

Galatians 4:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Analysis

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. Paul begins his allegory from Genesis. "For it is written" (gegraptai gar, γέγραπται γάρ)—Scripture says, introducing authoritative citation. "Abraham had two sons" (Abraam dyo huiou eschen)—Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 16, 21). Actually Abraham had more sons (Genesis 25:1-6), but Paul focuses on these two for his typological argument.

"The one by a bondmaid" (hena ek tēs paidiskēs, ἓνα ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης)—Ishmael, born to Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave. "The other by a freewoman" (kai hena ek tēs eleutheras)—Isaac, born to Sarah, Abraham's wife, a free woman. This distinction between slave-mother and free-mother will carry allegorical weight. Paul sees prophetic significance in these historical details. The circumstances of each son's birth illustrate two different principles by which people relate to God.

Historical Context

Genesis 16 narrates Ishmael's birth: Sarah, barren, gave her servant Hagar to Abraham to produce an heir through her—human effort to fulfill God's promise. Genesis 21 narrates Isaac's birth: supernaturally conceived when both Abraham and Sarah were past natural childbearing—divine power fulfilling divine promise. Paul sees these births as more than history; they're types, patterns illustrating flesh versus faith, works versus grace, law versus promise. This typological reading was common in Jewish and early Christian interpretation.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the distinction between Ishmael (human effort) and Isaac (divine promise) illustrate different approaches to relating to God?
2. In what areas of your spiritual life are you producing 'Ishmaels'—trying to fulfill God's promises through human effort rather than trusting divine power?
3. What does it mean to read Old Testament narratives not merely as history but as types illustrating spiritual realities?

Interlinear Text

γέγραπται	γὰρ	ὅτι	Ἀβραὰμ	δύο	υἱοὺς	ἔσχευ	ἓνα	ἐκ
it is written	For	that	Abraham	two	sons	had	the one	by
G1125	G1063	G3754	G11	G1417	G5207	G2192	G1520	G1537
τῆς	παιδίσκης	καὶ	ἓνα	ἐκ	τῆς	ἐλευθέρας		
G3588	a bondmaid	G2532	the one	by	G3588	a freewoman		
	G3814		G1520	G1537		G1658		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 16:15 (Parallel theme): And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

Genesis 21:10 (References Abraham): Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

