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PAUL'S HEAVENLY JERUSALEM AND EARTHLY JERUSALEM POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

In Galatians 4:25-26 Paul draws a distinction between two covenants, as well as between "the present Jerusalem" and "Jerusalem above." Scholars have debated whether the earthly Jerusalem refers to conventional Judaism or the apostles' community. Heavenly Jerusalem is usually associated with the New Jerusalem and Jewish apocalypticism.

The present article suggests that Paul's critical reference to the present Jerusalem should be understood in light of what "Jerusalem" represents to the readers of Galatians. In chapters 1-2 Jerusalem is associated several times with the leadership and the center of the Jesus movement, headed by "the Pillars." Members of the community in Jerusalem are the addressees of Paul's collection to "the saints" in Jerusalem. This leadership may be related to the "Judaizers" Paul is debating throughout these epistles. Thus, when Paul introduces the "Jerusalem above" as a superior alternative to "the present Jerusalem," he is expressing resistance to Peter and James.

Although Paul does not explain what the "Jerusalem above" is, the context suggests that it should not be viewed solely as an eschatological New Jerusalem. Paul offers his readers a spiritual and current experience that is neither controlled nor possessed by the apostles in Jerusalem. Its nature should be understood in accordance with other Pauline assertions about spirituality and heaven. There are differences between the "Jerusalem above" and New Jerusalem texts (including the New Jerusalem Scroll from Qumran, 2 Bar and 4 Ezra), and there are likely also differences from the beliefs held by the Jerusalem community at that time.

Thus, Paul's spiritualism was developed in response to the dominance of the apostles' leadership in Jerusalem and as an alternative to some of their doctrines. To convince the Galatians, Paul needed to formulate an alternative perspective on the significance of what "Jerusalem" means to the believer.

Introduction

In his letter to the Galatians (4:22-26) Paul presents an intricate allegory or analogy, drawing a comparison between "the present Jerusalem" and "the Jerusalem above."

> 21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? 22For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. 23One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. 24Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. 25Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother.[1]

This passage comes in the context of Paul's refutation of those apostles often referred to as "Judaizers," who are attempting to convince the Galatians that to embrace Jesus and become part of the so-called early Christian movement, they must be circumcised and observe the laws of the Torah.[2] Paul presents several arguments as to why the Galatians should not observe the Torah, including because they are "justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ".[3]

Previous scholarship has discussed in some detail whether or not "the heavenly Jerusalem" (*hē de anō Ierousalēm*) is an eschatological term. However, scholars have neglected the question of the precise meaning of "the present Jerusalem," in the context of the letter to the Galatians. This article explores the meaning of "the present Jerusalem" (*tē nun Ierousalēm*), in view of Paul's discourse on the apostles in Jerusalem in chapters 1 and 2 of the epistle. It will then reevaluate the meaning of "the Jerusalem above" in light of its counterpart, again in the context of Galatians and Pauline theology in general. The article will suggest that Paul employs wordplay with the name of Jerusalem to offer an alternative theology, which vies with the theology associated with the Jerusalem church.

In this passage, Paul says "this is an allegory" and then proceeds to establish a clear dichotomy between two "columns" or categories, which represent two separate covenants. The first includes the slave woman Hagar and her son, who was born of the flesh, who–according

[1] Translation follows J.L. Martyn, *Galatians*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 431-432.

[2] J.L. Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to the Gentiles: The Background of Galatians" in M.D. Nanos (ed.), *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody MA: Henderickson, 2002), 348-361.

[3] Gal 2:16, NRSV. For the interpretation of this complex phrase, see, e.g., C.S. Keener, *Galatians. New Cambridge Biblical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 100-112.

to Paul–represents Mount Sinai, Arabia and the children of slavery. The second includes a *free* woman (oddly, Sarah's name goes unmentioned), and her son, who was born through the promise. Paul does not actually specify these covenants, opting instead for an alternative set of dichotomies. The first covenant (Hagar, Sinai) is associated with "the present Jerusalem," whereas the second covenant (the free woman) is tied to "the Jerusalem above."

