Fulfilled Prophecies

Cast Out The Slave Woman: What Ended In The First Century?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† When Paul commanded the Galatian believers to cast out the slave woman and her son, he wasn't describing a future destruction of the physical world. He was explaining the removal of the Old Covenant system and the end of its claim to the inheritance promised through Christ (Galatians 4:21-31).

† The slave woman represented the covenant established at Mount Sinai, while the free woman represented the Jerusalem

above, the mother of those who belong to Christ (Galatians 4:24-26).
† This wasn't merely a comparison between two women in Abraham's household. Paul was explaining two covenants, two Jerusalems, two kinds of children, and two completely different relationships to God (Galatians 4:22-29).
† The command to cast out the slave woman revealed that the Old Covenant couldn't remain alongside the New Covenant as an equal authority or a second means of inheritance (Galatians 4:30; Hebrews 8:13).
† The first-century destruction of Jerusalem and its temple demonstrated publicly what Christ had already accomplished through His death, resurrection, and establishment of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15; Matthew 24:1-3, 34).
† To understand what ended in the first century, we must allow Paul to explain his own illustration rather than impose a future fulfillment upon it (Galatians 4:21-31).

The Two Women Represented Two Covenants

Galatians 4:22-24
For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. But the son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. This is speaking allegorically, for these women are two covenants: one coming from Mount Sinai giving birth to children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.
† Paul explicitly identified the two women as two covenants. He wasn't asking his readers to speculate about their meaning because he supplied the interpretation himself (Galatians 4:21-31).
† Hagar represented the covenant established at Mount Sinai, which placed Israel under the Law and its obligations (Exodus 19:5-8; Galatians 3:23-25).
† Sarah represented the promise fulfilled through Christ, where inheritance comes through God's grace rather than the works of the Law (Galatians 3:16-18; Romans 4:13-16).

† The contrast wasn't between physical and spiritual human beings. It was between an inheritance pursued through the Law and an inheritance received through God's promise (Galatians 3:18, 29).
† The Law served its appointed purpose until the promised Seed arrived. Once Christ came, the temporary guardian no longer governed God's covenant people (Galatians 3:19, 24-25).

Hagar Represented The Jerusalem Of Paul's Day

Galatians 4:25
Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children.
† Paul's identification of Hagar with the Jerusalem of his own day is one of the strongest historical indicators in the passage. He wasn't describing a Jerusalem thousands of years in the future (Galatians 4:25).
† The Jerusalem that existed when Paul wrote remained associated with the temple, Levitical priesthood, sacrifices, and Mosaic covenant administration (Acts 21:20-26; Hebrews 9:6-10).
† Those institutions had once served God's purpose, but they couldn't provide the permanent redemption accomplished through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-14).
† Paul's concern wasn't the ethnic identity of Jewish people. He was identifying the covenant system that continued to claim authority after the promised Messiah had arrived (Galatians 3:26-29; Philippians 3:3-9).
† Jewish believers who trusted Christ belonged to the children of promise, just as believing Gentiles did. The dividing line was covenant relationship, not ancestry (Romans 9:6-8; Ephesians 2:14-18).
† Jerusalem's approaching judgment would expose the finality of the covenant transition already established through Christ (Luke 21:20-22; Hebrews 8:13).

The Jerusalem Above Was Already The Mother Of Believers

Galatians 4:26
But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.
† Paul didn't say that the Jerusalem above would someday become the mother of believers. He declared that she already was their mother (Galatians 4:26).
† The heavenly Jerusalem represented the freedom, righteousness, and inheritance established through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24; Romans 8:1-4).
† The New Covenant wasn't waiting for the destruction of the physical universe to become a reality. Christ had already inaugurated it through His blood (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15).
† The first-century believers were experiencing the transition from the old covenant administration to the completed establishment of the new covenant order (2 Corinthians 3:6-11; Hebrews 8:13).
† The heavenly city wasn't another earthly capital waiting to replace Jerusalem geographically. It represented God's dwelling with His redeemed people through Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:2-3).
† The distinction between the two Jerusalems explains why the destruction of the earthly city didn't mean the destruction of God's kingdom (Hebrews 12:26-28).

