot. Blessing will come out.

There was the need to understand the magnitude of the problem with God. This is what the law does. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Once it has accomplished that purpose and now that the solution is here, we don't keep going back and running through the problem again and keep examining the problem. The problem has been explained.

The problem has been amplified and illustrated. Now we need to accept the solution. If this doctor that tells me I need this surgery, if I just sit there staring at the x-rays day after day and say, boy, that really does look bad.

Look at that lump next to my liver. Oh, gosh, look, I can see. Here's another x-ray and it's spread.

Now it's in some of my... Well, you can't just sit there keeping looking at the problem. Sooner or later you've got to embrace the solution. The problem in the first few generations of the church and, in fact, all the way down to the present, but especially in those first few generations because most of the believers were Israelites, is they couldn't make the transition from seeing the problem to seeing the solution.

In fact, their problem was they didn't recognize what the role of the law was to point out the problem. They thought the law was the solution. X-rays can't cure your disease.

X-rays show you what you need. But they thought, well, we'll just keep looking at these illustrations. We'll keep operating with these symbols.

We'll just keep slaying a bull and a goat and observing the feast. We'll just be obedient and everything will be fine. Obedience can't satisfy the righteousness of God.

It can't redeem us. It can't cleanse us from sin. It can't pay the judicial penalty.

It can't restore us. It can't regenerate us. It can't give us all of the things that come through Christ.

So by not fully understanding what the law was saying, by not understanding what the X-rays were showing, the generations of believers in Israel had a really hard time seeing the need for Christ and seeing that, okay, now we can put the X-rays away and go in for the operation. Let's accept the work of the doctor here and be healed and be made whole. And this is in the experiential sense, the daily deliverance, the daily salvation, not just deliverance from the lake of fire, but the fruitfulness and production that God wants from His people.

So this is what Paul is illustrating in Galatians chapter 4. He says we were a child. We needed to be taught the way of the world, the way things are. And so we had the priests and the prophets.

We had the law of Moses showing us these things so that we could grow up and become a son who is qualified to inherit, qualified to operate the household of the Father, to administer and to use the resources of the Father. But we had to be taught these things. And he says when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods in verse 8. Verse 9, but now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, see now there was always a time in the life of a young son when he reached the age of 13 to 15, somewhere in there, the father would go through a ceremony where he recognized his son as an adult and declared him to be his heir.

And this is when the son began to take an active part in the affairs and the business of the father. And this was a point that was reached. And this is the point that Paul is talking about.

This is where mankind has come. This is where the nation of Israel has come. It's time now to become an heir of the father.

Now that you are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements to which you desire again to be in bondage? It's like you're shirking your responsibility. You want to go back and have the servants lead you around by the hand. You want to go back to grade school.

You don't want to move into the adult world. You observe days and months and seasons and years. These are the things that the law specified, the feasts, the Sabbaths, and so forth.

Paul says in verse 11, I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Brethren, I urge you to become like me. I have become like you.

You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity, I preached the gospel to you at first, my trial which was in my flesh. You did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God or a messenger of God, even as Christ Jesus.

What then was the blessing you enjoyed? I bear you witness that if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? What's he talking about here? When Paul came and visited these believers in person, he taught them the good news of Jesus Christ, that there's been this wonderful fulfillment of the Old Testament shadows, and that there is freedom in Christ. There's a new way of life that is not organized and guided by the law of Moses.

And he says, You received me when I was there in person. You would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. You received me so well, but now have you decided that I'm your enemy because I'm telling you that these old things have passed away and new things have come? Why do you not accept my word? Why are you going back and listening to these old ideas? They, verse 17, zealously court you, but not for good.

They want to exclude you so that you will be zealous for them. There are teachers who are trying to bring them back under the custodianship of the law because under the law, you had people who were responsible. You had the priests and the prophets.

You had the leadership. You had the synagogue teachers and so forth, and they got to where they enjoyed this. I've seen this happen in a church that loses its pastor.

When you have a group of believers and there's a pastor there who's the authority and who guides the policies of the church, who makes sure that things are done decently and in good order, who is the primary source of teaching and who is the ultimate final say-so on policy and so forth, something happens and the pastor is gone. Well, the people who are on the board or who are the deacons or the elders, however they're organized, they have to fill in. So they'll take over and make the decisions and decide where and how the church is going to meet and who they're going to have speak and what the process is going to be for identifying a replacement pastor.

But I've seen several churches where these men, once they get up in that position and they kind of get to flex their muscles a little bit and exercise authority and make decisions, they kind of get to where they like that. And they don't really want the pastor to come in and to relinquish that control and that authority. They kind of get used to it.

And they don't want to say, okay, here's the guy. He's voted in now and I'm just going to

go back to my old responsibilities. They've all had a piece of the pie that belongs to the pastor and they're really reluctant to give it up.

