

Deeper Meanings of Allegories In The Bible

'It is written, Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid and one by the free woman. The son by the handmaid was born according to the flesh but the son by the free woman was born through promise. These things contain an allegory, for these are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children to bondage which is Hagar. Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answers to the Jerusalem that exists now, for she is in bondage with her children, but the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all. It is written, "Rejoice, you barren who do not bear. Break forth and shout you who do not travail. For more are the children of the childless than of her who has a husband." We brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise but as then, he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. What does the Scripture say? "Throw out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid will not inherit with the son of the free woman." So brothers, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the free woman ... Stand firm in the liberty as Jesus has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage' (Galatians 4:22 to 31; 5:1).

If we read that again without the Biblical poetry, it is easier to understand. 'Abraham had two sons, Ishmael by the mistress Hagar and Isaac by his wife Sarah. Ishmael was born according to the flesh (human desire) but Isaac was born through the promise made to Abraham. These two examples contain an allegory, for these are two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar. Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia (Hagar, the mother of Arabs) and answers to the Jerusalem that exists now, for she is in (spiritual) bondage with her offspring (Arabs believe the divine covenant was with Hagar and Ishmael, not Isaac and Sarah so they are in bondage to a lie). The (heavenly) Jerusalem that is above (in heaven) is free (of bondage and sin) which is the mother of us all (all believers have their spiritual roots in Judaism and thus Jerusalem). It is written, "Rejoice, you barren who do not bear (natural) children. Break forth and shout, you who do not travail in childbirth, for more are the (spiritual) children of the childless than of her who has a husband." We (God's servants and spiritual) brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise (the promise God made to Abraham stating he would be a blessing to all nations). As then, he who was born according to the flesh (Arabs) persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit (the Jewish people), so it is now to this day (Arabs are still persecuting Jewish people and Israel). What does the Scripture say? "Throw out the mistress and her son (the persecutors), for the son of the mistress will not inherit with the son of the wife." Brothers (all believers), we are not children of a mistress (illegitimate), but of the free woman' (legitimate heirs). Stand firm in the freedom Jesus procured for us and do not again become entangled with the burden of sin and come under bondage'.

It seems as though the birth of Ishmael was a sinful, adulterous, carnal event, pushed onto Abraham by Sarah's desperate need to fulfil her maternal instinct and raise a child. Yet the birth of Ishmael with everything that went with it, reveals the difference between being adopted by God as His legitimate children when we accept the Fatherhood of God through the blood of Jesus so we can enter into eternal life, and remaining spiritually illegitimate and being cast out of eternal life. The promise believers have is eternal life with God, and God is saying in this allegory, the unbelievers, those under the bondage of sin, will not inherit eternal salvation, but they will be cast out into eternity without God. Although Ishmael's birth seemed to be out of God's will, it was in reality, included in His overall eternal plan for salvation for all of humanity. The scriptures describe as being illegitimate, all people who refuse to accept Jesus as their Saviour and all those who refuse to accept the Fatherhood of God. Anyone who does not accept Jesus, is not considered to be a child of God the Father and is regarded as illegitimate. When we are loved and received by God we all need to accept His chastening, scourging and discipline. 'God deals with you as with His children, for what child is there whom their father does not discipline? If you are without discipline, of which all have been made partakers, then you are illegitimate and not children of God' (Hebrews 12:7 & 8). All those who knew God then turned away from Him are also considered spiritually illegitimate. 'They will go ... to seek God but they will not find Him. He has withdrawn Himself from them. They are unfaithful to God and they have borne illegitimate children' (Hosea 5:6 & 7).

An allegory is a story in which the characters and events are symbolic of a deeper underlying meaning or message. It is surprising to read the number of events the Bible tells us about, that seem to be against God's will or opposite to His character, yet those events open our understanding of eternal life and the Gospel message. All through the Bible we read so many allegories and nuances, many people have trouble understanding what the Lord could possibly mean and misinterpret what God is saying to us. Some of the Bible is written in very straightforward, easily understood language. For example, 'My son, listen to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching' (Proverbs 1:8). That is very clear but the next verse is an enigma. 'They will be a garland to grace your head and chains around your neck' (Proverbs 1:9).

This does not mean the parents will put flowers on their son's head and chain him up. Obviously not. It means, if you listen to your parents' instructions and teaching, they will give you wisdom, grace and spiritually speaking, a medal of honour for your neck'. 'Esteem wisdom and she will exalt you. Embrace wisdom and she will bring you to honour. Wisdom will give to your head a garland of grace and will deliver a crown of splendor to you' (Proverbs 4:8 & 9). There are so many allegories in the Bible it would be impossible to explain them all, but we will look at a few.

