

What Does "Present Jerusalem" (Gal 4:25) in Paul's Allegory Have to Do with the Jerusalem of Paul's Time, or the Concerns of the Galatians?

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Interpreters understand Paul's reference to "present Jerusalem," characterized as "in slavery with her children," to signify a profoundly negative valuation of the Judaism of his time, although some attempt to limit his target to the Christian Judaism of the Jerusalem Church. The language is allegorical; nevertheless, the implications derived from it play a significant role in Pauline theology. In addition to its use by those who interpret Paul against Jewishness, its reach is notable in the work of those who seek to challenge such interpretations. For example, in an in-depth study of the concept of Israel's land in the New Testament, W. D. Davies allowed this text to influence his otherwise largely positive understanding of Paul's valuation of Jewish space, derived, for example, from his interpretation of Romans 11 and 15. Reluctantly, Davies sees a development in Paul's thought away from apocalyptic geography, which retained a vested interest in the centrality of Jerusalem, to eventually discarding it for an "ecclesiological" eschatology inaugurated in Christ."¹

In *The Irony of Galatians*,² which focused on the situational discourse units in the letter, I did not find Paul to oppose Judaism or Torah-observance for Jewish people, or the Jerusalem Church, but to be specifically opposed to the proselyte conversion of Christ-believing non-Jews among whom he had worked. Those who were influencing his non-Jewish addressees to undertake the rite of proselyte conversion, which included circumcision for males, were non-Christ-believing local Jewish community members involved in facilitating contact with non-Jewish guests, and in particular, with those non-Jews expressing an interest in becoming members of the Jewish communities as proselytes. I do not think that these influencers were concerned with opposing Paul per

¹ Davies, *Gospel and the Land*, 220.

² Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*.

se, but simply with protecting traditional customs for re-identification of non-Jews seeking full membership. It is from Paul's perspective that their position inherently undermined the message of good in Christ. For Paul, if these non-Jewish addressees seek to be now "born" as proselytes to gain the standing his message declared to be already theirs, that would involve the logical subversion of the claim that Paul's message had made, in which they had previously believed. I therefore expect this narrative unit to function in the service of opposing the influence of those who seek to persuade these non-Jews that they have not been "born" into Abraham's family as fellow-members of the righteous ones if they do not undertake the rite of proselyte conversion.

The situational texts immediately framing this allegorical narrative unit involve discussion of just these kinds of topics. Note that immediately before the allegorical introduction of v. 21, in v. 17 Paul opposed the "exclusion" of his addressees, and v. 19 speaks of his travail again until Christ is formed in the addressees. Immediately following the unit, in 5:2, Paul writes of Christ being of no advantage to his addressees if they pursue proselyte conversion. In v. 4, he tells them that they will be severed from Christ, having fallen away from the grace of God shown to them while non-Jews if they seek to be made righteous ones by undertaking to be under Law, signifying the rite of proselyte conversion. Instead, Paul calls them to, "out of faithfulness to the Spirit [which they have as witness to their identity as children of Abraham although remaining non-Jews], wait for the hope of standing as righteous ones" (v. 5).

The allegorical unit begins in v. 21 with an ironic rebuke: "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not hear the law?" Note that Paul does not challenge the authority of the Torah to speak to whether or not to undertake proselyte conversion, but to how the addressees have (mis)understood it. This is important for Pauline scholars to note, who expect Paul to dismiss the voice of Torah at the very least as passé for Christ-believers, especially on this topic. Instead, he prepares the audience to hear Torah rightly interpreted, that is, according to Paul. Thus we should not expect the unit to negatively value or dismiss Torah, but a certain interpretation of Torah on the matter at hand; nevertheless, dismissal of a positive place for Torah is just what most interpreters understand Paul to communicate.