Interestingly, Paul associates the covenant of Sinai, namely the Torah and the Law, with Hagar and her son[4] rather than with Sarah and Isaac, as is typically presented in the Pentateuchal discourse. This appears to be a response by Paul to a contrary viewpoint about Isaac and the Law, or a similar claim that emphasizes the need to observe the laws of the Torah given at Sinai. This opposing view was likely articulated by the Judaizers, who were critical of Paul's mission to the Gentiles.[5] Moreover, the somewhat odd and detached phrase "Jerusalem [...] is our mother" within this context may be a variation on the Judaizers' claim against Paul, that their authority and status are derived from the Mother Church.[6] The entire paragraph may have been constructed as a polemic in response to and influenced by the constraints of the Judaizers' arguments, which may account for its lack of clarity.

Most scholars agree that Hagar, the slave woman, represents "Jewish life under the Law" as a burden.[7] However, Heinsch argues against this consensus, suggesting that Hagar stands for "the covenantal mother of slave-born gentiles," namely, the non-Jewish Christ-believers living outside of the covenant, whose salvation is delayed.[8] According to Heinsch, in Gal 4:8-9, slavery (Paul uses the verb *douleuō* twice here) means ignorance of the divine presence and the God of Israel, and this seems to be the fate of those who follow the covenant of Hagar.[9]

The Present Jerusalem – from Paul's Perspective

[4] Ishmael, traditionally regarded as the patriarch of the Arabs, see F. Millar, "Hagar, Ishmael, Josephus, And the Origins of Islam," *JJS* 44.1 (1993): 23-45.

[5] C.K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the argument of Galatians," *Essays on Paul* (London: SPCK, 1982), 154-168; R.N. Logenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990; reprinted Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 207-208, 210, 218-219. Cf. the discussion of Barratt's view in R. Heinsch, *The Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism and Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2022), 125-130.

[6] A.T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 17, 22; Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to the Gentiles," 357. Note that Jerusalem is visualized as a mother in Isa 65:11.

[7] E.g., Martyn *Galatians*, 447-456; D.J. Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 299–312.

[8] Heinsch, *Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism.*

[9] Heinsch, *Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism*,182-187.

Scholars have presented two distinct interpretations for "the present Jerusalem." One interpretation posits that the term refers to "the adherents of legalistic Judaism which has its center in Jerusalem",[10] cohering with its association with Mt. Sinai. Others maintain that it refers to the so-called Jerusalem church, and identify it with those preaching to the law-observant mission to Gentiles in Galatia, which is of course the most significant point of contention in Galatians.[11]

These two views actually allude to the major debate as to whether Galatians is about a conflict between Judaism and (to use an anachronism) Christianity, or an internal-church struggle between two Jewish-Christian missions to Gentiles: one requiring its converts to be circumcised and to observe the Mosaic law, the other imposing no such requirements argues that the present Jerusalem actually refers to the Temple and relates to Hagar, since gentiles were barred from access to the Temple.[12] However, unlike Jerusalem, the Temple is not mentioned in Galatians at all and the allusions to it that Heinsch suggests seem forced.[13]

In order to explore the meaning of "the present Jerusalem" here, we must examine Paul's earlier mentions of Jerusalem in Galatians, which are limited to chapters 1-2. We need to elucidate what "Jerusalem" actually means for the readers of Galatians. Does it represent the center of the early-Christian movement? To what extent is Paul critical of what Jerusalem stands for? Are there any indications that Paul wishes to challenge "Jerusalem?"

At the beginning of the letter, Paul outlines his religious biography and describes his interactions and encounters with the movement's leadership, the first apostles. He begins by noting that these apostles were situated in Jerusalem, implying that meeting them was not his first priority:

> But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased [16]to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, [17]nor did I go up (*anēlthon*) to

[10] E. d-W. Burton, *Galatians*, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 262. See also H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 246; P. Oakes, *Galatians* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 156-157; D.A. DeSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 399; cf. B. Byrne, "Jerusalem Above and Below: A Critique of J.L. Martyn's Interpretation of the Hagar–Sarah Allegory in Gal 4.21–5.1," *NTS* 60 (2014): 215-31.

[11] Martyn, Galatians, 439; N.C. De Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary,* Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 2011), 300-301.

[12] For a summary and bibliographical survey, see Heinsch, *Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism*, 17-23.

[13] Heinsch, *Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism*, 206-213.