The Children Of Promise Were The True Heirs

Galatians 4:28
And you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.
† Paul included himself and the Galatian believers among the children of promise. Their inheritance rested upon Christ, not their ability to maintain the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:26-29).
† Abraham's promised blessing extended to the nations through faith in Jesus Christ, fulfilling the purpose announced long before Sinai (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8-9).
† The children of promise weren't identified by physical descent

alone. They were identified by belonging to the promised Seed, Jesus Christ (Romans 9:6-8; Galatians 3:16).
† This doesn't mean God rejected every Israelite. The apostles themselves were Israelites who received the promise through faith in Christ (Romans 11:1-5).
† The inheritance wasn't transferred from one ethnic people to another unrelated people. God's promises to Israel reached their intended fulfillment in Christ, who brought believing Jews and Gentiles together in one body (Ephesians 2:14-16; Romans 15:8-12).
† The children of promise inherited what the Law anticipated but couldn't accomplish through its sacrifices and regulations (Hebrews 10:1, 14; Galatians 3:18).

The Persecution Revealed The Covenant Conflict

Galatians 4:29
But as at that time the son who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one who was born according to the Spirit, so it is even now.e.
† Paul's words so also it is now placed the conflict directly within his own generation. The persecution wasn't something reserved for a distant age (Galatians 4:29).
† Just as Ishmael's treatment of Isaac illustrated hostility toward the promised heir, opposition from those defending the old covenant order confronted believers in Christ (Genesis 21:9; Acts 13:45, 50).
† Paul himself had persecuted the church before recognizing Jesus as the Messiah (Galatians 1:13; Acts 9:1-5).
† The apostles experienced opposition because they proclaimed that forgiveness and righteousness came through Christ rather than through the Law of Moses (Acts 13:38-39; Acts 15:1-11).
† This conflict didn't establish guilt upon every Jewish person. It described opposition to the gospel, including opposition Paul had personally participated in before his conversion (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

† The persecution belonged to the period in which the old covenant administration was passing away and the New Covenant was being openly established (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 10:32-37).

Cast Out The Slave Woman And Her Son

Galatians 4:30
But what does the Scripture say? "Drive out the slave woman and her son For the son of the slave woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."
† This is the central declaration of Paul's argument. The slave woman and her son couldn't share the inheritance belonging to the free woman's son (Genesis 21:10; Galatians 4:30).
† Because Paul identified the women as covenants, the command illustrated the exclusion of the Sinai covenant from the inheritance established through Christ (Galatians 4:24; Galatians 3:18).
† The command wasn't a call to expel or harm Jewish people. It was a declaration that the Mosaic covenant couldn't remain an alternative means of righteousness and inheritance (Romans 10:4; Galatians 5:4-6).
† The Old Covenant couldn't be repaired, renewed as a competing system, or placed beside the New Covenant as an equal authority. Christ had established a better covenant through His completed sacrifice (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 10:11-18).
† The inheritance belonged to the children of promise because Jesus Christ, Abraham's promised Seed, had fulfilled the covenant promises (Galatians 3:16, 29).
† Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 wasn't the moment Christ first became victorious. It was the historical judgment that removed the temple system associated with the covenant that had already become obsolete (Hebrews 8:13; Luke 21:20-22).
† The slave woman's removal therefore represented the end of the Old Covenant's governing authority, not the end of the earth or the disappearance of the Jewish people (Hebrews 7:12;

Hebrews 8:13).

The Old Covenant Was Already Becoming Obsolete

Hebrews 8:13
When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.
† Hebrews identifies the first covenant as obsolete and approaching disappearance. The writer was describing a process already underway in the first century (Hebrews 8:13).
† Christ's death established the New Covenant, making the former covenant administration no longer necessary for access to God (Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The temple continued operating during the transition, but its sacrifices couldn't add anything to Christ's completed offering (Hebrews 10:11-14).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple brought the functioning sacrificial administration to an end, publicly demonstrating the passing of the old order (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-22).
† This explains why the covenant could already be obsolete while its visible institutions still existed. Its authority had ended through Christ, while its historical removal was approaching (Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 8:13).
† The events of AD 70 confirmed that the old covenant administration wouldn't continue as a parallel system alongside Christ's completed redemption (Hebrews 9:8-12; Hebrews 10:18).

The Priesthood And The Law Changed Together

Hebrews 7:12
For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.
† The Mosaic priesthood and its covenant legislation were inseparably connected. A change in priesthood necessarily

involved a change in the governing covenant arrangement (Hebrews 7:11-12).
† Jesus didn't become another Levitical priest offering repeated animal sacrifices. He became the permanent High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:15-17, 23-28).
† The Levitical system couldn't bring the worshiper to complete perfection, but Christ accomplished what its repeated sacrifices anticipated (Hebrews 7:18-19; Hebrews 10:14).
† The removal of the temple in AD 70 eliminated the physical center of the former priestly administration, but Christ's priesthood remains permanent (Hebrews 7:24-25).
† Believers don't need another earthly temple, another animal sacrifice, or another Levitical priest to approach God (Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:18).
† Casting out the slave woman therefore included the removal of the covenant system that governed worship through the former priesthood (Galatians 4:24, 30; Hebrews 7:12).