Well, here you have these people. There are people who thrive on this. This is a part of our nature as human beings.

Some of us have sort of a controlling impulse and that's a real hard thing to relinquish once it comes out and gets its sway. So these people who kind of like being the authority and telling people how to live their lives and running the feasts and so forth, the scribes and Pharisees and Jesus Day, they're courting the people. They're trying to convince them to go back under the law.

If people thought, hey, this is a good system. I'm kind of a monkey monk here in the Levitical order of things. They want to court you, but not for good.

They want to exclude you so that you will be zealous for them, so that you'll be looking to them. We've even had, in our section of our strand of Christian function and tradition, we've had the point where this real high concentration on the pastor. People say, well, I want to find my right pastor.

There are pastors who are willing to take that role and to tell people what their politics should be and what their opinions should be and who discourage people from reading their own Bible and who are really kind of occupying this sort of position. They take an intermediate spot between the believer and the Lord. Jesus came to wipe out that intermediate section.

He says, you come boldly before the throne of grace. You are a priest in this age. You are your own priest.

You represent yourself to God. Jesus Christ is your high priest. We are all priests after the order of Melchizedek.

It's a replacement for what was in the Levitical code. It's a great thing to sort of be a broker and say, well, let me be your channel to God. People want this.

Paul says, this is what these people are doing. Paul says, it is good, in verse 18, to be zealous in a good thing always and not only when I am present with you. Look at verse 19.

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you. Think about this. If Christ is formed in you, if the Lord Jesus Christ is indwelling you, like he talked about to the disciples in John chapter 14 and 15, if Christ is in you, no human being can stand between you and the Lord because he's right there.

You can't get a human being inside your soul to sort of stand between you and the Lord

and broker your relationship and say, well, let me be your mediator. Jesus Christ is the mediator between man and God. And if he's in your soul, if he's formed in you, well, you've got a direct link to God.

It's like Job said, I wish that there was someone who could stand and put his hand on each one of us, have a hand on God and a hand on man, and be the intermediary. Well, Jesus Christ is in you. There's your link.

And it's improper for any person, whether it's a pastor or anyone else, to try to insert themselves in between and say, oh, well... You can imagine a husband and wife. If somebody says, oh, well, let me be your intermediary. Wife, I'll talk to your husband for you.

Husband, I'll talk to your wife for you. Let me just be the third party here. Talk about an extraneous place to be.

Paul says, I'm laboring in birth again until Christ is formed in you. I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone. I have doubts about you.

I've taught you these things you ought to know better, but you're listening to these ideas from the past, these people who won't give up the ideas of the law. So now in verse 21, he says, Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? Are you not instructed by it? Do you not get the message of the law? It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman. But he who came from the bondwoman was born according to the flesh.

Remember, this was Sarah's idea. God was not in it. The one born of the free woman came through promise.

These things are symbolic. Paul says in verse 24, For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which gives birth to bondage, this is Hagar. For Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

What's he talking about here? Where is Mount Sinai? If you look on your Bible map in the back of your Bible, is Mount Sinai in the Holy Land? It's not. It's not in the land of promise. You would think, why didn't God give the law there on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem? The law was given outside the boundaries of the promised land.

Why? Paul points it out here. Hagar is an Egyptian. She's from outside the land, outside the people.

This is not the source from which the blessing of God is going to come. This Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. It's outside the land.

It's a foreign thing. And it corresponds to Jerusalem, which now is, and those who are in bondage under it with their children. These are people who are putting themselves under the law.

They're just looking at it as a code of restrictions, a code of conduct, rather than a schoolmaster to point out the need for Christ. And this is the earthly Jerusalem. This is the Temple worship that Jesus went in and overturned the tables of the money changers and said, Don't you know this is supposed to be a house of prayer? This is a place for relationship with God.

What is prayer? It's conversation with God. It's not a place of buying and selling. It's not a place of paying God with an offering and getting a blessing in return.

Verse 26, The Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. 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. And we're shifting from the realm of what is seen to the realm of what is not seen. Hagar had a child and everyone could see it.

And she had that child for 14 years before Sarah had her child. Well, do you bank on, do you put your money on the son that you can see or the one that's been promised? Are you operating in the realm of what is seen or the realm of what is not seen? Abraham has to make this choice. Is one in the hand worth one by promise? I've got a son here with Hagar.

He's here. He's from my flesh. God said someone from my loins will be my heir, so here's one in the hand.

Well, and then you've just got the hope that God says, No, you're going to have a son with Sarah. She's going to conceive. I'm going to come back this time next year and Sarah will have a son.

So do you treat the unseen son, the unseen hope as reality or do you go with the thing that you can touch and feel and see? Well, this is the challenge that faces Israel when Jesus comes and when Christianity comes, the day of Pentecost and you're in a new dispensation. You say, well, we've got the law and we've got this concrete stuff. We know these stone tablets came down from Sinai.

