

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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Mother of Us All

(22) For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave-woman and one by the free-woman. [Gen 16:2-4, 15; Gen 21:1-3] (23) But the [one] by the slave-woman has been born according to flesh, but the [one] by the free-woman through the promise, (24) which [things] speak allegorically. For these are two covenants: one indeed from Mount Sinai giving birth to [children] into slavery, which is Hagar. (25) For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and stands corresponding to the present Jerusalem and serves as a slave with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem above is the free-woman, which is mother of us all. (27) For it has been written, “Celebrate, O barren woman, the one not giving birth; break forth and shout, the one not experiencing labor pains, because many [are] the children of the desolate [or, forsaken] [woman] more than [those] of the one having the husband.” [Isaiah 54:1] (28) Now we, brothers [and sisters], just like Isaac, are children of promise. (29) But just as at that time, the one having been born according to the flesh was persecuting the [one] according to the spirit, so [it is] also now. (30) But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave-woman and her son, for by no means shall the son of the slave-woman inherit [or, be a heir] with the son of the free-woman.” [Gen 21:10] (31) Consequently, brothers [and sisters], we are not a slave-woman’s children, but the free-woman’s. (Galatians 4:22-31 ALT)

It is most interesting that Paul, who knew much about what he called the present Jerusalem, was no fan, so to speak, of it. In fact, he declared that the present Jerusalem of his day served as a slave that needed to be cast out. What is interesting is that there are so many Christians proclaiming that the present Jerusalem of our day must be protected and prayed over, for it is the apple of God’s eye, destined to be the center of the nations in the next eon with Christ literally sitting on a throne in a rebuilt temple. If this were so, then why did Paul not state so? Why did he make it very clear that the present Jerusalem is likened to a slave-woman that needs to be cast out? It is as if Christians of our day have a view that is totally opposite Paul’s view, the apostle to whom the secrets of God were revealed. Has some greater revelation come to the church in these latter days, or is the church off in its theology? I propose that the answer is in the latter.

We need to be clear that Paul was a Pharisee and, as such, he was well-versed in Hebrew Scripture. Further, according to his own testimony, after the risen Christ met him on the road to Damascus, he began to search and study Scripture in an entirely new light. Undoubtedly, he saw that the present Jerusalem was no longer the place upon which the name or glory of God rested. According to the prophets, God first placed His name upon the tabernacle in Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), but due to the corruption of His people, He removed His name. Next, He placed His name on Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem (Psalm 78:60-68), but later removed His name just as He had done at Shiloh, and for the same reason (Jeremiah 7:12-15; 26:6; Ezekiel 10-11). Further, there is no reference to His glory resting neither on the second temple built through Ezra and Zerubbabel nor on Herod’s temple during Paul’s day. Notice that the Lord declared that He would make this house like Shiloh and the city (Jerusalem) a curse to all the nations of the earth. God has kept His word, for it would seem that the present Jerusalem is a curse in our day as it continues to be a source of strife and bloodshed.

The good news is that God was waiting for a much better temple not made out of stones of the earth but of heavenly, living stones hewed from above, and it is upon these living stones that He places His name and glory. For those who conquer, the Lord promises to **write upon him the name of My God and**

the name of the city of My God, New Jerusalem; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their forehead (Revelation 3:12; 22:4). In other words, God's intention all along has been to have a people that bear His name and glory. They will be His new temple. The Lord never returned to Shiloh, and He will not return to an earthly Jerusalem. Why? Because He has a new temple born from above by the spirit of God! He has New Jerusalem.

To the Galatians, Paul wrote allegorically of two women, one of which is in slavery and the other of which is in freedom; one is according to the flesh and the other is according to the promise. He was comparing the two covenants, one that proceeded from Hagar to Ishmael and the other through Sarah to Isaac. That which is associated with the flesh and slavery corresponds to the present Jerusalem, and that which is associated with the promise and freedom corresponds to the Jerusalem above.

Hagar bore a child, Ishmael, through Abraham, but he was not the child promised by the Lord to Abraham. Abraham bore a son through the flesh, not the promise. The son of promise had to come through Sarah when she was beyond child-bearing days. The spirit of God had to open her dead womb to receive the child, Isaac, who was then persecuted from his birth onward by his half-brother Ishmael, who was 13 when Isaac was born. We could say that the flesh battled the spirit as depicted in these two sons of Abraham.

But notice that Paul identifies Hagar with Mount Sinai and slavery, and makes it correspond to the present Jerusalem. Mount Sinai signifies the first (old) covenant through Moses. The present or old Jerusalem of Paul's day had rejected the new covenant through Christ and, as such, they became Ishmaelites.

Some in our day proclaim that the present Jerusalem is reserved for those of the new covenant, but this is not what Paul states. Paul very clearly identifies the present Jerusalem with Ishmael and their rejection of the new covenant. To state it more succinctly, Paul declares that the present Jerusalem or, if you will, the old Jerusalem, as contrasted to New Jerusalem, is Hagar and all her children are Ishmael. The old Jerusalem is according to the flesh, not the spirit. God destroyed the present Jerusalem of Paul's day in 70 AD; however, as we all know, it has been rebuilt as a Jewish city in the state of Israel. But, the very character of this ancient city has not changed one iota. It is still according to the flesh and under the control of the Ishmaelites, the ones that call themselves Jews, but they are not, for they reject Christ. There is more from an historical perspective that could be said about the Ishmaelites, but this is beyond the scope of this issue.

Now, what we need to see is that Paul contrasts these two cities, one called this present Jerusalem or the old earthly Jerusalem, and the other called the Jerusalem above, which, although Paul does not use the name, must be New Jerusalem. After all, John records that New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven. Paul no longer recognized anyone according to the flesh, and this extended to God's holy city, the new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:16-17). We too are to be like Paul and not recognize anything according to the flesh, for, just like Isaac, we are children of promise.

(30) But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave-woman and her son, for by no means shall the son of the slave-woman inherit [or, be a heir] with the son of the free-woman." [Gen 21:10] (31) Consequently, brothers [and sisters], we are not a slave-woman's children, but the free-woman's. ... (1) Therefore, in the freedom in which Christ set you free, be standing firm, and stop letting yourselves be subjected again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 4:30-31; 5:1 ALT)

The old Jerusalem and all associated with it will in no way inherit the kingdom. We are to cast it out, for we are New Jerusalem. Our mother is above, which refers to being born from above, having received the seed of Christ. She is the mother of us all; that is, God has birthed a new creation, New Jerusalem, in a people, His dwelling in spirit, the spiritual house of living stones. Let us not be enslaved to the earthly Jerusalem! Let us give thanks that we are sons of the free woman and are born of the new!