> *Jerusalem* to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus (Gal 1:15-17).[14]

These leaders are defined by the fact that they were apostles "before me" who lived in Jerusalem. Both of these attributes denote their hierarchy or leadership in relation to Paul's early career as an apostle. However, several years later, Paul adds, he went to meet Peter and James in Jerusalem:

> Then after three years, I did go up (*anēlthon*) to *Jerusalem* to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; [19]but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother (Gal 1: 18-19).

In this passage, Paul notes the apostles' geographical location, although this would likely be well-known to his readers. The fact that he repeats it here underscores its significance for him or for his readers. He thus stresses the association of Peter and James with Jerusalem.

The third occurrence of Jerusalem in Gal 1-2 is more closely associated with the leadership of the Christ movement in Jerusalem. As Paul presents it, the city of Jerusalem seems to have become synonymous with the leading apostles:

> Then after fourteen years, I went up again to *Jerusalem* with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. [2]I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain (Gal 2:1-2).

When Paul writes that he "went up again to Jerusalem," he does not provide explicit details regarding the exact location in Jerusalem or with whom he met. Paul identifies "them" with the city of Jerusalem, as if Peter and James and the "acknowledged leaders" rule the entire city of Jerusalem or represent it. This is the sole instance in which Paul appears to designate the Christian leadership as "Jerusalem." It might be inferred that Paul attributes to them the authority of the Jewish national leadership, comparable to that of the high priests. Paul's return to Jerusalem is prompted by a revelation, making this visit a spiritual journey.

Up to this point, the manner in which "Jerusalem" is introduced conveys respect or at the very least acknowledgment of their authority.

A similar approach is observed in a later period, in Paul's letter to the Romans. In Romans Paul alludes to the Christian community as living in Jerusalem, calling them "the saints":

> I am going (*poreuomai*) to *Jerusalem* in a ministry to *the saints*; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among *the saints at*

[14] Translations follow the NRSV, unless noted otherwise.

> *Jerusalem*; [...] I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to *Jerusalem* may be acceptable to *the saints* (Rom 15:25, 31).

Intriguingly, here Paul repeats the linkage between Jerusalem and the saints three times! While the designation "the saints" is not exclusive to the Jerusalem community,[15] the fact that Paul is collecting money for these particular saints in Jerusalem is telling. In Romans, too, Jerusalem is depicted as both a geographical and religious center.

In earlier correspondence addressed to the Corinthians, Paul mentions the collection of money for "the saints": "Now it is not necessary for me to write to you about the ministry to the *saints* [...] for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the *saints* but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God".[16]

In contrast to Paul's acceptance of the authority of the apostles in Jerusalem, when he addresses the question of non-Jewish members in the Jesus movement in Gal 2, his tone becomes more critical. Paul suddenly introduces the notion of "false brothers" (or false believers), "secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us" (Gal 2: 3). He adopts a polemical tone against them, and subsequently again refers to the apostles' leadership:

> [6]And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. [7]On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised [8](for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), [9]and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. [10]They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do (Gal 2:6-9).

Paul famously declares that the apostles recognized his mission to "the uncircumcised," and draws a parallel between his role and Peter's authority to preach the gospel to the circumcised.

[15] P. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 128-158.

[16] 2 Cor 9: 1, 12. On Paul's commitment to the Jerusalem community see R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 927, 936-937.

Paul was thus acknowledged by the so-called Pillars. "Remembering the poor," namely, the collection for the saints of Jerusalem, was part of this agreement.[17]

Between the lines, however, Paul harbors criticism of these Pillars. They "were *supposed* to be acknowledged leaders (*tōn dokountōn einai ti*)." However, Paul does not hold them in particularly high regard (perhaps as spiritual leaders). In fact, he argues that his spiritual background or inspiration by Christ are equivalent to that of Peter, the first head of the apostles' community: "he who worked through Peter [...] also worked through me." James Dunn addressed these conflicting tendencies and concluded that Paul had a complex relationship with the leading apostles, in the context of which he acknowledges their authority but nevertheless maintains his independence as an apostle.[18]

One may suspect that this criticism can be traced back to Paul's confrontation with the so-called "Judaizers," who call upon Gentile converts to embrace Jewish customs and religious practices. Paul encountered a severe challenge to his apostolic work in Galatia engineered by Judaizers bent on forcing his Gentile converts to adopt Jewish customs and religious practices. According to Elmer, Paul's opponents claimed they had the authority of the Jerusalem church behind them: "Paul's entire treatment of these issues makes it clear that the source of his problems was Jerusalem and its leadership, in particular James and his pro-circumcision party [...] the crisis in Galatia must be viewed as the culmination of the conflict that led to the Jerusalem Council."[19]

Some think that the false brothers in Gal 2:4 were not a fringe minority within the Jerusalem church, as Paul and Luke attempt to portray them, but rather part of the mainstream with the full backing and authority of James, Peter and John.[20] This view, however, is far from

[17] On the collection see D.J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). On the designation "the poor" see D. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 31-35.

