

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Thirteen

Ishmael Circumcised at Age Thirteen

Gal. 4:22 "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac were real people and the events recorded for us in the book of Genesis were real events that really happened. Yet in those events another lesson is presented to us. An **allegory** (from [Greek](#) *ἄλλος*, *allos*, "other," and *ἀγορεύειν*, *agoreuein*, "to speak in public") is a figurative mode of [representation](#) conveying a [meaning](#) other than the [literal](#). Thus, there is the literal meaning and then there is the figurative meaning. In the above, the literal meaning is used to represent the two covenants of worship set forth in the scriptures: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Hagar represents the covenant of works. Sarah represents the covenant of grace. Ishmael represents the children of the flesh and Isaac represents the children of promise. Ishmael was born of the bondwoman and Isaac was born of the freewoman. Ishmael was a child of the flesh and Isaac was a child of promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham and gave to him the ordinance of circumcision: Gen. 17:10 "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11 And

ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

Ishmael was circumcised when he was **thirteen** years old. Isaac was circumcised when he was **eight** days old. **Thirteen** is associated with the subject of a curse. **Eight** is associated with the subject of new beginnings. The covenant of works is a curse to the children of the flesh. The covenant of works brings you under the curse of the law as stated in Gal. 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This curse brings the worshippers there under into bondage. They are in bondage to the curse of the law and cannot, through their works, deliver themselves out from under its bondage.

The covenant of grace through the new birth brings the children of promise out from under the bondage of the law covenant. When a person is born of the Spirit of God he is at the same time circumcised with the circumcision made without hands and is now able to worship God in Spirit and in truth under the covenant of grace. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death. The new birth and the spiritual circumcision of the heart is a new beginning for the children of promise.