

## THE WOMEN

**“These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants” (Gal. 3:24)**

There you have it! Abraham had two sons, but “he” did not represent the covenants, the “women” did. Yes! One of his sons was born to a “slave” woman and the other was born to a “free” woman. One of these sons was born in the “ordinary” way, and the other was born by “promise”. Certainly this fact is significant and plays a major role in helping us to understand the “new birth”. The new birth, as you know, is also by “promise” and not “ordinary”. Abraham played an essential role in the birth of both boys, but it was still the “women” that represented the covenants.

Men can only “imagine” what it is like to be pregnant. Hagar and Sarah did not need to “imagine” this. They experienced it! Both women, and both covenants are alike in this regard. The fact that one woman was free and the other a slave was passed on to their children. One son was born a slave and the other was born free. This too is foundational to understanding the difference between the two covenants. Hagar stands for Mt. Sinai and an earthly Jerusalem. It represents slavery. Sarah stands for Jerusalem from above and this represents freedom (Gal. 4:21 – 31).

But let us return to the stubborn fact that these two women represent two covenants. Abraham’s role, essential as it was, was much different from that experienced by the women. While he was separated from the daily struggles of pregnancy and parenthood, they were not. The Kingdom of God does not mature in a single day but grows like a seed, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head (Mk. 4:26 – 29). This, as you know, is what mothers experience when they raise a child. Another thought involving the covenants is that it is the mother who experiences the pain of childbirth and the responsibility of nursing. This speaks to the diligence required by both covenants. Just as Ishmael and Isaac both required effort, so also do both covenants also require effort. Certainly “the women” are better representatives of the covenants in this regard than was Abraham.

Conversion to Christ takes place immediately like pregnancy. Transformation, however, is a process. New converts, like newborn babes, need pure spiritual milk so they can grow (1 Pet. 2:1 – 3). The writer of Hebrews, like a concerned mother, was troubled that by the time those believers should have been teachers they needed to be taught the elementary truths of God’s Word all over again (Heb. 5:11 – 14). The Corinthians also needed milk instead of meat (1 Cor. 3:1 – 4). Paul’s concern for the Galatians was like being again in the pain of childbirth until Christ was formed in them (Gal. 4:19). No wonder God chose Sarah, not Abraham, to represent the new covenant.

It is significant that Jerusalem from above is described as the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26). In some respect, everybody in the church should be like a mother. If a child doesn’t grow, the mother is more concerned about it than anyone else. This is the same type of concern we need in the church.

Among all the creatures of earth it seems that the human infant is the most helpless. Baby sea turtles can immediately survive without their mother but the human infant cannot. A little baby cannot even lift its head for about two months. It will not take baby steps for many months more. Perhaps God designed it this way to help us understand the needs of those who are “born again”.

The need for diligence under the new covenant does not depend upon allegories. It is an integral part of new testament teaching. Jesus told us directly to make every effort to enter in through the narrow door and warned that many would seek to enter in and would not be able (Lk: 13:24). The parables of the foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1 - 13) and of the talents (Matt. 25:14 – 30), leave little to our imagination about the need for diligence. “The women” who represent the covenants, however, touch our hearts with a tenderness that everyone needs to understand. When seeking to describe God’s love Isaiah could think of no more endearing example than that of a mother showing compassion on the baby she was nursing (Is. 49:15). The point is, that a nursing mother will forget her baby before God will forget you! Don’t worry! God will not forget you. He loves you even more than your mother and has promised that He will never leave you or forsake you! (Heb. 13:5).