[18] J.D.G. Dunn, "The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1 and 2," *NTS* 28 (1982): 461–478. Idem, *Jesus Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 108-126.

[19] I.J. Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2009), 215, 218.

[20] Martyn, *Galatians*, 18, 218; Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers*, 94, 160-161.

consensual. Some view the false brothers as a maverick minority within the Jerusalem church.[21] Others refuse to see a direct link between the Judaizers and the Jerusalem church.[22]

The view of the false brothers or Judaizers as an integral part of the Jerusalem church does not align with Luke's account on the apostolic decree in Acts 15 either, where James decided to admit Gentiles into the Christian faith under certain conditions. Scholars have made efforts to reconcile the discrepancies between Gal 2 and Acts 15.[23]

When Paul addresses the so-called incident in Antioch, his tone toward the apostolic leadership in Jerusalem and especially toward Peter becomes polemical. Paul highlights the tension with "certain people" who "came from James," the Brother of Jesus, whose very presence caused Peter and Barnabas to distance themselves from the mixed table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles, creating a division between Jews and non-Jews who share the belief in Jesus (Gal 2:11-14). Curiously, here Paul does *not* mention that these people came to Antioch from Jerusalem! Paul claims that he admonished Cephas "before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how *can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews* (*Ioudaizein*)?'" (Gal 2:14). Throughout the rest of the letter, Paul argues against the demand for Gentiles to undergo circumcision and observe the Law in order to obtain salvation through Christ. Some scholars attribute this attitude of the so-called Judaizers to these "certain people" which Paul says "came from James." They most likely came from Jerusalem. While Paul does not say whether they were actually sent by or officially represented James, Paul's mention of James is intended to give the readers the impression that James was concerned about Peter's eating with gentiles.[24]

The people who came from James insisted that Jews not eat with Gentiles, probably due to concerns about ritual purity.[25] Or perhaps, they resisted the very idea of Jews and Gentiles sharing communion as equal members of the community.[26] Paul saw this as an attempt to compel the Gentiles to adopt a more rigorous Jewish lifestyle in order to preserve communal

[21] Betz, *Galatians*, 5-7, 92, 100-101; Logenecker, *Galatians*, xcv; P.F. Esler, *Galatian* (London: Routledge, 1998), 74, 138.

[22] D. Lührmann, *Galatians: A Continental Commentary*, tr. O. C. Dean (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 126; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 193-194.

[23] See the survey in Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers,* 96-104. Elmer arrives at the radical conclusion that Acts 15 does not reflect James's viewpoint, *ibid*., 103.

[24] Keener, *Galatians*, 86. Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers*, argued that the incident in Antioch is the key to understanding the identity of the Judaizers in Galatia.

[25] Dunn, *Jesus Paul and the Law*, 154-156.

[26] M.D. Nanos, "What was at Stake in Peter's 'Eating with Gentiles' in Antioch," in M.D. Nanos (ed.), *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody MA: Henderickson, 2002), 282-318.

unity. If this was indeed the case, the alienation of Jews from Gentiles only *indirectly* pressured Gentiles to adopt a more Jewish lifestyle.[27] Nonetheless, when Paul confronts Peter directly (Gal 2:14), he boldly accuses Peter of forcing the Gentiles to Judaize. According to Paul's choice of words, Peter's alleged intention mirrored that of the false brothers who wanted Titus to be circumcised in Gal 2:3, as well as the Judaizers in general.

Despite Paul's accusation, Peter may have allowed non-Jewish believers in Jesus to join the community while refraining from eating with them. Paul's accusation of Peter appears to be somewhat exaggerated.[28] Perhaps Paul thought that the people sent by James, as well as Peter himself, wanted to pressure the Gentile believers to undergo circumcision so that they could share meals with the apostles and become full-fledged members of the community. In any event, Paul presents Peter's actions as a model for the "Judaizers."

