

Galatians 4:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Analysis

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. The glorious contrast! "But Jerusalem which is above" (hē de anō Ierousalēm, ἡ δὲ ἐνωπούσαλήμ)—the Jerusalem above, heavenly Jerusalem. This corresponds to Sarah, the free woman. "Is free" (eleuthera estin, ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν)—she is characterized by freedom, not slavery. This heavenly Jerusalem is the true covenant community, the church composed of all who believe, both Jew and Gentile (Hebrews 12:22-24, Revelation 21:2).

"Which is the mother of us all" (hētis estin mētēr hēmōn, ἡτις ἐστίν μήτηρ ἡμῶν)—she is our mother. Believers' spiritual ancestry traces not to earthly Jerusalem and law-covenant but to heavenly Jerusalem and promise-covenant. Sarah, the free woman bearing Isaac through promise, represents this. Christians are free-born children of promise, not slave-born children of flesh. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), our mother-city the new Jerusalem. This redefined identity: not ethnic descent or geographical/institutional connection but faith-union with Christ.

Historical Context

Jewish expectation included hope for a renewed, glorified Jerusalem when Messiah came (Isaiah 2:2-4, 60:1-22). Paul radically reinterprets: the true Jerusalem isn't future earthly restoration but present spiritual reality—the church, the community of faith. Believers already participate in heavenly Jerusalem through Christ (Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 3:1-3). This "already but not yet" eschatology appears

throughout Paul: the new age has dawned through Christ's resurrection; final consummation awaits His return. Meanwhile, Christians live as citizens of heaven.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Do you see yourself primarily as a citizen of earthly kingdoms and member of earthly institutions, or as a citizen of heaven?
2. How does identifying with 'Jerusalem above' as your mother-city affect your values, priorities, and allegiances in this world?
3. What practical difference does it make daily that you're a free-born child of promise rather than a slave-born child of law?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	δὲ	ἄνω	Ἰερουσαλὴμ	ἐλευθέρα	ἐστὶν	ἥτις
G3588	But	which is above	Jerusalem	free	is	which
G1161		G507	G2419	G1658	G2076	G3748
ἐστὶν	μήτηρ	πάντων	ἥμῶν·			
is	the mother	all	of us			
G2076	G3384	G3956	G2257			

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:22 (References Jerusalem): But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Philippians 3:20 (Parallel theme): For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

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

Revelation 3:12 (References Jerusalem): Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Isaiah 66:10 (References Jerusalem): Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

Isaiah 65:18 (References Jerusalem): But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

Isaiah 50:1 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Romans 6:18 (Parallel theme): Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Romans 6:14 (Parallel theme): For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

John 8:36 (Parallel theme): If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.