HANDOUT · CHAPTER ONE

Born of a Woman

Galatians 4:4–7 · Paul says nothing about the story and plenty about the birth.

> *When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.*
>
> Galatians 4:4–7, Christian Standard Bible

WHAT PAUL DOES NOT GIVE US — AND WHAT HE DOES

1. Paul is silent about the Christmas story. He is not silent about the _____.
2. A writer argues for what his readers might fight him on, and he _____ on what nobody is fighting about.
3. A letter isn't a _____, and silence isn't _____.
4. Where a Gospel would start telling the story, Paul has a verb. In Greek it is *ginomai*, and it means to _____.

FOUR CLAIMS IN ONE SENTENCE

5. **The time came to completion.** Was God late? Paul says no. He says the glass was _____.
6. **God sent his Son.** Whatever arrived at Bethlehem did not _____ at Bethlehem.
7. **Born of a woman.** Whatever we are, he _____. And if he did not become it, he did not save it.
8. **Born under the law.** He did not lift them out from above. He went and stood in the place where the _____ falls.

THE DOOR THIS CLOSES

9. God sent his Son, so the Son already was. So what happened in that young woman's body in Nazareth did not make a person. It _____ one.
10. An ordinary conception, with the Son joining himself to the child, would give you two persons in one body. That is not the incarnation. That is a _____.

NO LONGER A SLAVE BUT A SON

11. The one who was never adopted is sent, so that the ones who were never sons could be adopted. He is Son by nature. We're sons by _____.

YOU WILL HEAR IT SAID Paul never mentions the virgin birth, so the earliest Christians didn't believe it.

AND THE ANSWER IS Paul never mentions the Sermon on the Mount either, and nobody concludes he had never heard of it. Silence isn't denial. And what Paul does say needs a miracle: God sent *his Son*, so the Son already was before Bethlehem. A conception that receives someone who already was can't be an ordinary one.

THREE WORDS PAUL CHOSE

γίνομαι *ginomai* · GHEE-noh-my · to come to be; to arrive into a condition that wasn't yours before *The day you came to be a grandparent: you were already you.*

πλήρωμα *plērōma* · play-ROH-mah · the amount that fills a thing to the brim *A bus is late. A baby is not yet.*

ἐξαπέστειλεν *exapesteilen* · ex-ah-PES-tay-len · he sent out; he sent forth *You can only send a boy who already lives in your house.*

A few paragraphs later in the same chapter, telling the story of Hagar and Sarah, Paul uses the begetting word, *gennaō*, for Ishmael and Isaac. Of Jesus he does not. Your English says *born* for both.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SAID

> *For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary according to a dispensation, of the seed of David but also of the Holy Ghost.*
>
> Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians* 18.2, about A.D. 107, on his way to be executed

> *What he has not assumed he has not healed.*
>
> Gregory of Nazianzus, fourth century

TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE NEXT WEEK

1. Paul says the time came to completion: filled up, not run out. For four hundred years after Malachi it looked from the ground as if God was late. What was going into the glass all that time, and who was holding it? Then bring it home: when you are waiting on God, what does this sentence promise you, and what doesn't it promise?
2. We love the manger partly because a baby asks nothing of us. Paul skips the part you can look at. What does he go straight to instead, and why does it make a claim on you that a baby in a manger never will? Then be honest about which one your Christmas is built around.
3. Verse 6 says the Spirit in you is crying *Abba*. Not that you are. A Roman adoption could give a son everything except one thing. What was it, and what does God send to sew that seam shut? So when you call God Father and mean it, who is doing the calling?

THE SENTENCE TO TAKE HOME

God did not send a message. He sent his Son, and he sent him through a womb.

God sends twice. He sends the Son out into the body of a girl in Nazareth, and he sends the Spirit of that Son into the chest of a Gentile in Galatia who had no business being in the family at all. The second sending is why the first one happened. Christmas is not a visit. It is a household being enlarged.

THE ONE THING I WOULD SAY TO SOMEBODY WHO ASKED

NEXT WEEK Philippians 2, He Emptied Himself. This week God made slaves into sons. Next week the Son takes the form of a slave.