SLAVES OR SONS

Galatians 4:4&5 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

The Underage Heir

Galatians 4:1&2 What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.

The analogy is about a wealthy Roman household; and as our Father in Heaven owns everything, the analogy fits. In a wealthy Roman household children were usually taken care of by slaves, spending more time with them than with their parents. Even though the child would eventually inherit everything the parents owned, he was under the authority of "guardians and trustees until the time set by his father." Matthew 2:15d (quoting Hosea 11:1) "Out of Egypt I called my son," supports this analogy.

"Guardians" is *"epitropos,"* "one to whose care something is committed" (Vine's). "Trustees" is "oikonomos, lit., one who rules a house..., a superior servant responsible for the family housekeeping, the direction of other servants, and the care of the children under age (Vine's)." The guardian's job was to take care of the children under the supervision of the servant in charge of the entire household. The heir or heirs were under the authority of slaves.

Galatians 4:3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.

In the same way, we Jews, while we were children, that is, not yet having been adopted as sons (verse 5) were in slavery, being told what to do without explanation, as slaves are, as is a basic principle in raising children all over the world.

But When the Set Time Had Fully Come

Galatians 4:4&5 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

"When the set time had fully come." Jesus came when God, through the prophet Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27, had said He would come.

I John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

"Born of a woman" may imply the virgin birth. It certainly implies that the Son of God was fully human as well as fully God.

"Born under the law" means that Jesus was born a Jew and lived as a Jew His entire life, although He certainly did not keep the Old Testament law in at least one respect as the Pharisees understood it.

John 5:16-18 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Mark 2:27&28 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

"Redeem" is *"exagorazo* a strengthened form of *agorazo,* to buy…, denotes to buy out *(ex for ek),* especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom" (Vine's). The Jewish people were slaves under the law, treated as little children, given rules without explanation.

"That we might receive adoption to sonship." In the Roman world natural born sons were adopted when they were recognized as adults who could inherit from their father. In our culture the transition from childhood to being an adult is gradual; in Roman culture, it was marked by the adoption ceremony. Part of this transition is going from arbitrary rules to general principles to be applied wisely.

John 15:15a "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business."

*Abba,* Father

Galatians 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Romans 8:14-16 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, *"Abba,* Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Mark 14:36 *"Abba,* Father," he said, "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Exodus 20:18-20 When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." See Deuteronomy 5:23--29

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament God revealed Himself in a terrifying way so that His people would fear Him and so obey Him. In the New Testament God reveals His love and grace and His desire to have a loving relationship with us.

I John 4:16-19(NASB) And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.

The loving relationship God wants us to have with Him is verbalized in the phrase, *"Abba,* Father." It is a way of connecting with God that shows absolute trust and confidence in our Father's love. It is how the Holy Spirit within us wants us to connect with God.

It is how Jesus taught us to pray. Matthew 6:9, "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,'"

In the Old Testament God revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent one (Yahweh), the all-powerful Creator (Elohim) that He might be feared and obeyed. In the New Testament He has revealed Himself as the loving Father, who loves and forgives and restores. We now address Him primarily as Father, because that is how He has revealed Himself and how He has revealed through Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit that He wants to be addressed.

No Longer a Slave, But a Child and Heir

Galatians 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Things to Remember

Paul uses the analogy of adoption into a Roman household to explain the Jews former and current relationship with Christ.

Under the Old Testament law, they were slaves, told what to do without explanation, like little children are treated, "Do what you are told, or you will be punished."

Christ bought them (and us) out of the slave market and set them free, and they were accepted into God's family as full-grown sons, given basic principles and told to apply them wisely.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The change in relationship, from the fear-based obedience of slaves, to the "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14a) obedience of those who know they are incredibly loved, changes how we address God.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit within both teach us to call Him *"Abba,* Father" because we are no longer slaves under the Old Testament law but are now children and heirs of God.