

Trinity Lutheran Church

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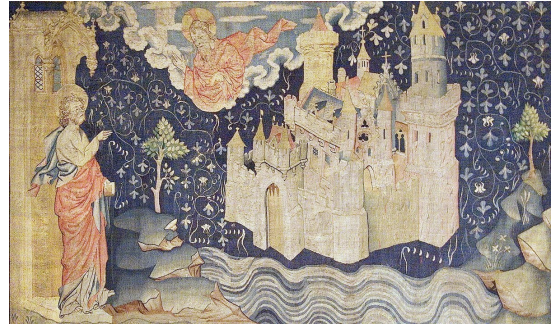
The Book of Galatians

Theme: “The True Gospel You Have Received”

Date: 9-18-22

Lesson: 25 - Chapter 4:26-30

TEXT AND STUDY



(26) But **the Jerusalem above is free**, and **she is our mother**. (27) For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."

(Is 54:1; Php 3:20; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 3:12; 21:2,10)

(28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of **promise**. (29) But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to **the Spirit**, so also it is now. (30) But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." (31) So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

**(Gen 21:9,10,12; Ps 83:5,6; Jn 8:35;
Ac 13:50; 14:2-5,19; Rom 7:4; 1 Th 2:14-16; 1 Pet 3:6)**

Luther's Commentary – Vol. 26

26. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

The earthly Jerusalem, says Paul, which is down below and has the authority of the Law, is Hagar and is in slavery with its children; that is, it is not set free from the Law, sin, and death. But **the Jerusalem that is above, that is to say, the spiritual Jerusalem**, is Sarah, although Paul does not use the proper noun "Sarah" but refers to her with the adjective "free." She is truly lordly and free; and she is our mother, giving birth, not into slavery, as Hagar does, but into freedom. **Now the heavenly Jerusalem above is the church, that is, believers scattered throughout the world, who have the same Gospel, the same faith in Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments.**

The church triumphant is in heaven; the church is militant on earth. This is not strange, for the godly are said to have their being **in heaven**. Phil. 3:20: "**Our πολιτεύμα is in heaven**," not in a local sense; but to the extent that a Christian believes, to that extent he is in heaven; and to the extent that he does his duty in faith, to that extent he is doing it in heaven. Eph. 1:3: "who has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

Therefore the spiritual and heavenly blessing must be distinguished from the earthly blessing, which is to have a good government and household, to have children, peace, wealth, food, and other physical advantages. **But the heavenly blessing** is to be set free from the Law, sin, and death; to be justified and made alive; to have **a gracious God**; to have a confident heart, a joyful conscience, and spiritual comfort; to have a **knowledge of Christ**, the gift of prophecy, and the revelation of the Scriptures; to have **the gifts of the Holy Spirit**; to **rejoice in God, etc.**—these are the heavenly blessings of **the church of Christ**.

Therefore **the Jerusalem that is above, that is, the heavenly Jerusalem, is the church here in time...**

But Paul says here that the old, earthly Jerusalem pertains to Hagar; that she is in slavery with her children; that she has been abolished; and **that a new and heavenly Jerusalem**, which is lordly and free, has been **divinely established**, in heaven and on earth, to be the mother of us all, of whom we have been born and are being born every day. Therefore it is necessary that this mother of ours, like the birth she gives, be on earth among men; yet she gives birth in **the Spirit, by the ministry of the Word and of the sacraments**, not physically.

We should know that Paul is contrasting **the Jerusalem that is above** with the earthly Jerusalem, not spatially but spiritually. Spiritual things are distinct from physical or earthly things. **Spiritual things** are “above”; earthly things are “below.” Thus the Jerusalem that is above is distinguished from the physical and temporal Jerusalem that is below, as I have said, not spatially but spiritually.

For **the spiritual Jerusalem**, which began in the physical Jerusalem, has no prescribed location, as the one in Judea does; but it is scattered throughout the world and can be in Babylonia, Turkey, Tartary, Scythia, India, Italy, or Germany, on the islands of the sea, on mountains, in valleys, and everywhere in the world where there are men who have **the Gospel and believe in Christ**.

Therefore Sarah, or **Jerusalem, our free mother, is the church, the bride of Christ** who gives birth to all. She goes on giving birth to children without interruption until the end of the world, as long as she exercises **the ministry of the Word**, that is, as long as she preaches and propagates the Gospel; for this is what it means for her to give birth.

Now she teaches **the Gospel** in such a way that we are set free from the curse of the Law, from sin, death, and other evils, not through the Law and works but **through Christ**. Therefore **the Jerusalem that is above**, that is, **the church**, is not subject to the Law and works; but she is free and is a mother without Law, sin, or death. And as the mother is, so are the children to whom she gives birth.

Therefore this allegory teaches in a beautiful way that **the church should not do anything but preach the Gospel** correctly and purely and thus give birth to children. In this way we are all fathers and children to one another, for we are born of one another. I was born of others through **the Gospel**, and now I am a father to still others, who will be fathers to still others; and so this giving birth will endure until the end of the world. But I am speaking, not about Hagar’s giving birth, who gives birth to slaves through the Law, but about free Sarah’s, who gives birth to heirs without the Law, without works or their own efforts. That Isaac is the heir and Ishmael is not, even though both are genuine sons of Abraham, takes place through **the Word of promise**, specifically...

... Therefore just as Isaac has the inheritance from his father solely on the basis of **the promise** and of his birth, without the Law or works, so we are born as heirs by Sarah, the free woman, that is, by **the church**. She teaches, cherishes, and carries us in her womb, her bosom, and her arms; she shapes and perfects us to the **form of Christ**, until we grow into perfect manhood (Eph. 4:13). Thus everything happens through the ministry of **the Word**. It is the duty of a free woman to go on giving birth to children endlessly, that is, to sons who know that they are justified by faith, not by the Law.

LIFE APPLICATION

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.
We are not children of the slave but of the free woman.
What is your definition of true Christian freedom?