In vv. 22-23, Paul introduces the story of Abraham having two sons, one begotten to him by a slave woman according to the flesh, meaning, in this case, by way of a

human convention for gaining an heir, the other by a free woman according to promise, that is, by the agency of God working in a miraculous way so that a barren woman bears a son, just as had been promised. Their manner of being begotten to Abraham is accentuated in the language development from v. 22 to v. 23. Paul does not cite Genesis here, but he draws largely from Genesis chapters 11, 15—17, and 21, where the various elements of this story are told. Of course, the story on its own does not teach that non-Jewish Christ-believers should not become proselytes, but it is about the begetting of sons, about entrance into the covenant made with Abraham and his sons. Note that in the story as told in Gen 17, a provision was made for the inclusion of male slaves within the household by way of circumcision, and thus Ishmael, the son of the slave woman, was circumcised at thirteen years of age. Josephus observes that Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day, as are all natural born Jews thereafter, but the circumcision of Ishmael is distinguishably different (*Ant.* 1.191-93). It appears that the Hagar/Ishmael model appeals to the idea that foreigners join the house of Abraham after the manner of slaves.³ Paul conflates that model for slave inclusion of Hagar's son begotten to Abraham, which had a place before the son begotten to Abraham according to promise had been born, with the tradition of proselyte conversion to produce children of Abraham. Ironically, just as Abraham's seeking relief by way of convention turned into a liability when the older slave son challenged the right to inheritance by the son born to Sarah, so too does the convention of proselyte conversion, which had its place before the inclusion of the other nations upon the arrival of the age to come, result in a challenge to the addressees' claim to be heirs of Abraham.

In v. 24 we meet three very interesting clauses, each worth its own paper. In the first, Paul says he is being allegorical. I will simply work with the idea that Paul is saying or interpreting the elements in the story to signify something else—this stands for that—hence, allegorically. In the next clause, he writes, “these women are two

³ Borgen, “Hebrew and Pagan Features,” 154-56, 158, observes that for Philo, Hagar is a figure on the borderline, which Philo develops from the Hebrew *gwr*, “to be a stranger, sojourn, dwell” (*Congr.* 22-23); she is an Egyptian by “birth [γένος],” but a Hebrew by her “choice/rule of life [προαίρεσιν]” (Philo, *Abr.* 251; see also *Gen. Rab.* 61.4). She is like a sojourner in a city, or better, an adopted child, so that while ranked with the family as far as inheritance, she is ranked with outsiders in the sense of not being their actual children (from Philo, *Congr.* 22-23; cf. *Sacr.* 44). See also Dozeman, “Wilderness and Salvation History,” 23-43; Gaston, *Paul*, 87.

covenants.” Interpreters have generally concluded that the analogy is to the old and new covenants or Judaism and Christianity, and some maintain that it signifies the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants, which understanding at least has the mention of Mt. Sinai in the next clause going for it, as well as the story of Abraham, and the prior narrative language of 3:15-22. But why would the specific matter of opposing proselyte conversion for Christ-believing non-Jews result in painting the entire Mosaic covenant with the same negative brush? And does not the Abrahamic covenant also include circumcision of males, both free born sons and slaves, indeed, according to revelation?

Paul analogizes the addressees with Isaac, and those influencing them with Ishmael. I do not think that there are two other covenants in view, but these women *are* two covenants, allegorically speaking, that is, one representing the birth of free sons, Israelites and those from the nations who join with them through faith in Christ, and the other represents the birth of slave sons, proselytes. In the remaining clauses, Paul says one of the covenants is from Mt. Sinai and it is bearing children for slavery, which he equates with Hagar. Hagar may represent a particular matter linked to the Mosaic covenant; however, remember, it is the Mosaic covenant to which Paul turns to teach the addressees that they should not become proselytes, and he is not putting himself or them in slavery to do so. Rather, I suppose it is the concretizing of proselyte conversion in the traditions of the fathers that Paul seeks to challenge, which Paul allegorically equates with the model for the inclusion of slaves, since it is being applied to exclude the standing of his addressees, when, for Paul, by their receipt of the Spirit their inclusion as children of the free woman like Isaac has been demonstrated as an accomplished fact. They do not need to gain identity as do foreign-born children, they already belong like natural-born ones.

In v. 25, Paul continues the motif in a way that has caused a great deal of textual diversity. The first clause runs something like this: “Now this Hagar-Sinai mountain is in Arabia,” a strange statement that has given even the most certain interpretations of this unit reason to wonder what he meant. Especially perplexing is highlighting of the location as “in Arabia.” Hagar is described in Genesis as an Egyptian, and although Mt. Sinai is in Arabia, what difference does that make? And why does he alter the word order from Mt. Sinai to Sinai mountain? I propose that the Hagar-Sinai entity emphasizes a specific element of the Mosaic covenant as it is applied by those who claim to represent the traditions of the fathers in the way that Paul formerly excelled at

most zealously when making proselytes (1:12-14; 5:11), namely, proselyte conversion for foreigners who wish to join the house of Israel.