We know this is the word of God. But this unseen business that we don't have to do these things anymore, that doesn't seem real. But Paul says the real Jerusalem is not the one down here on earth running the temple, running the sacrifices, running the feast days.

It's the heavenly Jerusalem. You haven't seen it yet. You can't put your hands on it, but

the apparently barren, the one that doesn't have anything you can see is going to be more fruitful than she who has a husband.

So in verse 28, Paul says, We, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But just like he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. We're going to see this morning that Ishmael is going to precipitate some action because he's going to make fun of, he's going to persecute Isaac.

This is what Paul refers to. Nevertheless, what does the Scripture say? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not inherit, shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

And I think it's unfortunate that chapter 5 is a break here in the thought because you tend to want to stop right there at the end of chapter 31. But the point of this whole discussion on Paul's part is in chapter 5, verse 1. Because of this, if you can see this illustration, stand fast, therefore, in the freedom by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

Now, wait a minute. Genesis chapter 17, we studied that God commanded circumcision. He said if you're not circumcised, you're cut off from your people.

Paul here is saying if you get circumcised, you're cut off from Christ. These are pretty strong words, aren't they? Paul says if you put your hope in the law, if you don't see the place that the law had in the earlier part of God's plan, and if you don't see where you are now in God's plan, you're going to be cut off from Christ. Because the inheritance is for the grown son.

The inheritance is not for the son that's a product of the law, that's stuck in the law, that is in bondage under the law. Israel in the Old Testament, have you ever noticed they didn't inherit the promises? God promised Abraham a land. He promised Israel that land in perpetuity.

He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey that they would dwell in forever. Every man would have his olive tree and his grapevine, and there would be a king on the throne of David perpetually. They would have the Davidic kingship.

They would have all of this prosperity. Israel hasn't ever had that, have they? Why? Because in the entire Old Testament they existed under the law. They were under the schoolmaster.

They were a child. They weren't grown up and ready to inherit. Well, Paul says, it's silly to want to go back and try to stay in that status.

You want to grow up so that you can inherit. You want to fulfill and inherit all of these things that come from your Father, the Lord God. This is his point.

So he says, now that Christ has come, now that you have accepted Christ as your Savior, this is the maturity phase for the human race. This is where we now are no longer, we don't go back to the paideia, the trainer, the instructor that led the child to and fro from his classes and told him when to get up and when to lie down and what to wear and so forth. He says, we're free now.

We're out from under the training phase and it's time to act like a son and an heir and to receive the promises. So he says, stand fast in the freedom that Christ has given us. Don't be entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

Don't try to go back and go back to grade school. If you go back to those things, you are estranged. Christ will profit you nothing.

He says in verse 2, I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised, he is now under obligation to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace.

You were in grace and you've fallen from it. These are believers. And this idea of justification is what we studied in Romans.

If you are looking for your daily righteousness by what you do, by your obedience, by your adherence to a ritual, you have fallen from grace. We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. We're looking for those unseen things that God promises in this age through Christ.

In Christ Jesus, verse 6, there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision that avails anything. It's faith working through love. Righteousness, justification, the things that God assigns to us and can bless us and can give us an inheritance in, these things come through faith working through love.

Paul says you ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? You started out well. This persuasion doesn't come from the one who called you.

You're listening to these teachers who are trying to assert their control over you. And he goes on in that vein. This is the subject of the whole book of Galatians.

But it's pertinent for us this morning because we are looking at the chapter where Hagar and Ishmael are driven out of the household of Abraham. This seems terribly unfair. It's very politically incorrect.

Why does this take place? Well, as we resume our study over in Genesis chapter 21, we left off here a few weeks ago before our Job special. The Lord visited Sarah as he had

said and the Lord did for Sarah as he had spoken. This was the fulfillment of the promise.

God said he would do this and he did. And the scripture emphasizes this twice in verse 1. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which God had spoken to him. This puts us in mind of what Paul said over there in Galatians chapter 4. Remember he said at the appointed time God sent his son into the world to redeem us from the curse of the law? Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God has made me laugh and all who hear will laugh with me.

This is interesting because the word laugh of course is the root from which Isaac's name comes. It's Tzakak. T-S-A-Q-A-C-H in Hebrew.

And when you put the prefix with it, Yitzhak, that's where Isaac's name comes from. And so there's a play on his name there in verse 6. And this is going to recur, this theme of laughter. Remember when God told Abraham he was going to have a son? Abraham laughed.

Tzakak is the verb. When Sarah hears through the tent flap that she's going to bear a son in her old age, she laughs. God says, why did Sarah laugh? She says, I didn't laugh.