Is it possible that Paul deliberately exaggerates when he blames Peter for encouraging Gentile believers in Christ to fully convert to Judaism? Perhaps this is a rhetorical manipulation on Paul's part when he mentions the incident in Antioch in order to associate Peter and James with a party that rejects the legitimacy of Gentile Christianity. It seems that here Paul is attempting to *disassociate* himself from the apostles in Jerusalem, the Pillars. In fact, earlier in Gal. 2, Paul challenges Peter's authority when he equates his own spiritual status with Peter's ("he who worked through Peter [...] also worked through me"). He also distinguishes between Peter (and James and John) as the apostle to "the circumcised," whereas Paul (and Barnabas) would "go to the Gentiles." This is quite the opposite of Luke's narrative on Peter's mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11), as well as Peter's call to accept Gentiles in the Apostolic decree.[29]

The Researcher suggests that Paul deliberately widened the gap between his apostleship and that of Peter and James in order to encourage the Galatians to associate the Judaizers with the Jerusalem leadership. Paul wants to call attention to his gospel as an alternative to the official or central one, thus demonstrating his independence as an apostle.

We have observed two aspects of Paul's approach to earthly Jerusalem and its Christian leaders in Gal 1-2: On the one hand, he needs the Pillars' approval, hence, he shows respect for

[27] Betz, *Galatians*, 112; P. Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," *JTS* 42.2 (1991): 532–564, here 560; C.C. Hill, *Hellenist and Hebrews: Reappraising Division Within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 141-142. Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers* 107-116 rejects this view.

[28] According to Willitts, Paul's statement is "rhetorical, hyperbolic, and sarcastic". See H. Willitts, "One Torah for Another. The Halakhic Conversion of Jewish Believers: Paul's Response to Peter's Halakhic Equivocation in Galatians 2:11–21," in *The Crucified Apostle: Essays on Peter and Paul*, eds. T.A. Wilson and P.R. House (Tübingen: Mohr, 2017), 21-45.

[29] Acts 15: 7-11. For dating Galatians to the early 50s, relating Gal 1-10 to the Apostolic meeting in Acts 15, see Keener, *Galatians*, 4-7.

their status and authority (and also argues that they respected him), evidenced by his visits to Jerusalem, meetings with the Pillars and acceptance of their recognition of his apostleship. On the other hand, Paul hints: (1) that his role and merits as an apostle are equal to those of Peter; (2) that the false brothers who oppose the mission to the Gentiles hold sway over the leaders in Jerusalem; and (3) that Peter was pressured to follow this approach, although he only declined to dine with Christian believers. In a sense, Paul attempts to have it both ways: he wants to show respect for the Jerusalem leadership while at the same time challenging it with regard to Gentile Christians.

All this explains Paul's critical and even somewhat derogatory use of the term "the present Jerusalem." It is suggested that when Paul is referring to "the present Jerusalem" as the enslaved woman or the first covenant, he is acknowledging the centrality of the concept of Jerusalem, while also striving to offer an alternative one. In doing so, he is laying the foundation for his own mission or apostleship.

If one follows Heinsch's interpretation of Hagar's role in Gal 4:22-26,[30] "the present Jerusalem" symbolizes the Galatians being subjected ("enslaved," like Hagar's children) to the Law, as demanded by the Jerusalem apostles or the false brothers/Judaizers. (The nature of this "enslavement," whether it means living under the Law's burden or being mistreated by the Jewish believers, requires a separate discussion). In contrast, the heavenly Jerusalem is associated with the free woman. In Paul's covenant of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Galatians are free from being enslaved to the Law. This heavenly Jerusalem (rather than Hagar) "is *our* mother," hence she is the mother of both Paul and the Galatians. Here Jews and gentiles alike who believe in Christ share equal status in the covenant.

Jerusalem Above – A Resistance to the Present Jerusalem

What does Paul mean by "Jerusalem above"? How does this term relate to "the present Jerusalem" and the discourse about Jerusalem in chapters 1-2? The researcher would like to address three questions: (1) Does the term have an eschatological meaning? (2) Does it rely on traditions of the New Jerusalem? and (3) Why does Paul draw on the image of Jerusalem when he coins a spiritual or mystical term for spirituality or salvation?

