

Introduction

- As we return to our worshiping together through Paul’s letter to the Romans, let’s remember our summary statement describing the purpose of the letter: **Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to unify the local church for global mission through the right understanding and application of the Gospel.** Paul writes in preparation for visiting the Roman Church, hoping to receive both spiritual (1:11) and financial (15:24) gifts from them so that he might go further west to preach the Gospel in Spain (15:28). To have a right fellowship and ministry partnership with them, Paul believes the Romans must have a deep and comprehensive understanding of the Gospel. His letter to the Romans is meant to give them that.
- How does Romans 9-11 fit in with Romans 1-8? The big question of Romans 9-11 is “what do we do with the Old Testament now that the Gospel reveals faith in Jesus alone to be God’s salvation?” A shorter way to ask the question is, “what about the Jews?” Paul has written that “*the gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first*” (1:18). If Jews need the Gospel to be saved, what does that mean for the Old Testament promises to the Jews? Does that mean that the Old Testament promises to the Jews are broken?

Burden for the Lost (9:1-4a)

9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 9:4a who are Israelites...

The Impossible Wish Reveals the Heart

- This is a God-grief, seen in the Son’s weeping over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39/Luke 13:34,35) and the Spirit’s grief over our rebellion against Him

(Ephesians 4:30, quoting from Isaiah 63:7-14). See also Psalm 78:40-55.

- Paul’s passion drove him to Spirit-guided reflection of Scripture and mission. Some people’s passion drives them to ignore Scripture and destroy the need for mission, either by eliminating hell, watering down John 14:6, or making a group unworthy of evangelism.
- Paul wishes himself anathematized, or cursed.
 - There are only two anathemas (ἀνάθεμα), or curse-penalties, in the New Testament: one for not loving Jesus (1 Corinthians 16:22), and one for preaching a false gospel (Galatians 1:8,9).
 - Of course, Paul cannot be separated from Christ – he just, after all, taught us about the believer’s inseparable unity with “*the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (8:35-39). This hypothetical self-cursing is meant to show us the absolute depth of his grief.¹
- Our hearts are exposed that we don’t weep before the LORD over the sin of the culture – it too quickly is perverted by our sin natures into self-righteous judgment. We must weep over others – Ezekiel 9:4; Luke 19:41; Philippians 3:18; Revelation 11:3

Kinsmen According to the Flesh, Who Are Israelites

- Paul’s description of “*Israelites*” as being his “*kinsmen according to the flesh*” prepares us for an

¹ Paul follows in the footsteps of Moses, who, in his intercession for God’s covenant people, wished himself separated from God for their sakes (Exodus 32:30-32). This intercession of Moses and Paul was fulfilled by Christ: “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*” (Psalm 22:1; quoted by Jesus on the cross in Matthew 27:46/Mark 15:34). He was separated from God in our place. Outside of Christ, the eternal separation remains (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9).

understanding of a spiritual Israel through chapters 9-11.

- Romans 9-11, including this statement about *“Israelites”* who are *“according to the flesh,”* should be read in context with other statements Paul has made concerning those who are physical Jews yet unbelievers in Jesus:
 - In this letter, Paul has told us that the old covenant seal of circumcision is nullified by breaking God’s Law, and that keeping God’s Law is more important than circumcision (2:25-27; compare with 1 Corinthians 7:19).
 - Further, in this letter Paul says that Jewishness has nothing to do with outward marks like circumcision, *“nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh,”* but the true covenant mark of God *“is of the heart, by the Spirit”* (2:28,29; compare with Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26).
 - In 1 Corinthians 10:18, Paul speaks of *“Israel after the flesh”* (K.J.V., N.K.J.V.).
- In 2 Corinthians 11:18-22, the false teachers were boasting *“according to the flesh,”* that is, in the fact that they were *“Hebrews...Israelites...descendants of Abraham.”* Paul points out that he could boast in these things, as well, but instead boasts in his *“weakness”* (11:30). This is laid out in Philippians 3, as well, where Paul warns against a *“false circumcision,”* who have *“confidence in the flesh”* because of their Jewishness.² The *“true circumcision,”* and therefore true Jewishness, comes

