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ABRAHAM'S THREE WIVES

ACORRESPONDENT objects to our suggestion that Keturah, Abraham's third wife, represented the New Covenant, as his secondary wife, Hagar, represented the Law Covenant, and his primary wife, Sarah, represented the Covenant of Grace, "the New Jerusalem, the mother of us all," the mother of the promised seed, Isaac, typical of Christ Jesus the Head and the Church his Body, as the Apostle declares in Galatians 3:29; 4:28.

The objection is that Keturah was not a wife, but a concubine or secondary wife, and that Abraham had several of these, according to Genesis 25:5,6, where we read, "Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines." The claim further is that Abraham was already old at the time of Isaac's birth and that the probabilities are that he had several concubines while Sarah was still living.

We reply that there is always room to speculate in contradiction to the plain statements of Scripture; so that the worldly-wise and all who lack faith in the Divine record will have abundant opportunity to stumble themselves. The Scripture record is clear to the effect that Abraham's companion, fully recognized as his wife and joint-heir, was Sarah, and that her son was specially recognized as Abraham's heir. As for Hagar and Keturah, the record is similarly explicit – that they bore children to Abraham – the former with Sarah's consent and as her special representative, the latter after Sarah's death. Whether these two women be termed secondary wives or concubines matters nothing and we need not quibble over a point of no consequence. Evidently concubine is the name which preferably describes the relationship of these two women to Abraham. And this was eminently proper, since it was [R4440 : page 222] evidently the

Divine intention, as declared by the Apostle, that Abraham himself should be a type of the Almighty, Sarah a type of the Abrahamic Covenant, and her son Isaac a type of The Christ, the Messiah, the Prophet, Priest, Mediator, King, Judge, through whom the blessing of the Almighty should ultimately proceed to all the families of the earth. The Apostle carries out this figure by showing that Hagar, the bondwoman or concubine, represented the Law Covenant, and that her child Ishmael represented the Jewish people, born under that Law Covenant. The Apostle shows that they could not be both children of the bondwoman and children of the free woman. He shows that the Jews, in order to become united to Christ and members of the spiritual Isaac, the heir of all, must become dead to the Law Covenant and be married to Christ, begotten of the holy Spirit; otherwise they could have neither part nor lot in the spiritual Seed of Abraham. The Apostle does not carry the figure on and declare that Keturah typified the New (Law) Covenant. We believe that this omission was of Divine intention, because the time for this particular feature of the Divine program to be clearly understood was not yet due.

One thing, however, can be clearly seen by all who have the eyes of their understanding open and their spiritual senses exercised, and that is that Isaac did not have two mothers. It was the same Sarah who from the first was recognized by Abraham as his mate and only full and proper wife, who for so long was barren, but who finally bore Isaac, the seed of promise. Similarly the Sarah Covenant, which was barren for centuries, at our Lord's First Advent bore him as the Antitypical Seed of Abraham. Then also the Hagar or Law Covenant and her child, the Jewish nation, were "cast out." In the Apostle's figure of Galatians 4:28 he represents the spirit-begotten, faithful overcomers of the Church, as members of the Antitypical Isaac, the Spiritual Seed of the Sarah Covenant. "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise." In the picture he gives us in Galatians 3:29 the

Apostle presents the Church as the Bride of Isaac and his joint-heir – now betrothed and in the end of the age to be married to him, and to enter into his mother's tent – to enter into all the blessings and privileges that belong specially to this great Covenant which God made with Abraham and which he confirmed with an oath.

The record in Genesis 24:67 and 25:1 shows that after Sarah's death Abraham took Keturah as his wife – not, however, as taking the full place of Sarah as his joint-heir, as the word *wife* in olden times evidently signified. She was accepted as his companion in a secondary sense without [R4440 : page 223] disparagement to the first wife Sarah and her son Isaac, to whom Abraham "gave all that he had." We submit that Keturah is a very proper figure of the New (Law) Covenant, as Hagar was of the old Law Covenant. It is not the Oath-bound Covenant, which relates to the Spiritual Seed, which becomes heir of all. As the Law Covenant was no part of the original one, but merely an addition to it – so likewise the New Covenant is an addition to the Oath-bound Sarah Covenant. As the children of Hagar and the children of Keturah did not inherit the original promise, *so neither will those who inherit the New Covenant be fellow-heirs with those who inherit as members of Isaac or as his bride and joint-heir.*

We therefore deny that it is possible for anybody to be logically, truthfully or Scripturally a child of two Covenants or two mothers at the same time. And on the other hand we urge the reasonableness of the proposition that if the Law Covenant was represented as a mother and a concubine wife the New (Law) Covenant, to take its place, should also logically appear as a concubine wife. We also urge upon the attention of all that the word "New" implies, as the Apostle suggests, that another had become old and ready to vanish away. It was not the original Oath-bound Covenant which vanished away, but the Law

Covenant. Hence the New Covenant did not take the place of the original or Sarah Covenant, but is to take the place of the old Law Covenant as a New (Law) Covenant under a new Mediator, superior to Moses. – Acts 3:22,23.

The query is raised, Was not our Lord the child or seed of two Covenants or two mothers, since we read that he was "born under the Law (Hagar) Covenant" and the Apostle teaches that he was the Seed of the original or *Sarah Covenant*?

We answer, No! If our Lord Jesus had kept the Law Covenant merely and had not consecrated his life, had not sacrificed it, he might thus have had eternal life as an earthly being. Then truly he might have claimed to be Abraham's seed and heir of all earthly things. But, then, he could not have been the *promised* seed; for the promised seed was to "bless all the families of the earth" – implying the resurrection of the dead. This *blessing ability* could be our Lord's not by keeping the Law and becoming Hagar's wonderful son, but by sacrificing all of the *earthly* blessings proffered by the Hagar Covenant, accepting *instead* the spiritual privileges of the Sarah Covenant. Let us get clearly in mind that it was not the "man Jesus," but the "new creature" Jesus who became heir of all and who liveth to bless Israel and all nations. Similarly only such believers as have become New Creatures, begotten of the holy Spirit, are members of the great Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator and Judge which God is now raising up as the Seed of Abraham to bless the world.

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