An eschatological interpretation of "the Jerusalem above" is most common,[31] drawing on the idea of the New Jerusalem in Jewish Pseudepigrapha and the Book of Revelation. Scholars have identified "the Jerusalem above" with the eschatological community of believers in

[30] Heinsch, *Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism*.

[31] E.g., Moo, *Galatians*, ad loc.; P. Söllner, *Jerusalem, die hochgebaute Stadt: Eschatologisches und himmlisches Jerusalem im Frühjudentum und im frühen Christentum* (TANZ 25), Tübingen: Francke, 1998), 169, stressing the theme of Jerusalem's motherhood.

Christ,[32] or "an ideal form of Jerusalem in the purpose of God." Others have described it as "the community of the new covenant".[33]

One complex aspect of Paul's term is that he contrasts time (*nun*) with place (*anō*). The contrast *implies* that "the Jerusalem above" is not a present reality (and of course, that "the present Jerusalem" is not in heaven), but rather that it exists in the future.[34] The fact that Paul mixes temporal and spatial categories has led some scholars to conclude that "the Jerusalem above is already making its presence felt on earth over against the present Jerusalem".[35] This ambiguity as to whether the heavenly Jerusalem relates to the present or the future is not characteristic of visions of the New Jerusalem in the Pseudepigrapha and Revelation.

Two examples of the use of the New Jerusalem concept in ancient Judaism can be found in the apocalypses of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra (compare also prophetic vision of the creation of Jerusalem once again in the future in Isa 65:18). The hidden city is situated within the context of Messianic expectations and is closely associated with the renewal of the world.[36] Zion's structure will mirror that of the Temple (2 Bar 59:4) and Jerusalem will be saved (2 Bar 63:9). In these eschatological visions, the New Jerusalem and the heavenly Temple are depicted as inseparable elements,[37] signifying the authors' intent to show that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple would not be final. The real Jerusalem and Temple still exist in a heavenly realm and will be revealed in the New Creation. The New Jerusalem is limited to the eschatological age (see also 1 Enoch 90:29). This is not a spiritual concept, and the readers do not share it in the present, although they do draw hope in knowing that it is waiting "up there."

In contrast, Paul regards the heavenly Jerusalem as a present reality. He has no interest in the descent to earth of "the Jerusalem above." The future earthly transformation of the New Jerusalem does not seem to capture his imagination.[38] Instead, it appears likely that Paul is alluding to a spiritual ascendance of the believers to the heavenly Jerusalem as a "place" of transcendent experience.

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[32] Burton, *Galatians*, 363.

[33] F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 221; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 253, 254; De Boer, *Galatians*, 301.

[34] J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998), 146-147.

[35] de Boer, *Galatians*, 302. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 252.

[36] 4 Ezra 7:26; 10:42-44, 53-55; 13:55-56.

[37] P. Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21-22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2001), 137-138, 155-157.

[38] Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 21.

Indeed, when we compare Gal 4:26 to the apocalyptic frameworks, we should bear in mind that Paul's Christology modifies Jewish apocalyptic thought. Due to the coming of Christ, the present and future overlap, and earth and heaven intersect.[39] To quote Andrew Lincoln: "Paul modifies the concept he has taken over from Jewish apocalyptic tradition by employing it to describe the church's situation within the history of salvation as it now enjoys the anticipation of the eschaton by virtue of what Christ has accomplished."[40]

Several commentators regard "the heavenly Jerusalem" as non-eschatological. Davies noted that it is a symbol of the definitive or ultimate community, or a heavenly city which Christians on earth share, namely, that the Church here and now is part of the heavenly Jerusalem.[41] If the Jerusalem above is "our mother," it does not align with material and national connotations. It is not an actual city. Lincoln interpreted it in terms of realized eschatology. It stands for the new order of salvation bound up with the new age that is accessible now through faith. Although depicted in spatial terms, this reality transcends time and space as the origin of the new people of God that consists of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. The church in the present time depends on the heavenly realm for its existence.[42]

Compelling lexical evidence that Paul is not speaking of the future is his double use of the present tense: "the heavenly Jerusalem *is* (*estin*) free, she *is* (*estin*) our mother".[43] This is a stronger argument than the *implied* eschatology created by the contrast to the present Jerusalem. So why does Paul use the celestial model? One possibility is that Paul conceives of his Church as heavenly because he holds that Christ, the church's Lord, is in heaven. Paul thinks of the church as having its origin and center of existence in the heavenly realm.[44]

Paul's use of other heavenly dimensions in his theology provides a new avenue for understanding "the Jerusalem above" in a sense that differs from both the New Jerusalem and the eschatological models. In 2 Cor 5: 1-10, Paul introduces the heavenly house, where he contrasts an earthly tent with a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a heavenly dwelling. It is possible that here Paul anticipates the believer's share in heavenly glory (heavenly glory is mentioned in 2 Cor 4: 17) and is assured of his future possession of the heavenly body.