² I believe this is exactly what the glorified Jesus warns the churches about when He speaks of *“those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan”* (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). True Jews and the true gathering (*“synagogue”*) are those who are saved solely by faith in Jesus Christ, both Jews and non-Jews.

through *“the Spirit of God”* and the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

- **To be *“separated from Christ,”* as are unbelieving Jews *“according to the flesh,”* is to be *“accursed.”* The only way of salvation, whether you are Jew or non-Jew, is by faith in Jesus Christ alone.**

How God Blessed Israel (9:4b-5a)

- God’s blessings to Israel have already been mentioned by Paul: *“...what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”* (3:1,2). These benefits given by God to the Jews, the old covenant Scripture and old covenant seal of circumcision, were not enough to save, however. Chapters 9-11 provide the answer to the question: what do we do with the history and promises of the old covenant in light of the coming of the new covenant in Jesus Christ? This is a huge question.
- Paul now gives us a fuller list than the one started in 3:1,2.³

Adoption as Sons

9:4b...to whom belongs the adoption as sons...

- The word *“adoption”* is only used by Paul in the New Testament (Romans 8:15,23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5), is not used at all in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and has no known theological implications prior to Paul’s use.

³ There is a rhyming in the original Greek to the list of 9:4, which is exceedingly rare in the New Testament. The rhyming is obviously Paul’s goal, since he makes a curious word-choice (δόξα, “glory”) and even invents a word (νομοθεσία, “giving of the Law”) to accomplish the rhyme. I’ve put the two sets of three in parallel below so that you can see the similar endings to the words:

...ἡ νόμοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι
καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι...

“When Salvation History Doesn’t End in Salvation”
from Romans 9:1-5 (NASB)

Pastor Michael Head – Indian Hills Baptist Church, Silver City, NM
Sunday, January 1, 2017

- While the Old Testament doesn’t use the word “*adoption*,” the idea is there, especially in Exodus 4:22,23. It is a metaphor for Israel’s election as God’s people. The Exodus is seen as the adoption point by the Old Testament (see Hosea 11:1). Adoption is another way of describing election (see Deuteronomy 14:2).
- Romans 8 introduced us to the reality that non-Jews and Jews alike share this adoption through the Spirit of adoption, Who is received by faith in the Son.

The Glory

...and the glory...

- It’s easy to assume that Paul is referring to the glorious Presence of God with Israel from the Tabernacle/Temple.⁴ I’d like to suggest the apostle is directing our attention not to the past, but to the future. “*Glory*” in the N.T. always refers to God’s future, eternal Presence with His people.⁵ The O.T. repeatedly describes a future glory for Israel, of which the glory at the Tabernacle/Temple was just a foretaste.⁶
- “*Glory*” rhymes with “*service*” in the Greek. The sacrificial system of the old covenant, which allowed God’s people to come into His glorious Presence, points us forward to Christ and the eternal glory we will enjoy with Him.

The Covenants

...and the covenants...

⁴ Exodus 16:10; 24:16; 29:43; 33:18; 40:34; Leviticus 9:23.

⁵ Romans 5:2; 8:21; 9:23; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:14; Titus 2:13. In the Gospels, see Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; 10:37; 13:26;

⁶ Isaiah 40:5; 42:8; 46:13; 48:11; 58:8; 60:1,2,7; 62:2,3; 66:11,18; Jeremiah 13:11; Haggai 2:7,9; Zechariah 2:5.

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- “*Covenants*” and “*promises*” rhyme in the Greek.⁷
- God deals with humanity only through covenant.⁸
Covenants in the Bible are initiated by God toward humanity, contain stipulations for remaining in covenant, and contain promises of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
- Paul here refers to all the special relationships (“*covenants*”) God instituted, from Noah to Moses to David, to preserve a people unto Himself through whom Christ would come into the world.