The next clause introduces the topic of Jerusalem. Paul writes that Hagar-Sinai is a mountain in Arabia: “but it corresponds to present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.” The verb linking the two clauses translated “corresponds to,” *συστοιχέω*, is a relatively rare verb. Many interpreters think that Paul uses the word in the sense that Aristotle used the noun form (*systoicheia*) to describe the Pythagorean enumeration of basic universal principles, illustrating the technique in a “pair of coordinate columns” containing elements like hot and cold, day and night (*Metaphysics* 1.5.6/986a²³). In other words, Hagar-Sinai mountain is linked with present Jerusalem in a column including such negative elements as slavery versus some other entity in the facing column linked with freedom. In the next verse (26), some oppositional elements are named: “but the above Jerusalem is free, which is our mother.”

The use of such a term to refer to this kind of structured columns of opposites represents an unusual technical case, and attributing that use to Paul here is to some degree undermined by the way he constructs this narrative unit. Not only does Paul say he is engaged in allegory rather than oppositional column making, but he fails to fill out most of the corresponding elements in either column, often giving items understood to stand in one column without providing the opposite item, and vice-versa. That is a strange way to proceed if engaged in the task Aristotle described. Many a commentator has sought to help Paul fill in what is required to make the approach work, but one must wonder why it did not occur to Paul to do that for the Galatian addressees, since without it there is more confusion than clarity. And if column making rather than allegory making is Paul’s aim, then why did he wait to introduce the term *συστοιχέω* until v. 25b, and why are the corresponding elements left so ambiguous? (e.g., what does a covenant from Mt. Sinai have to do with Hagar, and what is the corresponding location for Sarah, if one is meant to be supplied; moreover, why is Sarah not even named?)

I suggest that *συστοιχέω* has a different meaning. While I believe that any contemporary allusions to present Jerusalem for Paul and his audience would have been to Roman enslavement rather than Judaism, as it was for the author of *Targum*

Isaiah on 54:1,⁴ it is the intertextual connections to Isaiah's time that account for this language. Paul here *links* the stories from Genesis with a text from Isaiah 54:1, which in v. 27 he cites as a proof to the argument he has been making. Since Paul is engaged in *connecting* the story he is allegorizing with the allegorical story comprising Isa 54:1, it is logical to suppose that συστοιχέω signals that intertextual link.

a. As noted already, συστοιχέω is a relatively rare word, and Paul does not proceed in a manner that represents what Aristotle described. In a different direction also often noted by interpreters, but in a usage otherwise unparalleled, συστοιχέω is used to mean *connected to* when referring to a file of soldiers who stay together when making a maneuver (Polybius, *Histories* 10.23.7). In still yet another direction, several church fathers understand the usage here as "is adjacent to," in the sense of "borders upon" or "is contiguous to" (Lightfoot, 181). In general, the word carries the sense of *corresponds to* or *linked to*, as well as *points to* or *represents* (see Louw & Nida 58.68). And even if understood in a columns-of-opposites way, it can arguably mean the corresponding element in the other column, according to Lloyd Gaston, thus reversing the implications.⁵ In other words, the choice of usage must be governed by the context in which it appears.

b. Independent of Paul's development of this allegory, Isaiah's text is itself an allegory linking elements drawn from the Genesis story of Sarah as well from the stories of other barren women, notably including language adopted from the song of Hannah.⁶ The "barren one" told to "rejoice" links Jerusalem awaiting restoration with Sarah. The

⁴ Chilton, ed., *Isaiah Targum*, 105: "Sing, O Jerusalem who was as a barren woman who did not bear; shout in singing and exult, [you who were] as a woman who did not become pregnant! For the children of desolate Jerusalem will be more than the children of inhabited Rome, says the LORD."

⁵ Gaston, *Paul*, 83-84, 91.

