

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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JERUSALEM ABOVE

During 2007, an eight part series was written on the matter of being born from above based on Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus in John 3. According to Jesus, one must be *born from above* to enter the kingdom of God.

Now, in relation to being born from above, there is another vital aspect and that is the Jerusalem that is above.

Paul does not use the phrase *born from above* in his epistles; however, he does declare that those called by the grace of God, born of the spirit, are children of the Jerusalem above, the mother of us all. He allegorized two women as two covenants, one of the flesh and one of the spirit, and these covenants are tied to two cities, the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem. Only those born of the heavenly woman are free.

For it hath been written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the maid-servant, and one by the free-woman, but he who is of the maid-servant, according to flesh hath been, and he who is of the free-woman, through the promise; which things are allegorized, for these are the two covenants: one, indeed, from mount Sinai, to servitude bringing forth, which is Hagar; for this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and doth correspond to the Jerusalem that now is, and is in servitude with her children, and the Jerusalem above [ano] is the free-woman, which is mother of us all, for it hath been written, 'Rejoice, O barren, who art not bearing; break forth and cry, thou who art not travailing, because many are the children of the desolate—more than of her having the husband.' And we, brethren, as Isaac, are children of promise, but as then he who was born according to the flesh did persecute him according to the spirit, so also now; but what saith the Writing? 'Cast forth the maid-servant and her son, for the son of the maid-servant may not be heir with the son of the free-woman;' then, brethren, we are not a maid-servant's children, but the free-woman's. (Galatians 4.22-31 YLT)

An *allegory* is defined as "a representation in which the meaning is conveyed symbolically." Therefore, to understand what Paul wrote, one needs to understand the symbols as represented by the two women.

According to the record, Abraham was promised a son who would be his heir. Since no son quickly came forth through Sarah, Abraham's wife, they decided it best that Abraham have a child through his Egyptian bondwoman, Hagar; so she had a son named Ishmael. However, when Ishmael was 13 years of age, God informed Abraham that this was not the son of promise and that he would have an heir through Sarah; so at the ripe old age of 100, Abraham was given a son, Isaac.

This situation created tension between Sarah and Hagar, especially over who would inherit the birthright. After all, Ishmael was the firstborn. **But God** had the final word in the matter as He chose Isaac, the son of promise, to be Abraham's heir. An important principle of God is that **He takes away the first in order to establish the second** (Hebrews 10.9 NASB).

Symbolically, Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants that are also represented by two cities and two types of people. Hagar represents the old covenant that was given to the sons of Israel through Moses when he was on Mount Sinai receiving the law. In Paul's day, as well as in our day, Hagar corresponds to the earthly Jerusalem and those who continue to hold to the old covenant and reject the new covenant. **For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and doth correspond to the Jerusalem that now is, and is in servitude with her children.** According to Paul, the old Jerusalem, even the one we see in Israel today, is Hagar and her children are Ishmael. This Jerusalem and her people are born after the flesh.

If you recall from the series on *born from above*, that which is born of the flesh is flesh; it is not born of the spirit. Consequently, all who choose to remain under the old covenant given at Mount Sinai are considered Ishmaelites that are under bondage. This applies to all in Paul's day, as well as all in our day.

We see a clear picture of this rejection in the account of Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, who performed great wonders and signs among the people, as he stood before the Jewish Council. He recounted the entire history of Israel starting when the God of glory appeared to Abraham the Hebrew. Stephen had their full attention, without argument, until he pronounced judgment on his Jewish audience: **"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it"** (Acts 7.51-53 NASB). Their response to this indictment was violent anger as they rushed at him and drove him out of the city to stone him to death. But before they rushed him, this dear saint, **being full of the Holy Spirit gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God"** (Acts 7.55-56 NASB). Jesus was standing to see if the church (ecclesia) in the wilderness would receive the new covenant and the Jerusalem above. To their detriment, they rejected Jesus' offer, and they became sons of Hagar, Ishmaelites; to this day, all who reject the new covenant and continue in the old covenant are Ishmaelites as well.

Sarah represents the new covenant of Jesus Christ. She represents the Jerusalem above, for she brought forth the promise of the child according to the spirit. Isaac was the son of promise, being conceived when Sarah was well past child-bearing age. It took a miraculous act of the Holy Spirit to open her womb to conceive at such an old age. Later, Abraham offered him up as a sacrifice, but the Lord provided the sacrifice at the last minute. Also, Isaac represents all who are born of the spirit and are under the new covenant of Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ, who was conceived of a virgin through an act of the Holy Spirit and who was the Lamb provided by God to be sacrificed for the sin of the world.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians, some of the early Christians were continuing to offer up sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem and follow the traditions of Judaism. It took the Roman army to destroy the temple in 70 AD so that the Pentecostal church would be set free from the bondage of Hagar. Unfortunately, there are Christians today who are acting and thinking more like these early Christians as they join themselves with Judaism, as if *the reign of the heavens* is going to come to this earth through Hagar and the old Jerusalem on earth. How can this be? Paul declares that we must **cast forth the maid-servant and her son.** Abraham loved Ishmael, but he had to let him go so that Isaac could be the rightful heir. Let us let go of all our Ishmaels as well!

Dear brethren in Christ, our Jerusalem is not on earth, she is above; she is heavenly or celestial, and she is spiritual. To me, the word *above* is not so much spatial as it is dimensional, for it refers to the spirit realm, which envelopes our physical realm. She is free from the bondage and sin of this earth. She is the mother of us all! Let us not revert to Judaism, but let us seek for that which is above where Christ is.