

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NATIONAL OWNERSHIP OF SOULS

Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

There is a teaching floating around that declares a Christian belongs to the church that first baptized and anointed a person exclusively. This teaching further misuses the apostle Paul's teaching and states that just as Sarah is the spiritual mother of Israel, the local church where one receives salvation becomes a "Sarah" with legitimate claims on the loyalty of the members. Finally, they misappropriate the type and shadow teaching in Genesis 2:21 to justify their "ownership" of their church members. For the sake of convenience, let us call this doctrine the "doctrine of national ownership of Apostolic souls". None of the above stands up to scriptural scrutiny, and we need to address each one by one. The Lord Jesus will hold us responsible for what we say about souls; he alone gives birth to spiritual souls through the agency of his precious flesh and blood for souls. Let us remember God's warning to the backslidden children of Israel.

Ezekiel 13:18 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

Does a local or national church own souls? God forbid! The Lord Jesus Christ emphatically declared to the kingdom of Satan, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). When did the church-age begin? It began on the Day of Pentecost! In other words, the one who started and builds the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus's Spirit is the body of the entire church, wherever people are "called out" and are born again of his body. All members are within the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, both in heaven and earth.

1Cor 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The scriptures above do not make local or national distinctions: the body of the Lord Jesus Christ is international. The Lord Jesus Christ does not return from heaven to gather churches according to their geographic or national locations. When the church is caught up in what we call the rapture, this event occurs at the same time worldwide (I Thess 4:16,17). We all now have the body of Jesus and are placed into his body – the Holy Spirit of Jesus. The

clue lies in the word “church” (Greek *ekklēsia*). The Greek scholar, James Strong, defines this as “the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth”. Clearly, this has nothing to do with this doctrine of local or national ownership of souls. In the original usage before Christianity, Strong states that *ekklēsia* referred to, “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly”. The Apostle Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven by the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet even he recognized many shepherds, but one Chief shepherd alone, Jesus Christ.

1Pet 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

1Pet 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

1Pet 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

What about the next aspect of the doctrine of the “national ownership of Apostolic souls” that strangely involves Sarah spiritually in the process of the new birth? What role can a church have in the new birth? The answer is nothing besides mentoring and nurturing the souls for Jesus! Feed the flock, was all the Lord asked Peter to do – not own the flock. “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs” (John 21:15). Peter’s role was only to feed the church that Jesus gave birth to – first as lambs with milk, and then with meat as mature sheep. This is why we reject any genetic or biological contribution from Mary in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic church pushed for the doctrine of Mary’s biological contribution to the flesh of the Lord so that they could justify the worship of Mary. Any Apostolic church that claims that the church was somehow involved in the birth of souls (i.e.) is following the Roman Catholic error. This is why Catholics worldwide will remind you they are “Roman” Catholic and not just Catholic. The so-called national mother becomes elevated to the level of the Lord. God forbid! Let us consider what the Bible states about the type and shadow teaching about Sarah.

***Galatians 4:26** But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

In Bible hermeneutics, or the interpretation of the text of the Bible, it is essential to consider the context of the text. The context is not about the church, but about the Law of Moses versus grace under the Lord Jesus. “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? (Gal 4:21). Hence, the allegory or metaphor of Hagar and Sarah is not about

Old or New Testament churches, but about Law and grace. Clearly, we cannot argue that while Sarah represents the church, Hagar represents Israel. Hagar never was equated with Israel, so why equate Sarah with the church. The Apostle Paul makes it clear: “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal 4:26). What or who is this Jerusalem? Jerusalem means the “city of peace” and is the city of the great King Jesus. In other words, the Jerusalem above, which is free, is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the city Jesus is building in heaven is representative of his body – we will live forever in a New Jerusalem which Jesus builds with his own hands. This New Jerusalem is not Sarah, but the city of the great King, Jesus Christ!

***John 14:2** In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

***Rev 21:2** And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Finally, the doctrine of the “national ownership of Apostolic souls” further declares that just as God took Adam’s wife out of his side, the church is somehow the mother of souls because she too was taken out of the body of the Lord when he was pierced on the Cross. This is patently false! Christians are not taken out of the body of a woman similar to Eve, but directly from the body of Jesus. The entire church worldwide is this woman taken out of the body of Jesus. When Paul explained the mysterious relationship between marriage and the Lord with the church, he stated, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Ephesians 5:30). We are all members of this worldwide church that is the Bride of Christ. Jesus does not have thousands of national Brides in every country – just one Bride that is born again of his body. Since the Bride of Christ is one, wherever members may find themselves in the world, a local or national church cannot act like they can order their members about and own souls. What happens if souls from another church in another country come under their care? Does it mean that after 30 years, the “mother” church in another country can order these souls to leave their shepherds? This is an unbiblical doctrine that must be challenged in Jesus’ name! Does the scripture below apply only to a “mother” church? No!

***Heb 13:17** Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

May the God who commanded us “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3) open your eyes to reject the teachings of humans and uphold the truth! We are not the church of human teaching, but the church of the firstborn, Jesus Christ!