The Giving of the Law

...and the giving of the Law...

- Paul doesn’t just say “*Law*,” since he is building a rhyming structure (“*adoption*” and “*giving of the Law*” rhyme in Greek).
- The Law was meant to lead them to Christ (Romans 10:3,4; Galatians 3:22-24); instead, they attempted to use the Law as a means of being right

⁷ These two words are found together in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (READ Ephesians 2:12,13). Christ brings non-Jews into the promises of the Jews, making them one in Himself (2:15,16).

⁸ Lost humanity is in covenant relationship with God – they are under the curses for breaking covenant. The Adamic covenant, or covenant of works, was the first covenant between God and man. God gives the covenant stipulations that man must represent God’s sovereign rule (Genesis 1:26-28) and stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). The blessing was access to the tree of life and bliss in the place of covenant fellowship and blessing. The curse was death. Adam broke covenant, and came under the curse of death (Genesis 3:17-19), along with all those born to him: “...in Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22; see also Romans 5:12-21). **All humanity is born under the curses of a broken covenant with God.** This is why we must be “*born again*” through faith in Jesus Christ, the second Adam Who fulfilled the covenant Adam broke.

with God (Romans 9:31,32). This was not the purpose of the Law.

- The foundation of the Law is God’s gracious salvation of His people. This grace introduces the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1,2//Deuteronomy 5:6) and is mentioned countless times throughout the Law.

The Temple Service

...and the temple service...

- This “*service*” is the sacrificial system of the old covenant, by which the sins of the covenant people were atoned, and through which the people were able to draw near to the God Who dwelt in their midst.⁹

The Promises

...and the promises...

- These “*promises*” came through the “*covenants*” (these words rhyme in the Greek), but were given to “*the fathers*.”
- All “*the promises*” made to “*the fathers*” are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. READ Romans 15:8; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Galatians 3:16.

The Fathers

...9:5a whose are the fathers...

- These last two phrases in this section are not part of the “benefits” God has given the Jews, but describes their history and purpose for existing as a people. In this phrase, we are reminded of the origin of the Israelites: “...*the fathers*,” that is, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the next phrase we find the purpose of God’s creation of the Israelite people: to bring His

⁹ The sacrifices were not something the people did for God, but something God graciously gave them to facilitate peaceful relationship with Him (Leviticus 17:11). See also Exodus 29:43-46.

anointed King, the Christ (“Messiah” in the Hebrew) into the world.

- In this chapter, Paul will mention Abraham (9:7), Isaac (9:7,10), and Jacob (9:13).

From Whom Is the Christ

...and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh...

- While Israel “*according to the flesh*” is accursed because of its separation from Christ, Christ came “*according to the flesh*” to bring salvation to those who would believe in Him (compare with 8:3).
- The goal of God’s election of the Jews/Israel in the Old Testament was to bring His Son into the world. All of the Old Testament blessings God gave Israel (9:4) were to point them to the Christ, Who would come from them in the fullness of time. If we miss this by thinking the Old Testament and Israel exist for themselves, we miss the whole point of the Bible and human history.¹⁰
- “...with the coming of Christ, the privileges of Israel have reached their decisive climax.”¹¹

Doxology (9:5b)

9:5b... Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- This doxology is the first of two. This one, at the beginning of this large section of Romans, is matched by another at the end of this section of Romans (9:5; 11:36).
- Paul is either praising Jesus Christ as “*God blessed forever*,” or is blessing God because Jesus Christ “*is over all*.” I think it is the first. This Jesus, Who came “*according to the flesh*,” is “*God blessed forever*”!

¹⁰ “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, Who is Himself the focus of divine revelation” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, I).

¹¹ John Piper, *The Justification of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 43.