

A Mystery Revealed

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery" Romans 11:25
Paul's Epistle to the Romans is a guiding light to the Christian church. Seeking enlightenment, Christians should heartily desire to understand the mystery Paul is referring to in our theme text—Romans 11:25.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Gentile Christians in the church at Rome were feeling a great sense of superiority over the Jews. Paul reminded them (and us consequently) that Gentiles were "wild olive branches"—grafted into the trunk and root of the Abrahamic Promise. He also gave assurance that God is able to graft the natural branches in again. The Jews, noted Paul, are still "beloved for the fathers' sakes."

Consider with us two major issues. What has become of the Law Covenant and what shall become of the Jewish people? The general sentiment in the Christian world is that the Law Covenant ended and the Jews were eternally cast off from favor at the beginning of the Christian era. Then, common opinion asserts, the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31 was given to the church of Christ—Spiritual Israel. A careful examination of the Scriptures will reveal that the Law Covenant has not ended. The New Covenant belongs to the Jews and through it Jewish people will yet receive salvation. Please consider the following.

Types and Antitypes

Students of the Scriptures know that Old Testament events, *types*, pictured things that would have a much grander fulfillment, the *antitypes*. With regard to the Mosaic Law's "matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Colossians 2:16-18 (NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION) A type ends when the *antitype* (fulfillment) begins. When following a shadow, it comes to an abrupt end when we reach reality—the substance. For example—the type of the Passover lamb being slain ended (found its fulfillment) in the offering up of Christ our Passover. The Mosaic Law Covenant was a type or picture of the New Covenant. If the New Covenant has begun then the type of the Law Covenant must have ended. We inquire, "Which scriptures teach that the Law Covenant has come to an end?"

Mosaic Law Covenant Ended?

Four scriptures seemingly teach that the Law Covenant has ended:

1. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."
Romans 10:4
2. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" Colossians 2:14
3. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, [of the law covenant]"
Colossians 2:20
4. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:" Ephesians 2:14-16

The first text is the strongest, but only if we stop reading it halfway through. This is frequently done, "For Christ is the end of the law. " If it did not have the last half, this would be a very strong scripture to show that the Mosaic Law Covenant is ended. But the last half argues powerfully that the Law is not ended. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Only those Jews who had believed on the Lord Jesus were freed from the grasp of the Law. Only those who had become dead in Christ could enter into Christian liberty—free from the bondage of the Law. All who did not believe remained (and still remain) in bondage to the law.

These four texts all refer to Jewish believers who escaped the Law's bondage by becoming dead with Christ. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4 By coming into Christ (as members of his mystical Body) Jewish Christians were (and are) freed from their obligations to the Mosaic Law. Otherwise, as the above scripture shows, the Law still has a claim over them. Therefore, the typical Law Covenant still exists.

The Christian Covenant Oldest of All

A doctrine cannot be proven by a type-unless that type is interpreted for us by an Apostle. Such is the case in Galatians 4:22-31. The Apostle Paul reveals the significance of Abraham's two wives, Sarah and Hagar. They were an allegory—representing "the two covenants." The Hagar Covenant corresponded to the Law Covenant. This covenant brought forth a seed—the nation of Israel. Likewise the Sarah Covenant brought forth a seed—the seed of promise—Spiritual Israel. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Galatians 4:28.

Sarah was Abraham's wife long before Hagar was given to him. This fact is paralleled in Galatians 3:15-17. The promise to Abraham that he would have a seed (Sarah Covenant) came 430 years before the Law Covenant (Hagar Covenant) was made. The Sarah or Grace Covenant is thus 430 years older than the Hagar or Law Covenant. The covenant Sarah typified is not the New Covenant. It is even older than the typical Law Covenant.

Carefully looking at the type ("Cast out the bondwoman")

The Apostle's lesson in chapter four is that as Hagar's son Ishmael persecuted Sarah's son Isaac so the Hagar (Law) Covenant seed, natural Israel, was persecuting the Sarah (Grace) Covenant seed, spiritual Israel.

Abraham, as a type of God, pronounced punishment on Hagar and Ishmael.

We note that they were not to be put to death by stoning or slain with sword or spear. "But what does the scripture say? 'Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman.'" (Galatians 4:30 NRSV) She was turned out into the wilderness, still very much alive. In this way the antitype has been fulfilled. The nation of Israel has been dispersed to the four corners of the earth (the wilderness) by Divine decree. see Deuteronomy 28:64-67 In this wilderness condition they are still obligated and bound to their very much alive "mother"—The Law Covenant.

Three Further Witnesses

"In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." Another proof that the Law Covenant did not end at the first advent of Christ is given in Galatians 4:24-25 and 29. These verses were written nearly a quarter century after the Cross. Yet the Apostle still speaks of the Law Covenant in the present tense.

"Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children." "But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also." (Galatians 4:24-25, 29 NRSV) These scriptures affirm that the typical Law Covenant is still in force. Therefore the antitype, the New Covenant, cannot have begun.

The second witness is 1 Corinthians 9:20, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law." This is very clear. The Law still had to exist—still be in force—in order for the Jews to be under it.

The third witness, Hebrews 8:13, says "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The word "old" in the original Greek has the thought of "*senile*." *Senile* does not mean dead—

passed away. It means feeble, aged or infirmed. The typical Law covenant did not end at the cross-it became weak. It started to decay after the time of the cross and is now getting "ready to vanish away."

Evidences of the New Covenant

There are clear scriptural evidences as to when the New Covenant has begun. These are found in the context of the classic New Covenant text-Jeremiah 31:27-34.

Three points stand out as to the time when the New Covenant will be in effect. First, the nation of Israel—the Jewish People—scattered to the four corners of the earth will be regathered. They will be planted in their land. Therefore the New Covenant cannot be made until the Great Diaspora ends. (vs. 27, 28)

Second, in those days of the New Covenant's operation no one will die for their father's (Adam's) sin. Each will die for his own sin. (vs. 29, 30) Manifestly, this has not yet occurred as Paul asserts in Romans 5:12.

Third, in that time it will no longer be necessary to tell anyone, from the least even unto the greatest, to know the Lord. This is due to the fact that all shall know him. (vs. 34) Comparatively few have really known the Lord since the time of the first advent. Therefore this too awaits fulfillment.

If these three future events are Scripturally associated with making the New Covenant, it is rational to understand that the New Covenant is also future.

The Mystery Revealed

The New Covenant is not the "Sarah" or Christian Covenant. But if it is not for Christians, then with whom will the New Covenant be made? "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Jeremiah 31:31 When the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (see Acts 15:14-17) "there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my [God's] covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." The Law will then have completed its role of leading the nation of Israel to recognize Messiah. Galatians 3:24

Then the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 will be made with the nation of Israel. Blessings will begin to flow forth from the Divine storehouse upon Israel and through them to the rest of mankind. Though God has led the Jews on a path separate and distinct from the way He leads Christians, the Jewish people are not forgotten nor cast off forever (see Romans 11:11,12). They too will realize Divine salvation. This mystery will then be made plain. Israel's partial blindness will be removed. God will restore them, turning away ungodliness from Jacob and forgiving their sins. God "shall cause them that come

of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." Isaiah 27:6

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