

Galatians 4:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Analysis

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Paul explicitly identifies his interpretive method. "Which things are an allegory" (*haina estin allēgoroumena*, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα)—these things are being allegorized, spoken as allegory. *Allēgoreō* (ἀλληγορέω) means to speak figuratively, finding spiritual meaning beyond literal history. Paul doesn't deny historical reality but sees deeper theological significance.

"For these are the two covenants" (*hautai gar eisin dyo diathēkai*, αὗται γάρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι)—Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants. "The one from the mount Sinai" (*mia men apo orous Sina*)—the Mosaic covenant given at Sinai. "Which gendereth to bondage" (*eis douleian gennōsa*, εἰς δουλείαν γεννῶσα)—bearing children into slavery. Law produces slaves, not free sons. "Which is Agar" (*hētis estin Hagar*, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἄγαρ)—this covenant is represented by Hagar, the slave woman. Paul's shocking claim: the Sinai covenant, which the Judaizers revered, corresponds to slavery, not freedom.

Historical Context

Paul's equation of Sinai/law with Hagar/slavery would have scandalized Jewish readers. The law was God's gracious gift to Israel (Psalm 119), the foundation of covenant relationship. Paul doesn't deny the law's divine origin or temporary

validity but insists it produces bondage when treated as means of righteousness. The old covenant, glorious in its time (2 Corinthians 3:7), is now obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), replaced by the new covenant in Christ. To insist on the old when the new has come is to choose Hagar over Sarah, slavery over freedom.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do you respond to Paul's radical claim that the Mosaic covenant leads to slavery rather than freedom?
2. What's the difference between honoring Old Testament law as God's revelation versus treating it as means of righteousness?
3. In what ways does law-based religion produce slavery—to anxiety, pride, performance, judgment—rather than freedom?

Interlinear Text

ἥτις	ἐστὶν	ἀλληγορούμενα·	αὗται	γάρ	εἰσιν	αἱ		
Which things	are	an allegory	these	for	are	G3588		
G3748	G2076	G238	G3778	G1063	G1526			
δύο	διαθήκαι	μία	μὲν	ἀπὸ	ὄρους	Σινᾶ	εἰς	δουλείαν
the two	covenants	G1520	G3303	from	the mount	Sinai	to	bondage
G1417	G1242		G575	G3735	G4614	G1519	G1397	
γεννώσα	ἥτις	ἐστὶν	Ἀγάρ					
which gendereth	Which things	are	Agar					
G1080	G3748	G2076	G28					

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:11 (Parallel theme): Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Matthew 13:35 (Parallel theme): That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Genesis 16:8 (Parallel theme): And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

Genesis 25:12 (Parallel theme): Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

Galatians 4:25 (Sin): For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Hosea 11:10 (Parallel theme): They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

Hebrews 13:20 (Covenant): Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Hebrews 12:24 (Covenant): And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Hebrews 7:22 (Covenant): By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Hebrews 11:19 (Parallel theme): Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.