The three generations of the family of the patriarch and father Abraham, the son of promise Isaac, the children of Israel founder Jacob, rebellious Esau, and the events surrounding them, were an allegory for God the Father; the Son of Promise, Jesus; Jacob, the father of the Jewish people and Israel; and Esau, a 'picture' of rebellious Gentiles who scorn their spiritual birthright by scorning God's promises of a great spiritual inheritance. Abraham is the biological forefather of all Jewish people and the spiritual father of all Gentiles who repent and walk with God by faith, through the blood and cross of Jesus. 'The promise to Abraham and his descendents, he would be heir of the world was not through the Law of Moses, but through the righteousness of faith ... It is of faith and grace the promise may be sure (unquestionable) to all the descendents, not only to those born under the Law of Moses, but also to those (Gentiles) of the faith of Abraham, who is the forefather of us all. As it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations"' (Romans 4:13, 16 & 17).

Isaac was not only the son of promise, he was also offered as a living sacrifice in a real-life allegory of the sacrificial death of Jesus. He was our ultimate sacrifice then was received back to God the Father into heaven. God promised Abraham three times, Sarah would have a son. "Sarah your wife will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac (meaning laughter). I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendents after him" ... "I will return to you when the season comes round. Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son" ... "At the set time I will return to you, when the season comes round, Sarah will have a son" (Genesis 17:19; 18:10 & 14). 'This is a word of promise, "At the appointed time I will come and Sarah will have a son"' (Romans 9:9). 'Abraham's faith was tested when he offered up Isaac. Yes, he who had gladly received the promises was offering up his one and only son, his son about whom it was said, "In Isaac will your offspring be called." Abraham knew God is able to raise up from the dead. Figuratively speaking, Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead' (Hebrews 11:17 to 19).

Jacob, the father of the children of Israel and his wayward twin brother Esau are an allegory of Jews and Gentiles. Jacob and Esau were estranged for about twenty years before they reconciled when Jacob returned home from his exile. Jews and Gentiles were estranged by the Laws of Moses and Judaism, then through the cross of Jesus, the early church began as an extension of Judaism. Gentiles who accepted Jesus joined with the Jewish people and attended synagogues. The cross of Jesus has reconciled Jews with Gentiles as brothers and sisters. During the time Jacob was working for Laban, there was no mention of Esau, in the same way, the Lord did not pay a lot of attention to Gentiles from the time He made the promises to Abraham right up until the apostles went to the Gentiles to preach the Gospel of Jesus. There were a few exceptions but Gentiles were largely disregarded and were without hope of salvation. 'Rebekah conceived by a promise, by our father Isaac. Not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, but so the purpose of God according to His will might stand, not of works, but of Him Who calls, it was said to her, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9:10 to 13). We could interpret that as God saying, "The Jewish people I have loved but the Gentiles I have disregarded." But the Lord knew Gentiles would one day come into full salvation and so did Isaac when he spoke the blessing over both his sons. 'By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come' (Hebrews 11:20). The 'things to come' were the reconciliation and the tearing down of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, and now many Gentiles are serving the Jewish people as we encourage and help them in their struggles in Israel. Truly, the 'Elder is serving the younger'. 'Remember you Gentiles, who were once uncircumcised in the flesh were called Goyim (uncircumcised) in the flesh done by hands. You were at that time separate from Jesus, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Jesus, you who were once far off are made near in the blood of Jesus for He is our peace, Who made both Jews and Gentiles one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the hostility, the Law of Commandments contained in ordinances so He might create in Himself "one new man of the two", making peace and reconciling them both in one Body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility. He came and preached peace to you Gentiles who were far off and to the Jews who were near. Through Him we both, Jews and Gentiles, have our access in one Holy Spirit to the Father. You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God (the Jewish people), being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Himself being the Chief Cornerstone in Whom the whole 'building', fitted together, grows

into a holy temple in the Lord in Whom you are built together for a habitation of God in the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 2:11 to 22).

In the Middle East, shepherds speak to their sheep. When the shepherd wants his sheep to come close to him, he calls them and they follow him. The sheep never argue or rebel against their shepherd and that is what the Lord wants from us. In the following allegories, the Lord affectionately refers to His people as sheep in a flock and to the earth as His pasture, which also means spiritual food, the Word of God. Sheep are likened to righteous people who know His voice; goats are likened to unrighteous strangers and thieves. When judgement comes, God will separate the Godly, righteous 'sheep' from the ungodly, disobedient 'goats'. Jesus made it clear, He is the only 'Door' by which we can enter heaven. 'Know that the Lord, He is God. It is He who has made us and we are His. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture' (Psalm 100:3). "As for you O My flock," thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I judge between sheep (genuine believers) and sheep (Pharisees or those who attend church for the wrong motives), the rams (Godly) and the bucks (male goats; ungodly)" (Ezekiel 34:17). 'Before the Lord all the nations will be gathered. He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the 'sheep' on His right hand but the 'goats' on the left' (Matthew 25:32 & 33). 'I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered' (Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27). Jesus said, "I tell you, someone who does not enter by the door into the sheep fold, but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. Someone Who enters in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep ... the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. Whenever He brings out His own sheep, He goes before them and the sheep follow Him for they know His voice. (In other words, they trust Him.) They will by no means follow a stranger but will flee from him for they do not know the voice of strangers ... I tell you, I am the sheep's Door. All who came before Me are thieves but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the Door. If anyone enters in by Me, they will be saved and will find pasture ... I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand (religious leader) and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees a wolf (life's difficulties or the devil) coming, leaves the sheep and flees. The wolf (the devil) snatches (deceives) the sheep and scatters them. The hired hand flees because he does not care for the sheep. (Many pastors and ministers leave their churches and their flocks when difficulties arise, but Jesus will never leave His flock.) I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and I am known by My own. The Father knows Me and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep (Gentiles) that are not of this (Jewish) fold. I must bring them also and they will hear My voice. They (Jews and Gentiles) will become one flock with one Shepherd ... If you do not believe, you are not of My sheep. As I told you, My sheep hear My voice. I know them and they follow Me' (John 10:1 to 16; 26 & 27).