Jesus Announced The Judgment Of That Generation

Matthew 23:36
Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.
† Jesus identified His own generation as the one that would experience the accumulated judgment upon Jerusalem (Matthew 23:34-39).
† The judgment concerned the city that rejected the prophets and would reject the Messiah sent to her (Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 23:37-38).
† Jesus wasn't predicting the destruction of the entire planet. He was announcing covenant judgment upon Jerusalem and its religious establishment (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-22).
† The destruction of the temple in AD 70 fulfilled His warning that its stones would be thrown down (Matthew 24:1-2, 34).
† This judgment corresponds historically with Paul's explanation that the covenant represented by Hagar couldn't remain an heir

alongside the covenant of promise (Galatians 4:24-30).
† The judgment fell upon the old covenant center, while the kingdom established through Christ continued without interruption (Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 12:28).

The Days Of Vengeance Were Fulfilled In Jerusalem

Luke 21:20-22
But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.
† Jesus provided a recognizable historical sign. Jerusalem surrounded by armies would signal that its desolation was approaching (Luke 21:20).
† The warning was directed to people living in Judea who could flee when the danger appeared. It wasn't an instruction to generations living thousands of years later (Luke 21:21).
† Jesus called these the days of vengeance, connecting Jerusalem's approaching destruction with the covenant judgments announced in Scripture (Deuteronomy 28:49-52; Daniel 9:26-27).
† The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 brought the temple sacrifices and priestly administration to an end (Matthew 24:1-2; Hebrews 10:11-18).
† This was the historical setting in which the old covenant order represented by Hagar disappeared from its former institutional position (Galatians 4:25, 30; Hebrews 8:13).
† The New Covenant didn't collapse when Jerusalem fell because its foundation was the risen Christ, not the earthly temple (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20-22).

We Are Children Of The Free Woman

Galatians 4:31
So then, brothers and sisters, we are not children of a slave woman, but of the free woman.
† Paul concluded by identifying believers as children of the free woman. Their covenant identity was already established through Christ (Galatians 4:26-28).
† They weren't waiting to become heirs through the restoration of the Mosaic system. They were already Abraham's descendants and heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:29).
† Freedom in Christ didn't mean freedom to practice sin. It meant release from the Law as the governing covenant and freedom to serve God through love (Galatians 5:1, 13-14).
† The children of the free woman belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, where access to the Father comes through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24; Ephesians 2:18).
† The inheritance is secure because it rests upon Christ's completed work rather than upon the continued existence of an earthly temple (Hebrews 9:12, 15; Romans 8:16-17).

Historical References

Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 6, Chapters 4-5
† Josephus described the burning of the Jerusalem temple during the Roman siege in AD 70. His account provides historical evidence that the center of the former sacrificial system was destroyed.
† Josephus recorded the devastation of the city and the collapse of its religious institutions. These events correspond to the historical setting of Jesus' warning about Jerusalem's approaching desolation (Luke 21:20-24).
† Josephus didn't interpret Paul's allegory for us. Scripture supplies that interpretation, while his historical account confirms the destruction of the temple associated with the former covenant administration (Galatians 4:24-30).

Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 7, Chapter 1
† Josephus described the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction,

including the demolition of much of the city and the Roman occupation.
† His account demonstrates that the judgment involved an identifiable first-century city, not the destruction of the physical universe (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-22).

Tacitus, Histories, Book 5, Chapters 10-13
† Tacitus described the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the conditions surrounding the siege.
† His testimony provides an additional Roman historical witness to the conflict that culminated in Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.
† The historical evidence supports the occurrence of Jerusalem's judgment, while the covenant significance must be established from the teachings of Christ and His apostles (Matthew 23:36; Galatians 4:25-30).

Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7
† Eusebius recorded the early Christian tradition that believers in Jerusalem departed to Pella before the city's destruction.
† Writing centuries afterward, he understood Jerusalem's judgment in connection with Jesus' warnings. His account is a later historical witness rather than independent first-century proof of the evacuation (Luke 21:20-22).
† His writings show that early Christian historical interpretation connected Jerusalem's destruction with the warnings Jesus gave to His own generation (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).