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[39] S.A. Sharkey, *The Background of the Imagery of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the New Testament*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1986, 224.

[40] Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 22.

[41] W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 197; idem, "Jérusalem et la terre dans la tradition chretienne," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* 55.4 (1975): 491-533, here 529.

[42] Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 225.

[43] Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 22.

[44] Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 25.

In Philippians 3:20-21 Paul claims:

> *Our citizenship is in heaven*, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Note that here too the heavenly dimension pertains to the present. Paul refers to citizenship in the kingdom of God as a political entity, and perhaps offered it as an alternative in the present time to Roman citizenship.[45] One wonders about the distinction between heavenly citizenship and the heavenly Jerusalem as a mother.

In Deutero-Pauline epistles, Ephesians 2:6 states that God "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

These three sources show that Paul and the author of Ephesians share an interest in the heavenly realm with no connection to eschatology. Paul's spirituality and soteriology relate to celestial existence. But unlike these three latter texts, it is only in Gal 4:26 that the heavenly dimension is linked to Jerusalem.

One further New Testament text that explicitly refers to the heavenly Jerusalem is Hebrews 12:22-24:

> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Heavenly Jerusalem, like Mt. Zion, is referred to here as an alternative to Mt. Sinai (much like Hagar's association with Mt. Sinai which Paul relates to the "Present Jerusalem," and once again a covenant is involved!), where the believers experience God's presence.[46] Here too the heavenly Jerusalem is portrayed as present and accessible to the believers. It will not be revealed in the future as in Revelation, 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, but is already available to the addressees. Its transcendental features are described in detail, including the presence of angels and the spirits of the righteous and of course, Jesus. Did Paul have these transcendental features in mind when he referred to the heavenly Jerusalem? Does Hebrews provide an interpretation of Paul's concept as found in Galatians? In any event, more so than Paul, Hebrews stresses the geographical aspects of this concept, using Mount Zion and "the city" as synonyms for the heavenly Jerusalem.

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[45] M.F. Bird, *Philippians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 59-60, 159-165.

[46] R.H. Gause, *Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 318-319.

Why Jerusalem?

Why does Paul choose to employ Jerusalem imagery for this spiritual domain, and why does he depart from the eschatological concept of New Jerusalem? Does he consciously modify the latter to show that what other Jews wish for in the far future is now within reach for the Galatians? Could Paul's "Jerusalem above" serve not only as an alternative to the Judaizers' (or Peter and James's) "present Jerusalem," but also to other apocalyptic circles, some of whom might be followers of Christ? These questions require further consideration. Let us explore the symbolism of Jerusalem which Paul may had employed.

If we accept that Paul uses the symbolism of Jerusalem in a realized eschatological sense, we may ask why the heavenly dimension is linked to Jerusalem? What role does the image of the city play in Paul's conceptualization of the ideal community or belief system? In the Hebrew Bible, Jerusalem possesses several characteristics that extend beyond its geography, and hold religious or metaphorical significance, which Paul may have had in mind: Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible also designates a community.[47] This aligns with the identification of "Jerusalem above" with the church.[48] Jerusalem has several religious qualities which may be associated with the heavenly One. Jerusalem is the place where God is worshipped (2 Sam 15:8; 2 Kings 18:22). Jerusalem is holy because God dwells there.[49] Jerusalem bears a sense of divine election (1 Kings 11:32, 36; 2 Kings 21:7), reflecting God's grace towards the believers. Jerusalem is the source of God's word (Isa 2:3; Micha 4:2). And it is the inheritance (*nir*) of David, God's messiah (1 Kings 11:36), which may resonate with Jesus. Paul may have incorporated some, if not all of these aspects in his conceptualization.