God says, yes, you did laugh. That's all the verb Tzakak. So now when Isaac is born, Sarah remembers this and she says, God has made me laugh.

Laugh with joy. And all who hear will laugh with me. Because this is a joyous occasion and it's a demonstration of the power of God.

She also said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children, for I have borne him a son in his old age? Who would have thought? It didn't seem like it was going to take place, but here it is. And here's an interesting observation. We've noted that the details of Scripture are important.

And I don't pretend to have worked out all of the numerical significances in Scripture, but you cannot help but notice, if you go back to Genesis chapter 16, when the conception of Ishmael takes place, the very end of that chapter, Genesis 16, 16, Abraham was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. Right? So he's 86 when Ishmael is born. How old is he when Isaac is born? He's 100.

So how old is Ishmael when Isaac is born? When the son of promise comes. He's 14. There have been 14 years passed between the birth of Ishmael and the birth of Isaac.

If you know anything about biblical history, what is the date of the Exodus? What's the

date in history when Moses climbed Mount Sinai and God gave the law? It's 1400 B.C. 1440 thereabouts. The 40 years of wandering Israel goes into the land in about 1400 B.C. So there are 1400 years between the giving of the law and the coming of Christ. And this is the equivalence that Paul draws out for us in Galatians chapter 4. He says, Hagar, who gives birth to Ishmael, she represents the giving of the law on Mount Sinai in Arabia.

14 years after the birth of Ishmael, you have the birth of Isaac, who is the son of promise. The son through whom the fulfillment of the promises will take place. Heirship, inheritance, all is channeled through Isaac.

He is the son of promise. So it's an interesting correspondence that there are 14 years between Ishmael and Isaac. There are 1400 years between the law and Jesus Christ.

So I just toss that out there to you for your own meditations. So we have this in chapter 21, verse 8. The child grew and was weaned and Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had born to Abraham, scoffing.

Do you want to hazard a guess at what the root of the word scoffing is in Hebrew? T-S-A-Q-A-C-H. Tzakak, the word to laugh. Here it's in the P-A-L stem in Hebrew.

The P-A-L is the intensive stem. And the P-A-L of tzakak, it's intensive. Most of the time when you have a word, a Hebrew verb, in the cal stem, which is the normal stem, it'll have a meaning.

And then there's a P-A-L. You change the vowels around a little bit and it intensifies it. So instead of just laughing, laughing with joy, the P-A-L of tzakak means to laugh in derision, to mock, to laugh at someone instead of laughing with them or laughing for them, laughing at something humorous.

Now this is derisive mocking laughter. This is persecution type laughter. This is an echo of the same attitude that took place when Ishmael was conceived.

His conception also brought about some derision. Again, back in Genesis 16, Sarai has this great idea for Abraham to have a son with Hagar. So in verse 4 of chapter 16, he went into Hagar, she conceived.

When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. So then Sarai said to Abraham, My wrong is upon you. I gave my maid into your embrace.

And when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. So there's this air of superiority. With the conception of Ishmael, it leads almost immediately to some pride, some arrogance.

Look at what I have done that you can't do. I can conceive with Abraham. I mean, one try

and bingo.

So what's the matter with you? Abraham's been living with you for 60, 70 years here. You didn't have any children. I go into his tent, and I'm already with child.

So what's the matter with you? There's this derision and this despising, this pride sort of, that Hagar has. Well, this is part and parcel of the comparison, of the illustration. Because anytime you start looking at works as the basis of your righteousness, you're going to look down on people that you don't think have the same works that you do.

And this was the self-righteousness of the Pharisees that Jesus condemned when he said, you stand on the street corners and parade your piety around, and yet you've whitewashed the outside and inside you're full of dead man's bones because you're looking at others and you're comparing yourself to others and you have this natural arrogance that comes about when you decide that you're righteous based on what you do. It's just part of that system. And this is associated with Ishmael at his conception, and again, just before he leaves the household here, Isaac comes along and Ishmael's making fun of him.

He's scoffing at him. This matter caused problems in Sarah's mind. So in verse 10, she said to Abraham, cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac.

She doesn't call Hagar by name. She doesn't call Ishmael by name. She says the bondwoman.

Why is that? Because it is a standard, it's an understanding, it's a law in the ancient world. There are some particular rules that apply to servants in the household and heirs that may spring up with that servant. And Sarah is appealing to the legalities here, to the law of the day, when she talks about the inheritance.

Because by right, it doesn't matter with whom the child was conceived, Ishmael as the firstborn son is legally, at this point, Abraham's heir. Sarah says no. God says that Isaac is going to be the heir, so you've got to cast out the bondwoman and her son.

Well, how can this take place? How can Ishmael be removed as the legal heir of Abraham? Well, we're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we will find out how this is possible and whether or not the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael is, in fact, right in the eyes of God. But let's pause here and take a break.