How It Applies To Us Today
† We aren't children of the slave woman. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we belong to the covenant of promise and share in Abraham's inheritance (Galatians 3:26-29; Galatians 4:31).
† We don't need the Mosaic priesthood, temple sacrifices, or ceremonial regulations to obtain acceptance before God. Jesus Christ has provided permanent access to the Father (Hebrews 7:24-25; Hebrews 10:19-22).
† Our citizenship isn't dependent upon an earthly Jerusalem

because believers belong to the heavenly Jerusalem and the kingdom that cannot be shaken (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22-28).
† We shouldn't confuse the modern nation of Israel with the covenant system Paul identified as Hagar. His argument concerned the first-century covenant conflict, not a command to reject any ethnic people today (Galatians 4:24-31; Romans 10:12).
† We must never use this passage to justify hostility toward Jewish people. Salvation in Christ is offered to Jews and Gentiles alike, and both are reconciled to God through the same Lord (Romans 10:12-13; Ephesians 2:14-18).
† The kingdom isn't waiting for a future destruction of the earth to begin. Christ already reigns, and His people already belong to His kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28).
† We live in the freedom Christ accomplished, serving one another through love rather than returning to the covenant obligations from which He has released His people (Galatians 5:1, 13-14).
† The slave woman has been cast out in the covenant sense Paul explained. The inheritance belongs to the children of promise, and nothing needs to be added to Christ's completed redemption (Galatians 4:30-31; Hebrews 10:14-18).

Q & A Appendix

Q: Who was the slave woman in Paul's allegory?
A: Hagar represented the covenant established at Mount Sinai, which Paul connected with the Jerusalem of his own day and its condition of bondage (Galatians 4:24-25).

Q: Who was the free woman?
A: Sarah represented the covenant of promise fulfilled through Christ. Paul identified the Jerusalem above as the mother of believers (Galatians 4:26-28).

Q: What did Paul mean by casting out the slave woman?
A: He meant that the Old Covenant couldn't share governing authority or provide a competing claim to the inheritance established through Christ. The children of promise alone inherit through Him (Galatians 4:24, 30; Galatians 3:16-18).

Q: Did the Old Covenant end at the Cross or in AD 70?
A: Christ established the New Covenant through His death, making the former covenant obsolete. AD 70 brought the historical destruction of the temple and the end of its functioning sacrificial administration (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:15; Matthew 24:1-2).

Q: Did casting out the slave woman mean God rejected all Jewish people?
A: No. Paul himself was Jewish, and Jewish believers were among the first children of promise. The distinction concerned faith in Christ rather than ethnic ancestry (Romans 11:1-5; Galatians 3:26-29).

Q: Was the destruction of Jerusalem the end of the physical world?
A: No. Jesus described the judgment of Jerusalem and its temple within His own generation. God's kingdom continued because it wasn't dependent upon the earthly city (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:1-2, 34; Hebrews 12:28).

Q: Why couldn't the two covenants continue together?
A: The Law served as a temporary guardian until Christ came. Once the promised Seed fulfilled God's purpose, the former covenant couldn't remain an equal means of inheritance (Galatians 3:19, 24-25; Hebrews 8:6-13).

Q: What happened to the priesthood when the Old Covenant ended?
A: The Levitical priesthood lost its covenant authority because Jesus became the permanent High Priest. The destruction of

the temple ended its functioning sacrificial system (Hebrews 7:12, 23-28; Hebrews 10:11-18).

Q: Does the heavenly Jerusalem exist now?
A: Yes. Paul declared that the Jerusalem above was already the mother of believers, and Hebrews stated that Christians had already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24).

Q: Are believers still waiting to receive the inheritance promised to Abraham?
A: Believers already belong to Christ and are heirs according to promise. Their covenant standing is established through Him, not through a future restoration of the Mosaic system (Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 8:16-17).

Q: What is the central message of Galatians 4:30?
A: The covenant represented by Hagar couldn't inherit alongside the covenant of promise. Christ fulfilled what the Law anticipated, and the inheritance belongs to those who are His (Galatians 4:24-31; Galatians 3:16, 29).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Galatians 4:22-24; Galatians 4:25; Galatians 4:26; Galatians 4:28; Galatians 4:29; Galatians 4:30; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 7:12; Matthew 23:36; Luke 21:20-22; Galatians 4:31
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 6, Chapters 4-5; Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 7, Chapter 1; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5, Chapters 10-13; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7

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