

Galatians 4:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Analysis

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Paul extends the allegory geographically. "For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia" (το γὰρ Ἀγαρ Σινᾶ ὅρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ)—Hagar corresponds to Mount Sinai, located in Arabia (where Ishmael's descendants dwelt). Some manuscripts omit "Hagar," reading "for Sinai is a mountain in Arabia." Either way, Paul links Hagar/Ishmael/Sinai/law/Arabia.

"And answereth to Jerusalem which now is" (συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ)—it corresponds to the present Jerusalem. Systoicheō (συστοιχέω) means to stand in the same row or rank, to correspond. Present earthly Jerusalem, center of Judaism and law-observance, corresponds to Hagar and bondage. "And is in bondage with her children" (δουλεύει δὲ μετὰ τῶν τεκνῶν αὐτῆς)—she is enslaved along with her children. Those trusting in law, centered on earthly Jerusalem and physical descent, live in slavery. This was explosive: Paul declared that Judaism-as-practiced (law-righteousness) enslaved rather than freed.

Historical Context

Jerusalem was Judaism's holy city, site of the temple, center of covenant worship. To claim Jerusalem represented bondage, not freedom, inverted Jewish self-understanding. Paul's point: physical Jerusalem under the old covenant, centered

on law-keeping and ritual, could not produce free sons of God. Only the new covenant, centered on Christ and received by faith, brings freedom. This anticipates Hebrews's argument (Hebrews 12:18-24) contrasting Mount Sinai with Mount Zion, earthly Jerusalem with heavenly Jerusalem.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does earthly religious institution—impressive, traditional, claiming divine authority—sometimes represent bondage rather than freedom?
2. What's the difference between being 'children' of religious systems versus free sons of God through faith in Christ?
3. Where do you look for spiritual security—external religious structures or internal reality of relationship with God through Christ?

Interlinear Text

τῶν γὰρ Ἀγὰρ Σινᾶ ὅρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῶν Ἀραβίᾳ·
which For this Agar Sinai mount is in which Arabia
G3588 G1063 G28 G4614 G3735 G2076 G1722 G3588 G688

συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῶν νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ δουλεύει δὲ μετὰ^{τόπου}
answereth and which now is to Jerusalem is in bondage and with
G4960 G1161 G3588 G3568 G2419 G1398 G1161 G3326

τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς
which children G846
G3588 G5043

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:18 (Parallel theme): For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Acts 1:11 (Parallel theme): Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Psalms 68:17 (Sin): The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

Psalms 68:8 (Sin): The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Matthew 23:37 (References Jerusalem): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Deuteronomy 33:2 (Sin): And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

Luke 13:34 (References Jerusalem): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killst the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Luke 19:44 (Parallel theme): And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Galatians 1:17 (References Jerusalem): Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Judges 5:5 (Sin): The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