⁶ The theme of the barren wife who eventually has children and use of *akara* are also found in Gen 25:21, for Rebekah; 29:31, for Rachel; Judg 13:2-3, for Manoah's wife, Samson's mother; 1 Sam 2:5, for Hannah (very close to the statement in Isa 54:1!); and see Exod 23:26; Deut 7:14; Ps 113:9. For reference to Zion as mother, see Ps 87:5 (LXX 86:5); Isa 49. Note that in Pesikta de-Rab Kahana 20.3, dated to the 3rd cent in Palestine, Isa 54:1 is connected with Sarah, and Horbury thinks this connection is traditional (Horbury, *Messianism*, 221): before the time of Paul, Isa 54 was understood to concern the "coming divine renewal of the land and the coming divinely-prepared Zion" (220), and this view is attested shortly after Paul in 2 Esdras 10:26-27 on Isa 54 (220).

“desolate one [who] has many children” can be read as a link to Hagar, when she ran away to and then later was cast away to the wilderness, the place of desolation, a characterization that can be extended to Ishmael, who is linked with the desert of Arabia. The “desolate one” could also signify Sarah, if her having many children is understood to refer to a future development, and the contrast made to the one “having the husband” is to Hagar, perhaps referring to Sarah’s sense of alienation when Hagar was with child. Perhaps Sarah is desolate in the sense of feeling abandoned, linking this perspective with that of the Jerusalemites in exilic times. The one “having the husband” can also refer to Sarah, perhaps suggesting the time she has Abraham but is barren nevertheless, or to the time when she has Abraham, but her son is the younger one, and thus not in line to inherit. One can hardly hope to sort out with any certainty the signifiers and the signified in Isaiah 54:1, so there is less hope of doing so in the way Paul employs it here. But the point is that Paul seems to use *συστοιχέω* to link themes and texts in allegorical fashion rather than to indicate elements in columns of opposites.

c. Linking Prophetic texts with Torah portions is a long-standing tradition in Jewish exegetical practice, and one highlighted in liturgical settings. The Jewish reading cycles, both the ancient triennial cycle traced to Israel and the annual cycle traced to Babylon, forming the backbone for the readings until this day, link readings from the prophets, called *Haftarah*, with the reading portion from the Torah. These form a “completion” or “conclusion” to the Torah, from which the homilies are developed, in the service of “hearing the Torah,” which is precisely what Paul says his addressees’ interest in proselyte conversion shows a failure to have properly done.⁷ The role of *Haftarot*, particularly in the annual reading cycle, “was believed to instruct by means of comparison or analogy with the Torah portion.”⁸

In the case of our allegory the linking is more interesting than a general one between Prophetic and Torah texts, or even between Isaiah and Torah texts, which make up the largest component of the *Haftarah* portions, especially Isaiah 40—66,

⁷ The reading/hearing of the Torah portion was “completed” [Aramaic אפטרעה or אשלמה or שלמה (not sure if ש or ש); and Hebrew verb “to conclude” is להפטר, the one who reads from the prophets is called in the Mishna, מפטר בבניא (Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 143).

⁸ Fishbane, *Haftarot*, xxix.

offering comfort to the exiles.⁹ In fact, in the ancient triennial cycle, Isaiah 54:1-9 was read with Genesis 16, and in the annual cycle still in use, Isaiah 54 (54:1—55:5 in Ashkenazic, 54:1-10 in Sephardic) is read with Genesis 6—11. That detail is certainly tantalizing.¹⁰ Could it be that the connection around which Paul's allegorical unit turns was made because it was the way that the text from Genesis was qualified in liturgical and exegetical practice, perhaps not only wherever he was, but where his audience was, and thus formed the basis for the way he proceeds in the allegory? That some kind of reading of the Prophets along with the Torah is as ancient as Paul's time is not in dispute, and interestingly, is attested for the synagogues of Psidian Antioch in Galatia when Paul visited them, according to Acts 13:15, a late first-century document: "After the reading of the law and the prophets" had been completed, the leaders of the synagogue asked Paul if he had any word for them. Such connections are made in several documents, not least the Qumran scrolls. Thus, even if the selections and links were not as fixed as the rabbinic examples we know from later periods, the idea of making such connections was. And where else but in the synagogues would one expect for Paul's addressees in Galatia to hear the Torah and its meaning expounded in midrashic style,¹¹ specifically by way of connections made with Isaiah's text?

