

Galatians 4:27

- A. **GAL 4:27** is a difficult text to properly interpret, especially if one does not heed basic rules of Bible study like word definitions, comparative analysis, context, etc.
1. What is the relevance of this verse relative to the main theme of Galatians (justification)?
 2. Who is “the desolate?”
 3. Who is “she which hath an husband?”
- B. Many commentators consider this verse to be descriptive of the greater size of the earthly church under the New Testament of Jesus Christ in contrast to the earthly church under the covenant/testament from Sinai mediated by Moses.
1. It is a fact that the gospel has had broader effect in the world than did Moses’ Law, since it went into all nations and brought Gentiles under the banner of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God under Jesus Christ would have superior exponential growth. **MAR 4:30-32.**
 2. But the theme of Galatians is not gospel expansionism, it is justification by Christ Whose obedience alone justified His elect by His faith. **ROM 5:19; GAL 2:16.**
 3. An assumption of many systems is that “the church” is the totality of Christians on earth but in Scripture “church” only refers to two things: a local church built by gospel conversion, and “...the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven...” (**HEB 12:23**) which is the entire redeemed elect family. Any time more than one local church is considered, it is *churches*. **GAL 1:2, 22.**
 4. Another assumption is that gospel conversion is exactly equal to eternal justification so that as the church on earth grows numerically, so does the heavenly church. But:
 - a. The size of the heavenly church is not determined by sinners but by God Who gave a people to Christ to save them all. **JOH 6:37-39; 17:2.**
 - b. The church kingdom on earth may gather in bad fish. **MAT 13:47-50.**
 - c. Virtually all sides concede that the heavenly church will have in it some unconverted folks (like perished infants).
 5. It may be noted that **GAL 4:27** is from **ISA 54:1** which immediately follows the most important prophecy in the O.T. of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ Whose knowledge would *justify many*. **ISA 53:11.**
- C. The contrast set forth in Galatians is rather between the natural and the spiritual, between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, between the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem, between justification by works and justification by grace, between those who had a temporary covenant relationship to God through outward circumcision/Moses/Law that only provided a forfeitable temporal inheritance and those who have a permanent covenant relationship to God by election in Jesus Christ unto secure eternal life in heaven. **1PE 1:1-5.**
1. It will be helpful to remember that the seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ. **GAL 3:16.**
 2. This seed includes all those who belong to Jesus Christ. **GAL 3:29.**
- D. **GAL 4:21-31** sets forth the allegory of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac to arrive at the conclusion that N.T. believers may justly conclude that they are the *children of promise* in Christ.
1. There are major differences between Ishmael and Isaac.
 - a. Ishmael was the son of a bondwoman; Isaac was the son of the freewoman.
 - b. Ishmael was naturally conceived and born after the flesh; Isaac was supernaturally conceived by the act of God upon the reproductively dead Abraham and Sarah (**ROM 4:19**), *born after the Spirit*. **GAL 4:29.**
 2. Ishmael was produced by the will of sinners contrary to God’s promise; Isaac by the will of God according to promise.
 3. As the Law was a “stop-gap” measure until the promised Seed should come (**GAL 3:19**), so Hagar and Ishmael were temporary blessing for Abraham but not according to the

- promise.
- E. In **GAL 4:27**, the phrase, "...Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not..." must apply to Sarah.
1. Though the promise was to her that through her God's Seed would come (**GEN 17:19; ROM 9:9**), she had been long barren and remained barren for years after Ishmael was born to Hagar.
 2. These words were meant to be a consolation for her: her time of rejoicing would come.
- F. But who in **GAL 4:27** is *the desolate*?
1. desolate: Left alone, without companion, solitary, lonely.
 2. This fitly describes Sarah when Abraham left her alone to marry Hagar. **GEN 16:3-4**.
 3. Hagar conceived Ishmael and for fourteen years Sarah remained in a state of virtual desolation. **GEN 16:16 c/w GEN 21:5**.
 - a. Abraham was very invested in Ishmael by Hagar (**GEN 17:17-18; 21:10-11**) which strongly implies that Sarah would have been left alone while Abraham tended to his other "family."
 - b. Also, during that fourteen year period, if Abraham had died, Hagar would not have been left utterly desolate but Sarah would have been. A childless widow is particularly desolate. **ISA 49:21 c/w 1TI 5:4-5**.
 - c. If Abraham died before Sarah conceived, Ishmael would have become Abraham's heir (c/w **GEN 15:2-4**) and Sarah would have likely been cast out and *completely* desolate. Sarah would not have been in this regard "...saved in childbearing..." (**1TI 2:15**).
 4. Logically, Hagar is obviously "...she which hath an husband" in **GAL 4:27**.
- G. While the promise was awaiting its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ (**GAL 3:19**), some of the posterity of Abraham (from Isaac) was formed into a nation under the Sinaitic Covenant and God declared Himself "married" to them. **JER 3:14; 31:32**.
1. But like Abraham's relationship to Hagar and Ishmael, this relationship would be cast off.
 2. Hagar had an husband, Israel under the Law had a Husband: both were temporary situations not according to the covenant of promise.
- H. Natural Israel from Abraham's loins through Isaac did have elect children of the heavenly Jerusalem in its make-up.
1. Consider, for example, Jacob (the icon of God's election, **ROM 9:11-13**), and many others over the years. Read **HEB 11** for some notables.
 2. But in the final analysis, only a *remnant* of the natural posterity of Abraham which were Israel would ever be *children of the promise counted for the seed*. **ROM 9:6-8, 27; 11:1-6**.
- I. Natural Israel and Earthly Jerusalem would indeed have many children. **ROM 9:27**.
1. Spiritual Israel and Heavenly Jerusalem would have many more, "...a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues..." (**REV 7:9**).
 2. This is because of Christ Who is "...the firstborn among many brethren" (**ROM 8:29**), "...bringing many sons unto glory" (**HEB 2:10**).
- J. Sarah, *the desolate* (for a season) would be richly rewarded in that although she only birthed Isaac, yet through the promise realized from Isaac (Jesus Christ, **ROM 9:7**), "...the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband" (**GAL 4:27**).
1. Heaven rejects all pretended claimants outside of the promise: "...Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (**GAL 4:30**).
 2. The *natural* posterity of Abraham, whether by Sarah, Hagar or Keturah (**GEN 25:1-4**), and those who might be joined to Israel by fleshly circumcision: these are all secondary to the

spiritual posterity realized in Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ. **GAL 3:16, 28-29.**

3. Only the latter shall live with Christ in heaven since only "...the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (**ROM 9:8**).

K. Sarah (the desolate) though in natural childbearing having no more than Hagar, could truly rejoice in seeing her consolation as a spiritual multitude in heaven, not earth. c/w **HEB 11:8-16**.