Another allegory is the story of Hosea. To reveal the Lord's anger at the spiritual adultery of ancient Israel, the Lord told Hosea to marry Gomer, a prostitute, separate from her then reconcile with her, just as the Lord 'married' the Israelites, separated Himself from them and is now, as prophecies are being fulfilled, He is reconciling with His former spiritual 'wife' and will be moving back 'home' to Jerusalem to live with His people. Asking a holy prophet to marry a prostitute seems to go against scripture but it was according to God's will because their idolatry was to God, spiritual unfaithfulness. 'My people consult with their wooden idol and answer to a stick of wood. Indeed the spirit of prostitution has led them astray and they have been unfaithful to their God' (Hosea 4:12). 'Their deeds will not allow them to turn to their God for the spirit of prostitution is within them and they do not know God' (Hosea 5:4). 'They are unfaithful to God and they have borne illegitimate children' (Hosea 5:7). 'God said to Hosea, "Go and take for yourself a prostitute for a wife and raise children of her unfaithfulness, for the land (of Israel) commits great adultery, forsaking God" ... "You are not My people and I will not be your God" ... "It will come to pass, in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people, the Israeli's will be called 'sons of the living God. The children of Judah and the children of Israel will be gathered together and they will appoint themselves one head'" (Hosea 1:2, 9 to 11). At one time, Israel and Judah were two nations, now they are one nation under one head – one Prime Minister. "Israel, return to Yahweh your God, for you have fallen because of your sin" (Hosea 14:1). "I will have mercy on those who had not received mercy and I will tell those who were not My people, 'You are My people,' and they will say, 'My God!'" (Hosea 2:23). 'There is a harvest appointed for you when I restore the fortunes of My people' (Hosea 6:11). 'As God said in Hosea, "I will call them My people, those who were not My people, and 'beloved' who was not beloved. It will be in the place (Israel) where it was said to them, 'You are not My people', there (in Israel) they will be called 'children of the living God'" (Romans 9:25 & 26).

In this allegory, people are likened to trees, fruit, wheat and chaff. 'Wheat' are the righteous and 'chaff' are unrighteous. 'The axe lies at the root of the trees. Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire ... His winnowing fork is in His hand and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor. He will gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire' (Matthew 3:10 &

12). In these two verses, John the Baptist was not talking about trees, edible fruit, edible wheat, flames, a threshing floor, barn, winnowing fork or actual chaff. What John the Baptist was saying in a round-about way had nothing to do with trees. 'The axe lies at the root of the trees = The Lord is ready to judge'. 'Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire = Every person who does not produce spiritual fruit by obeying God, who does not repent, who is not born-again, who does not serve God using the talents He has been given, who do not behave in a Godly manner for the rest of their lives, will be spiritually cut down and cast into the literal lake of fire on Judgement Day'. 'His winnowing fork is in His hand and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor = God is sorting out who will enter the Kingdom of God and He will cleanse the earth of sin'. 'He will gather His wheat into the barn but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire = He will gather up the righteous, put them safely into heaven then the ungodly will be cast into the unquenchable eternal fire'.

In this short allegory, Jesus likened preachers and teachers to anglers. 'Jesus said, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men"' (Matthew 4:19) = Commit yourself to Jesus and He will make you preachers of the Gospel so you can bring people into the Kingdom of God'.

This allegory compares entering the Kingdom of Heaven to a man sowing a small seed of faith that grows into a huge blessing, reaching out to others around him to bring them home to the comfortable, safe, spiritual 'nest' which is heaven. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed a man sowed in his field, which is indeed smaller than all herbal seeds but when it is grown, it is greater than all other herbs and becomes a tree, so the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches' (Matthew 13:31 & 32).

There are many other allegories written in the Bible but there are too many to include in this study. In all of the allegories, long or short, there is a message God wants us to teach us, and every message points us in the direction of our eternal life with Him. That is no allegory, it is reality. He really will dwell among us. He is our God and we are His people. 'Behold, God's dwelling is with His people. He will dwell with them. They will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God' (Revelation 21:3).

Amen and God bless you.

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