⁹ Fishbane, *Haftarot*, xxv, xxviii, who notes this is more characteristic of the probably older Triennial (Palestinian) Cycle than the Annual (Babylonian) one, and Fishbane ponders whether the move away from the Palestinian Cycle's notable emphasis on redemption and ingathering as well as messianic themes "reflects any significant aspect of Jewish Diaspora consciousness in Babylon."

¹⁰ A number of interpreters have noted the Haftarah of Isa 54:1-9 is linked with the Torah reading of Gen 16 in ancient (Mann, *Bible as Read*, 122-24, 562; Perrot, "Reading of the Bible, 141) and modern liturgies, although Callaway, "Mistress and the Maid"; Callaway, *O Barren One*, 111-12; and Perrot, "Reading of the Bible," have reflected on the implications for Galatians more than most. Meyer, *Galatians*, 263, discussed a slightly different point: "The public reading of the venerated divine Scriptures of the law and the prophets, after the manner of the synagogues (Rom. ii.15; Acts xv.21; Luke iv.16), took place in the assemblies for worship of the Christian churches both of Jewish and of Gentile origin...."

¹¹ Defining midrash or midrashic exegesis constitutes an enterprise in itself, and is not the concern of this essay. In short, midrash/midrashic exegesis ("interpretation," "commenting upon," "searching"; from the verb *darash*: "to seek, ask") as used herein may be described as seeking or making meaning through a creative process of interaction between the texts of Scripture and the contemporary concerns of the interpreter or interpretive community, sometimes driven more by one and sometimes by the other. Two aspects tend to be emphasized in describing midrash, although these cannot be so easily separated in

Note too that Paul's connections and the development of the explicit Jerusalem theme precedes the citation of Isa 54:1, instead of following after it, as a sermon might be expected to do. I suppose that this is one reason that the connection I suggest has not been pursued. It is interesting to note, however, that at Qumran, explicit citations followed the making of a point in order to justify the argument, and that according to Michael Fishbane, those citations almost never reflect the plain-sense meaning of the text, but a recontextualization: "they must each be construed relative to the point which precedes them."¹² [need to supply some Qumran examples in the text here...] The Scripture was cited as if its plain-sense supports the innovative point that has preceded its citation. That does seem to be the way Paul proceeded too. Although the Torah story is not an explicit citation, Isa. 54:1 is quoted, and the connection made with the Jerusalem motif of Isa 54:1 precedes it, and similarly, the citation of Gen 21:10 in Gal 4:30 serves as a proof to the point introduced in v. 29.

I propose that the reason that Jerusalem *now* versus *above* arises in Paul's narrative unit is intertextual rather than the result of reflecting upon Jerusalem of his own time. It precedes his citation of Isaiah 54:1, which does not mention Jerusalem by name, but is widely understood to be about Jerusalem. Isaiah speaks to the Jerusalem exiles in their *present* undesirable circumstance to offer comfort from *above*, from God's point of view, from which vantage point Isaiah writes. Things are not as they appear to be to her enemies, the Babylonians, any more than they were as they had appeared to be to Hagar when she had conceived a son to Abraham, and thus looked with disdain upon the barren Sarah (Gen 16:4-6).¹³ For Isaiah, the Jerusalemites may be presently enslaved, but they will be free, and they must believe and behave now on the basis of that hope,

practice, to the degree that the world of Scripture is internalized in the interpretive community's contemporary life. It is an enterprise carried out among those who read Scripture as authoritative, where the driving force generally arises either from the effort to resolve an ostensibly anomaly in a text/story or between texts/stories, or it arises from the concern to resolve an anomaly in contemporary life. In the latter case, the searching of the text or texts may itself give rise to the recognition of an anomaly or anomalies within or between texts.

¹² Fishbane, "Mikra at Qumran," 348 (for his discussion of specific examples, see 348-50).