The conceptualization of closeness to God after the model of Jerusalem certainly corresponds with the theology of the Deuteronomist, the biblical prophets and several Psalms. Yet, we should bear in mind that in Paul's allegory, "the Jerusalem above" relates to a *covenant*. His point is perhaps that this covenant is executed in heaven, with Christ and God, and he wishes to imbue it with the essence of the same biblical qualities associated with Jerusalem as a place, actually, a concept of holiness.

In the same vein, we should also remember that Paul employs the concept of Zion as a synonym for Jerusalem, in Rom 11:26, this time as a symbol of deliverance.

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[47] 2 Kings 19:21; Isa 36:7; Isa 40:2; Isa 51:17; Jer 6:8; Ezek 13:16; Ezek 16:2; Lem 1:8; Sharkey, *Imagery of the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 38-44. Cf. M. Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah: A Metaphor for Zion Theology* (StBibLit 155; New York: Peter Lang, 2013).

[48] Sharkey *Imagery of the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 225.

[49] Joel 4:17; Zech 1:16; Zech 8:3; Ps 135:21.

Conclusions: Spirituality in the Service of Politics

The purpose of this article was to show that "the present Jerusalem," evokes Paul's tension with the apostles which he designated earlier several times as "Jerusalem." It relates to Paul's implied and explicit criticism of Peter. As associated with Hagar, the enslaved woman, "the present Jerusalem" is perhaps associated with the lower status of gentile believers in comparison to Jewish ones, as attested to in Peter's behavior in Antioch and the demands of the false brothers and Judaizers, whom Paul associates with the leadership in Jerusalem.

"The "heavenly Jerusalem" is Paul's antithesis to "the present Jerusalem," but since it is available in the present, there is no evidence that it carries an eschatological meaning. It differs from the New Jerusalem which awaits in heaven until the End of Days, as in 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra and Revelation. Quite similar Pauline expressions of a non-eschatological heavenly spiritual experience that appear in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and later in Ephesians and Hebrews, attest to similar concepts.

Paul introduces "the Jerusalem above" as an alternative to the Jerusalem church led by Peter and James and (presumably) the Judaizers. He associates his concept of spirituality, which may include a union with Christ in heaven, with Jerusalem to demonstrate that his gospel is distinct and superior to the gospel of those who come from Jerusalem or claim to represent the apostles in Jerusalem. The allegory of the two covenants, Hagar and the free woman, and the two Jerusalems, is an act of *resistance* to the Jerusalem leadership. By naming his covenant or gospel after Jerusalem, Paul can argue that it parallels the official covenant and is, in fact, better. Through the designation "Jerusalem" Paul is relating to the origin of the Jesus movement, perhaps with some acknowledgment of the Pillars, while simultaneously challenging them.

The spiritual aspects of Paul's "Jerusalem above" further his discourse in the beginning of Galatians: Here he mentions that the Pillars accepted his gospel and mission to the Gentiles, while at the same time positioning himself as equal to Peter, and following the incident in Antioch, as more honest than Peter (and the people who came from James). The "Jerusalem above" serves as Paul's way of persuading the Galatians to follow him, rather than those who speak in the name of "the present Jerusalem."

When Paul mentions in Gal 4:22-26 "Hagar the enslaved women" and "the Jerusalem" above which is free and is "our mother," he weaves together four major themes which he discusses throughout Galatians: 1. Jerusalem–not as a geographic place but as the designation for the center and leadership of the Jesus movement. 2. In the context of the believers' symbolic parents–in addition to Hagar and "the free women,"–Abraham is mentioned several times when Paul discusses the relationship between Law vs. faith/promise (Gal 3:6-9, 14, 16, 18, 29). 3.

Slaves and slavery, which occupy Paul in both their negative and positive senses (Gal 2:4, 3:38; 4:1, 3, 7-9, 30-31; 5:1). 4. Freedom from slavery–Christ set the believers free.[50]

These themes attest to the central role of the Hagar-Jerusalem allegory as well as to the concept of "the Jerusalem above" being the "free mother" in Galatians, as the passage under discussion captures several of Paul's arguments in the letter. The relationship between these issues in the epistle to the Galatians awaits further exploration.

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[50] Gal 1:4; 2:4; 3:13; 4:5, 30; 5:1; R.G. Thompson, *Paul's Declaration of Freedom from a Freed Slave's Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 149-187.

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