

Message Six

**The Allegory of the Two Women**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 16:1—17:14;  
Gal. 4:21-31

**I. Sarah and Hagar, the wife and the concubine of Abraham, are an allegory of two covenants—the covenant of promise and the covenant of law—Gen. 16:1-3; Gal. 4:24:**

- A. Sarah, the free woman, signifies the covenant of promise, which is related to the new testament, the covenant of grace—vv. 23-24; Gen. 12:7; 15:7-21:
  - 1. In that covenant God promised that He would give Abraham the seed, without having any intention that Abraham needed to do anything in order to have it; God would work something into him so that he might bring forth a seed to fulfill His purpose; this is grace—v. 4.
  - 2. Sarah, as the free woman, the proper wife of Abraham, is a symbol of this covenant of grace; she brought forth Isaac by God's grace.
  - 3. The produce of the promise of grace, which is Isaac, is the seed for the fulfillment of God's purpose—17:19; 21:12b.
- B. Hagar, the maidservant, signifies the covenant of law—Gal. 4:24-25:
  - 1. Hagar, Abraham's concubine, is a symbol of the law; by this we can see that the position of the law is the position of a concubine—Gen. 16:1-3.
  - 2. The covenant of law, symbolized by Hagar, brings God's chosen people into the slavery, the bondage, of the law, making them slaves under the law, separated from the grace of God—Gal. 4:25; 5:1, 4.
  - 3. Abraham's producing of Ishmael through Hagar symbolizes man's attempt to fulfill God's purpose by the effort of the flesh in coordination with the law—Gen. 16:4, 15-16; Gal. 2:16; 4:23a.
  - 4. Abraham brought forth Ishmael through Hagar by his fleshly effort and not by God's grace; therefore, Ishmael, as the issue of man's fleshly effort according to the law, was rejected by God—Gen. 17:18-19; 21:10; Gal. 4:30.
- C. The promise was given in Genesis 12:2, 7; 13:15-17; and 15:4-5, and the covenant was made in 15:7-21:

Message Six (continuation)

1. According to God's intention, the covenant of promise came first, before the covenant of law; He had no intention of bringing in the law and of having man endeavor to keep it for the fulfillment of His purpose.
2. What God originally intended to do was to work Himself into man to fulfill His purpose through man—v. 4.
- D. The covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15:7-21 was confirmed in Genesis 17:1-14 with circumcision:
  1. In verse 1 God revealed Himself to Abraham as the All-sufficient God; as the all-sufficient Mighty One, He is the source of grace to supply His called ones with the riches of His divine being so that they may bring forth Christ as the seed for the fulfillment of His purpose.
  2. In Genesis 16 Abraham exercised his flesh to produce Ishmael; in Genesis 17 God charged Abraham to cut off his flesh, to terminate his natural strength, so that God could come in and bring forth Isaac by His grace.
  3. The spiritual meaning of circumcision is to put off the flesh, to put off the self and the old man, through the crucifixion of Christ—Col. 2:11, 13a; Phil. 3:3:
    - a. Spiritual circumcision is the constant application of Christ's death to our flesh—Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13.
    - b. Circumcision deals with the flesh that tries to do God's will and to fulfill His promise by itself; the significance of circumcision is to cut off the confidence of the flesh—Phil. 3:3.
  4. The confirmation of the covenant with circumcision concerns the seed and the land for the fulfillment of God's purpose—Gen. 17:2-8:
    - a. In order to fulfill God's eternal purpose that man express and represent Him, we need to have Christ as our seed and as our land, and for this we need to be circumcised and to live a crucified life—Gal. 5:24; 6:14.
    - b. When the flesh, the self, and the old man have been terminated, the door is open for God to come in and bring forth Isaac—Gen. 18:10, 14; 21:1-3.

**II. We need to consider Galatians 4:21-31 in the light of Abraham's experience in Genesis:**

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES

Message Six (continuation)

- A. In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul tells us that Hagar signifies the law, symbolized by the earthly Jerusalem, and that Sarah signifies grace, symbolized by the heavenly Jerusalem—vv. 25-26.
- B. Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants—the covenant of law and the covenant of grace; the law is a matter of man’s labor with man’s ability to produce something, whereas grace is God given to His chosen people to produce the many sons—3:26; 4:6.
- C. The original covenant that God made with Abraham was the covenant of grace:
  - 1. In this covenant there is not the need for man’s ability or effort but the need for God’s grace to produce the many sons—3:29.
  - 2. This covenant equals the new testament; this means that the covenant that God made with Abraham was actually the new testament—v. 8; Heb. 8:7-8:
    - a. The new testament is a continuation of the covenant that God made with Abraham—Gen. 15:7-21.
    - b. The new testament is a full continuation of the covenant of grace that God made with Abraham to produce sons; the first of the sons produced by this covenant was Abraham himself—Gal. 3:26; 4:6; Heb. 2:10.
- D. The two kinds of children brought forth by the two covenants are different in their natures—Gal. 4:24, 28-31:
  - 1. Those brought forth by the covenant of law are born according to the flesh, and those brought forth by the covenant of promise are born according to the Spirit—v. 29.
  - 2. The children born according to the flesh have no right to participate in God’s promised blessing, but the children born according to the Spirit have the full right—vv. 30-31.
  - 3. Because we have grace, Christ, and the life-giving Spirit, we are children according to the Spirit—6:18; Col. 1:27; 1 Cor. 15:45b:
    - a. This Spirit is now in our spirit and makes us children according to the Spirit; this is the marvelous revelation in Galatians 3 and 4.

GENESIS (2)

Message Six (continuation)

- b. As those who are children according to the Spirit, we should remain in the fulfillment of God's desire, enjoying grace, Christ, and the all-inclusive Spirit as the blessing of the gospel—3:14.
- E. Galatians 4 reveals that the mother of the believers, who is the Jerusalem above, the New Jerusalem, is the new covenant of grace symbolized by Sarah—v. 26:
- 1. The New Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, is our mother, and this mother is the new covenant of grace—Heb. 8:7-13; 12:22-23:
    - a. The new covenant is our mother because it brought us forth as children of freedom—Gal. 4:31.
    - b. We have been born under the new covenant, and the Jerusalem above is our mother—v. 26.
    - c. This woman is the new covenant and our mother, and our mother is the grace of God.
  - 2. The Father is the Grace-giver; the grace is the covenant; the covenant is the city, the Jerusalem above, the New Jerusalem, who is our mother; the sons produced by the mother are the components of the mother; and the mother returns to the Father to be one with Him, having come out from the Father and then going back to the Father as the destination—1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6.
  - 3. To receive the new covenant and to keep it is to come to the heavenly Jerusalem and to the church; the new covenant, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the church are one—Heb. 8:7-13; 12:22-23.
  - 4. The mother of the believers is the city for which Abraham was waiting—11:10:
    - a. This city is identified in 12:22, which tells us that we have come forward to the heavenly Jerusalem, the wife of Christ and the mother of the New Testament believers, composed of the sons of God, who have been born of her.
    - b. In choosing Abraham, God's intention was to carry out His economy, which is to produce many sons, brought forth by grace, to constitute the New Jerusalem—His ultimate and eternal corporate expression—Rev. 21:1-2, 7.