¹³ Granted, this is Sarah's viewpoint on how Hagar looked at her, and not necessarily what Hagar thought, but so too is it Paul's point of view on the influencers that is being compared, and not necessarily how they understood their response to the addressees' claims!

which is more real than the way things might otherwise appear, just as the barren one is to cry out in rejoicing instead of despair, believing that she will bear according to God's promise. The image of the barren one ironically symbolizes the opposite outcome, a theme well captured in *Pesiqta de Rav Kahanna* 135:15: "in every place where the words 'she did not have (children)' appear, the opposite is implied: 'she did have (children)'"!¹⁴

The Jerusalem exiles must not lose hope, but see things from God's point of view according to the promise made to the fathers. To put Isaiah's message in Paul's words, the Jerusalemites are called to, "out of faithfulness... wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). Paul's language expresses his instructions to the Galatian audience suffering a challenge to their claim to be Abraham's children according to the Spirit (4:29—5:1; cf. 3:29; 4:6-7), and thus tempted to accept the prevailing view that their expectation of being God's children is mistaken, that they are not who they think they are apart from undertaking proselyte conversion (5:2-4). But Paul's message is that they are not to let the norms of the "*present evil age*" dictate their identity or their expectations when different from what they have been promised from "*above*."

The ironic message of this narrative unit is in keeping with the ironic style that characterizes Paul's letter throughout. The allegory develops not only the irony of the story of Abraham and his barren wife giving birth to the promised son while his attempt to provide an heir by Hagar undermined that result instead of advancing it, but also the irony around which Isaiah built his prophetic message of comfort to the Jerusalem exiles in Babylon in the midst of their seemingly hopeless plight. The writers of Genesis, Deutero-Isaiah, and Galatians call their audiences to trust God's point of view, from above, and not to lose hope in the face of present appearances to the contrary.

This approach to Paul's allegorical unit brings the topics of the verses preceding the citation of Isa 54:1 into conversation not only with the perplexing language that

¹⁴ Callaway, *O Barren One*, 30-33 (her translation, and see 122, for precise transl. and comments), suggests that the theme as developed in Genesis had to do with showing how the Lord of Israel opened and closed wombs, not to fertility gods, that descendants were not due to heroic fathers but the gracious will of the Lord, and that the Lord overcame ostensible obstacles to the promises that had been made, even turning things meant by others for evil to good purposes (cf. Gen 50:20).

precedes it, but also the theme that follows, instead of making this citation and the topic of Jerusalem appear to be additions that do little to advance the argument. In v. 28, immediately following the citation of Isa 54:1, Paul likens the addressees to Isaac as “children of promise.” Building upon that analogy to Isaac, Paul returns to the images from the Genesis story in vv. 29ff., but introduces a seemingly new theme. In v. 29 he states, “But just as formerly the one begotten according to the flesh persecuted the one according to the Spirit,” which includes an interesting substitution of Spirit for promise. He follows this comment in v. 30 with the citation of Gen 21:10, wherein Sarah tells Abraham to cast out the slave and her son to ensure that they do not threaten the inheritance of her son Isaac. Paul does not here or anywhere else in the rest of the allegorical unit or even the letter return to the topic of Jerusalem, about which he had seemingly gone to great trouble to introduce. In fact, he returns to the themes from the Genesis story in a manner that makes one wonder why he took the course he did in vv. 24-27, introducing elements that he does not seem to tie back in thereafter. The thesis of the allegorical unit is arguably clearer if read directly from v. 23 to v. 28.¹⁵

Paul seems to be arguing that in addition to the proof of the Spirit in their lives, their present suffering of persecution for claiming to be equal members of the righteous ones apart from proselyte conversion, children of Abraham entitled to inherit the promise, is also a proof of their relationship to Abraham, like Isaac. He too was “persecuted” in the sense that his claim to the inheritance was disputed. Instead of accepting the circumstances as proof that things are as Hagar and her son supposed, the addressees are to resist. Here an association with Isaiah’s use of the story resonates in his call for the Jerusalem exiles to rejoice regardless of the fact that things appear contrary to their expectations. Things are not as they appear to be. Ironically, even that which they suffer is proof that they will inherit according to God’s promise. They must in the meantime remain faithful to the course upon which that promise has set them, to “out of faithfulness to the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness.”

