

Review Questions (Lesson #10)

Answer T for true, F for false

1. In this lesson, a “child” is a minor, while a “son” is an adult.
2. Redeem means pay the price to buy someone out of an undesirable situation.
3. Keeping the Mosaic Law made the Jews heirs of the promises made to Abraham.
4. The Holy Spirit cries out “Abba, Father!”
5. Both Jews and Gentiles sold themselves into the slavery of sin.

Give short answers:

1. What did guardians and stewards do?

2. How did the Israelites put themselves under a curse?

3. What price did Jesus pay to redeem us?

4. By turning back to the Law of Moses for their justification, what two foolish things were the Judaizers doing?

5. Briefly tell what the “elements of the world” are in 4:3.

Fill in the blanks:

1. Though Jesus was eternal _____, He took upon Himself _____, His _____ being derived from a _____ (His mother, Mary).
2. _____ connotes the intimacy and _____ a true _____ would have for his _____ would not use such a word of their _____.
3. A _____ child could technically _____ the father’s estate, but he would be too _____ and _____ to deal with it _____.
4. But Jesus is our _____, being “born (_____) of a _____.”
Therefore, He is able to _____ us, and has done so.
5. He (Jesus) lived and _____ under the _____ of _____, being the only person ever to have _____ it _____.

Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace
Lesson #10 Slavery and Sonship (Galatians 4:1-7)

Which would you rather be: a slave, or a son? Before you say, “That’s a foolish question!”, consider the fact that the Judaizers in Galatia and elsewhere were surrendering their status as sons to go back to being slaves. Minor children in ancient societies were entrusted to guardians who enforced proper behavior. Paul likened the Law of Moses to such a guardian over Israel (see lesson #8). In Christ, however, we are not children, but sons (i.e. adults) who are no longer under a guardian (see lesson #9). In this lesson, Paul expands this point by showing that minor children were, in a sense, like slaves. Therefore, by turning back to the Law for their justification, the Judaizers were reverting to the status not only of immature children, but of slaves.

Paul ended the third chapter by emphasizing that being heirs of the promises God made to Abraham depended not upon Mosaic Law-keeping, but upon belonging to Christ (Galatians 3:29). Picking up on the concept of being heirs, he now re-emphasizes the difference between the status of a minor child and that of a son (adult). “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all” (4:1).

A minor child could technically own the father’s estate, but he would be too young and immature to deal with it responsibly. The father would place others in charge temporarily. In lesson #8 Paul used the term “pedagogue” (mistranslated “tutor” or “schoolmaster” in some versions) to describe one who supervised minor children (3:24, 25). In 4:2, he uses two other terms that set forth the same general idea: “but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” A guardian watched over the child himself, while a steward managed the estate. This arrangement continued until the child reached the age set by the father (i.e. became an adult). Presumably he would then be mature enough to behave responsibly without the oversight of the guardians and stewards.

All of this illustrated the relationship of Israel to the Law of Moses. “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world” (4:3). “Elements of the world” is a difficult expression. The word elements gives us our word “elementary”; it has to do with things that are in a row or orderly, such as the “a, b, c’s” that a child learns. They are the basic, rudimentary things that have to be grasped before moving on to more

complex matters. This would apply not only to the Law of Moses for the Jews, but for whatever basic, elementary things pagans learned as a beginning point in their society.

Our Heavenly Father determined that the time had come for Israel to be an adult. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (4:4). The "fullness of the time" corresponds to "the time appointed by the father" in 4:2. At that time, God sent forth His Son, Jesus the Christ, to be born (literally "made") of a woman. That is to say, though Jesus was eternal Deity, He took upon Himself human flesh, His physical body being derived from a woman (His mother, Mary). (See John 1:1, 14.) And He was born under the Law; He lived and died under the Law of Moses, being the only Person ever to have obeyed it flawlessly.

For what purpose did God send forth His son? "to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:5). In Lesson #7 we learned that Christ "redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (3:13). The Israelites put themselves under a curse by failing to obey the Mosaic Law (3:10). Jesus redeemed them by enduring crucifixion: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (3:14 quoting Deuteronomy 21:3).

The word redeem means to pay the price to buy someone out of an undesirable situation. Specifically, under the Law of Moses, circumstances might force a person to sell himself into slavery. A close relative had the option to redeem such a person by paying an appropriate price to the slave's owner (see Leviticus 25:47-55). Since Jesus was "born (made) of a woman" and "born (made) under the Law" (Galatians 4:4), He had the right to redeem those who were under the Law, being a fellow-Israelite.

In a larger context, both Jews and Gentiles had sold themselves into the slavery of sin. That remains true to this day. But Jesus is our kinsman, being "born (made) of a woman." Therefore, He is able to redeem us, and has done so. He paid the ultimate price for us: His blood which He shed upon the cross. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). All of the blood sacrifices under the Old Covenant were fulfilled in Jesus when He offered His own blood in the very presence of God in heaven. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12).

The end result of our having been redeemed is that we "receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:5). Note the contrast between children (i.e. minors. v. 3) and sons (i.e. adults). It is against nature and common sense for adults to revert to being children; but such was the case in a spiritual sense with the Judaizers.

Paul's use of "adoption" shows that our relationship to God is not something that occurs because of our own nature, but we are accepted in Christ by the grace of God. But the main point here is the transition from a minor to an adult. Paul elaborates further: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (4:6). Most English versions capitalize "Spirit," but this seems not to be a reference to the Holy Spirit. More likely, it is a reference to the spirit (attitude) demonstrated by Jesus. Our Savior obeyed the Heavenly Father not in the spirit of an abject slave, but that of a loving Son. "Abba" connotes the intimacy and trust a true son would have for his father. Slaves would not use such a word of their master. Paul made the same point in his letter to the Romans: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit (spirit) of adoption by whom (which) we cry out, 'Abba, Father'" (8:15). Note that the first use of "spirit" in this verse pertains to the attitude a slave would have; the second use is also best seen as the attitude (spirit) a son would have, rather than a reference to the Holy Spirit. There is little reason for the Holy Spirit to cry "Abba, Father." But a Christian with the same attitude as Jesus has every reason to do so.

In view of all these points, Paul concluded: "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7). Just as it defies nature and common sense for an adult to return to childhood, so it would be absurd for one freed from slavery to become enslaved again willingly. But this is what the Judaizers were doing. No wonder Paul labored so hard to turn them around and keep others from falling into their error!

As already seen in 3:29, being an heir of God depends not on keeping the Law of Moses, but upon belonging to Christ. Jesus is "heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). Christians are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). The Judaizers who hounded Paul throughout his ministry missed this fact completely, and not a few Gentiles in the religious world today still miss it. Paul will return and illustrate this point again in 4:21-31.