

“In Bondage Under The Rudiments ...”

“So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world ...” (Gal. 4:3). The word “rudiment” in our text is the Greek word STOKHEION and is found in several different passages in the scriptures. It literally means to “put in a row,” referring to first things learned, like the ABC’s. Thus the word “rudiments” is found in 2 Peter 3:10, 12 where we are told that when “*the Day of the Lord comes the elements (rudiments) shall melt with fervent heat.*” Here the word “elements” (rudiments) refers to the fundamental elements from which our world was formed and that the world will pass away down to the very elements of it. In Hebrews 5:12 the writer chastens his readers: “*For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God ...*” “Rudiments” in this passage refers to the fundamental things of the gospel of Christ. In Colossians 2:8 brethren were warned they should take heed lest any spoil them “*through the philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ ...*” This warning against the “rudiments” of the world was to arm brethren against the pagan philosophy or even apostate Jews who taught the worship of angels, etc. (Col. 2:18). The “rudiments of the world” in the Galatian text is a reference to the Law which had been given by Moses.

The context in which the phrase for study begins, “*But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a bondservant, though he is Lord of all; but is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed by the father. So we also, when we were children ...*” (Gal. 4:1). One of the characteristics of the apostle’s writings is that he may speak of one matter, proceed to a second (or more) item, then revert to the first matter he had already discussed. So he does in this section of Galatians. The idea of guardianship of children was earlier illustrated by the apostle first as a tutor (schoolmaster) to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:23); then after turning to how we became sons; he then turns again to teach of a child who is under guardians and stewards until the day of maturity, that day appointed by the father. Both illustrations present the same idea: the “*tutor*” had custody of the child in one phase of his life; to transport him safely to and from his school; guardians and stewards had full control of his life.

Whichever illustration we consider, whether tutor or guardian, the principle parties were the same. The “*child*” was the Jew; the “*schoolmaster*” and “*guardian*,” the law. Thus we come to the verse of our text: “*So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world.*” Paul thus defines the law as a tutor, a steward: the rudiments of the

world, under which the Jew was in bondage until the day appointed by the Father.

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4f). The fullness of time refers to that time when the child (heir) would reach the day of inheritance designated by the father. The fullness of time was when the Jew would become mature in the sight of God, no longer under the law. Christ came to free the Jew from the Law, which was his tutor, his guardian or steward. *"And because ye are Sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. So that we are no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God"* (Gal. 4:7). The Jew was no longer a bondservant because he was no longer under the oversight of the guardian, which, when it exercised control over the child, made that child no different from a bondservant! Had the law has not been removed, we would still be bondservants. If it has been removed, we are sons; heirs of God! Paul's purpose in this illustration was to show Gentiles who were tempted to go back to the law and be bound by it; that were they to do so, they would revert from being a son to a bondservant! NEXT: "Turning Back To The Beggarly Rudiments."

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