The addressees are neither to become proselytes in order to gain indisputable status as children of Abraham in the present age according to prevailing conventions,

¹⁵ Callaway, “Mistress and the Maid,” 97, already made this point, and it is noted by others. She asks: “Why does Paul need to equate Sarah with the Jerusalem above to prove that she is free? He has proved it already in verse 22 by allusion to Genesis 16 and 21.”

which would be equivalent to accepting entrance on the model applied to foreign slaves joining the family of Abraham, nor to accept that they are merely pagan guests of the Jewish communities who are thus to return to familial, civic, and imperial cult practices expected of such guests, perhaps an allusion to the Babylonian captivity. They are not to return to observing the ritual calendar of the non-Jewish communities from which they came, but to regard themselves as children of the free woman representing the promise that in Abraham's seed all the nations will be blessed. They are representatives bearing witness by their receipt of the Spirit and even by their suffering a challenge to their claim to be children of Abraham. This is, according to Paul, evidence that the promise is beginning to be fulfilled, that the awaited age to come, when all of the nations will join with Israel to worship her God as the One Creator God of all humankind, has dawned.

Implications from this Interpretation:

For Exegesis of this Unit and its Relationship to the Letter:

1. This approach offers a more seamless integration of the narrative into the situational theme of Paul's oppositional rhetoric seeking to dissuade his Christ-believing non-Jewish addressees from undertaking proselyte conversion in order to comply with prevailing Jewish and pagan conventions for identity in the present age. The theological thesis of the letter, that non-Jewish Christ-believers would empty of meaning the purpose of Jesus Christ for them if they undertake proselyte conversion, remains central. The reason for this is that becoming proselytes would collapse the proposition of the good news of Christ that the end of the ages has dawned in the midst of the present age, so that representatives of the nations join with Israel in the worship of the One God of all the nations, but at the same time, that these representatives do not become Israel, because then the propositional truth remains that only Israel worships this God, and the awaited age has not yet dawned.
2. The themes of the immediate transitional verses, especially that Paul is going to teach them from Torah why they should not become proselytes, and afterwards, his call to resist pressure to comply with the influencer's alternatives, remain salient within the details of the narrative unit. Just as Ishmael did not inherit, neither will they by becoming circumcised according to that model for generating sons to Abraham. They thus learn from the Torah, interpreted through Isa 54:1's allegorical demonstration of the advantage of waiting for God to act while in the presently undesirable position of

barrenness, instead of seeking relief by capitulating to the conventions of the oppressors, that they should not seek to become proselytes to escape their present plight of disputed identity as children of Abraham. Success is achieved by following the example of Isaac, which, while leaving one vulnerable to disputed status as the younger child, will ultimately lead to the inheritance as a result of divine activity to fulfill God's promise; hence, Paul concludes his argument with a call to resist, for "out of faithfulness to the Spirit, we wait for the hope of righteous standing." This interpretation also links the allegorical narrative unit to the concluding statements of the preceding narrative unit, where Paul argued that the addressees have the Spirit of God's son in their hearts crying out "Abba, Father" (4:7), bearing witness that they are in Christ, "Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:29).

Thus, although the claims of the addressees are in dispute, they already have what they might think can be gained by proselyte conversion, and would empty of meaning the process by which that was gained if they were to now seek it by another means. They are like children of the barren woman already in the womb in a promised sense, like toddlers who will gain the inheritance, although they have older brothers who would seem to be in that position instead. Things are not as they presently seem; trust God that they will eventually be as he has declared them to be from above.

3. The allegorical nature of the unit stays in focus instead of being a subset of a columns-of-opposites approach. In the same vein, the midrashic nature of the unit remains central.
4. Within the unit, the role of vv. 24-27 is defined in a way that makes better sense of its role in the argument, as well as why Paul chose to proceed with just these texts and themes.
5. Similarly, the theme of persecution that arises and its use as a proof of the addressees' identity is made more understandable and better integrated into the flow of the unit's argumentative structure.
6. What Jerusalem "now" and "above" signify are reinterpreted with significantly different implications for Paul's relationship with Judaism, Jews, Mosaic legislation, Jerusalem, and so-called Jewish Christianity.
7. Other intertextual elements are highlighted in new ways, including the meaning signified by the details developed from the Genesis and Isaiah stories, and connections

between them, and then between them as an intertextual unit and the concerns of Paul and his addressees. For example:

- a) circumcision is linked to slave inclusion in the Genesis model;
- b) slavery is linked to exile in the Babylonian period of Isaiah's concerns;
- c) lack of present appearance of promised outcomes is linked to the limits of human perception in the, what Paul calls "*present evil age*," versus God's continued vantage point from *above*;
- d) the message is to wait for God to fulfill a promise made and not to try to rectify the ostensible situation by way of available human conventions that seem to promise the same, but ironically, that will cause more suffering instead, one the one hand, such as did Abraham by seeking to generate an heir through Hagar, the proselyte option, or on the other hand, such as the Jerusalemites would have if they sought to escape their plight as exiles by choosing to integrate into Babylonian society, the return to pagan idolatry as expected of mere guests alternative.
- e) the location oriented comments such as in Arabia and Jerusalem above can be explored in different ways than in the past (also, possibly the reference to "from Mt. Sinai").

8. My construction of the Galatian situations and the meaning of Paul's message is confirmed within this narrative unit. The addressees seem to be faced with a proposition to become proselytes in order to resolve the social dilemma created by resistance to that based upon Paul's gospel in the first place. The influencers are invested in convincing the addressees of the relevance of Scripture and revelation-based traditions for becoming proselytes in order to gain what they seek to claim, and the influencers may well be proselytes themselves, fitting the model of Ishmael as a type of proselyte, from Paul's point of view. Moreover, the addressees do not seem to be in a position to eject the influencers, but in a subordinate position, and they are instructed to resist. The language of casting out is from a direct citation of Genesis, and while expressing his disposition, does not involve an instruction from Paul to the addressees at the literal level to do the same.

For Constructions of Paul including his Views on and Relationship to non-Christ-believing Judaism, Mosaic Law, and the Jerusalem Church:

1. There is no reason to believe based upon this language that Paul did not value the promised land positively, and in particular Jerusalem, and no reason to think that this language reverses the positive place Jerusalem serves in Paul's other texts. Note also that it is not somewhere else, but Jerusalem, albeit above, that is identified as the mother of freedom.
2. To the degree that Paul expected the addressees to be in a position to hear Torah and to understand the kind of midrashic exegesis in which he engages, especially the linking of a Prophetic text with Torah in order to interpret the Torah rightly, they are likely involved in Jewish communal life, and as a result of Paul's efforts among them, not in spite of Paul, or only before his influence.
3. Paul not only appeals to the authority of Torah and in ways to be expected of Torah-observant Jews, but he expects the addressees, who are his disciples, to look to Torah and its interpretation as authoritative. The significance of the rhetorical approach Paul used in 5:3 is maintained. That is, Paul would have no creditability and can hardly expect to be convincing when telling his addressees that if they become circumcised they will be obliged to protect the whole Torah, if they know him to instead degrade it, while being a Jew from birth. The rhetoric only makes sense of addressees who know a Torah-observant Paul, whose own concerns are about re-identification, not the obligations that follow from that, at least, not as the more significant implication that it should be, which is emphasized in later ritualized dissuasion of potential proselytes in rabbinic tradition. At issue in this allegory, as I believe to be the case throughout the letter, is proselyte conversion, not Torah-observance for those who are Jews or proselytes.
4. As mentioned above, Paul writes to non-Jewish Christ-believers about why they must remain non-Jews, but his logic is based upon the fact that Jewish believers in Christ remain Jews, and governed by the interpretation of Torah, not its dissolution, and to a degree, so too do these non-Jewish addressees, in that it is Torah they need to hear, rightly. Paul is not against circumcision in universal terms, nor advocating foreskinned identity. In reading 5:6, we do well to note the situational aspect of his language, and thus read him to mean that "in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision for non-Jews nor foreskinned for Jews of advantage." In other words, Paul is not opposing Jewish identity and beliefs and behavior, but indicating that Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Christ remain different, and continue to be identified and to behave in some different

ways appropriate to those differences, but their ranking in the present age based upon Christ provides the basis for their relative standing as fully equal before God and each other, if not the rest of the world.

5. Understanding Paul to be engaged in allegorically linking texts instead of oppositional columns moves away from the implications of the opposition of Judaism and Christianity, Jews and Christians, and so on, that is structurally characteristic of the prevailing approach.

For Jewish-Christian Relations Criticism:

1. For those who do want to understand Paul to find something wrong with Jewish identity or values or behavior, this interpretation should at least challenge them that they cannot use this passage in that service without arguing why it should be understood that way.

2. For those who are seeking to understand Paul in ways that do not negatively value Jewishness, this interpretation offers an alternative. There is no longer the need to suppose with Davies that it negates the impact of other positive valuations of Jewishness present in Paul's letters.

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