

Romans Session 136

Israel's Unbelief Is Consistent With God's Plan 1

Romans 9:4-16 (NASB)

⁴ *who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,*

⁵ *whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.*

Amen.

⁶ *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;*

⁷ *nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."*

⁸ *That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*

⁹ *For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."*

¹⁰ *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;*

¹¹ *for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,*

¹² *it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."*

¹³ *Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."*

¹⁴ *What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*

¹⁵ *For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."*

¹⁶ *So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

When we stopped our study last time it was while we were talking about the 9th privilege that Paul was laying out for the Roman Church to consider.

That is, Israel was privileged to provide the lineage of Christ according to the flesh. Christ was not accidently born a Jew but was preordained to be a human descendant of Abraham and of David.

We remembered that in 1948, the Jews re-established the nation of Israel in part of the ancient land that God had promised them through Abraham.

In the six-day war of 1967, they acquired more of that land, including full control over their holy city of Jerusalem.

We also said that the modern-day state of Israel is not a theocracy, with God as its sovereign Lord, or even a nation ruled by God serving leaders.

It does contain large and influential religious groups, but it is like most nations of today, a secular state.

We are reminded that some Israelis are openly atheistic, Others cherish their religious biblical heritage and see it as the key to justify their right to the land.

Some even believe the state of Israel itself is the Messiah spoken of figuratively in the Old Testament, the promise delivered, and that it is the means of regaining the Jewish rights and influence in the world where the nation has so long been persecuted and suppressed.

One such group even draws parallels between the national view and the claims of Christians that the historical person Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

It is claimed, for instance, that, like Jesus Christ, the nation of Israel was sovereignly called or destined, into existence as its own messiah.

The nation faced destruction by famine and was protected in Egypt, just as the infant Jesus faced destruction by Herod and was taken by Joseph and Mary to Egypt for protections.

The nation/messiah became despised and hated by the world and was crucified, as it were, by the Romans in A.D. 70, just as Jesus had been crucified by the Romans some forty years earlier.

And finally, just as Jesus was resurrected to life on the third day, the nation/messiah of Israel was raised up to national life in the third millennium (the general timing of 1948-76)

On the other hand, many religious Jews in Israel are still awaiting the first coming of their promised King, the Messiah. Yet they look forward to a man who will come as their deliverer from human oppression, not from sin. They believe he will someday triumphantly enter the eastern gate of Jerusalem and that he will establish his throne in the city, setting in place their nation's supremacy from which he will rule the world.

In the land of God's own promise to them, few Jews acknowledge their true Messiah. They live where the prophets lived and walk where Jesus walked, but they do not truly believe the prophets (honoring only their memories) and, far worse, they reject the truth of the sacrifice of Messiah's own life made for sin.

Many Israelis pragmatically appreciate evangelical Christians who strongly support the state of Israel. But Jewish gratitude for such Christian patronage is based largely on its power to help them achieve their own economic and political ends.

Questions that Jews everywhere might express to Christians, could be phrased something like these;

“if, as you say, God sent His Son to earth as the promised King and Savior to redeem Israel and the world to Himself, how could His ancient chosen people possibly have not recognized and accepted Him?”

How could Jews, which Christians themselves acknowledge to be God's uniquely elect race, conceivably have rejected their promised and long-awaited Hope and even put Him to death?

If the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time, as well as the vast majority of other Jews of that day and of every age since, have not recognized Him as their own Messiah, then it is utterly irrational to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was, much less still is, who Christians claim Him to be.

Because they assume that those very dilemmas themselves disprove that Jesus could have been the Messiah, Jews conclude that Christianity is nothing more than a perversion of the true, God-given religion of Judaism.

Two further reasons that Jews do not accept Christianity are that it supersedes the Old Covenant of Moses and that it opens the door for Gentiles to come directly to God on the same terms as Jews and thereby become full and unqualified members of the family of God without passing through the vestibule of Judaism.

To accept the New Covenant in Jesus Christ was to recognize that it fulfilled and replaced the Old Covenant, that it completely nullified the ceremonies and all the man made rabbinical traditions, and that it set aside Israel as God's uniquely chosen nation in order to call out a new people from the Gentiles, who were thus offered equal access to God's grace and favor.

In the minds of most Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day, Christianity, as it soon came to be called;

Acts 11:26 (NASB)

²⁶ *and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

Was nothing less than a heretical movement that attempted to abrogate God's ancient covenant and promises given through Abraham and reiterated to the other patriarchs as well as the covenant and law, that He gave through Moses and to David.

Most Jews, therefore, considered Christianity to be the total denigration of God's integrity and faithfulness.

And so because the Judaism of his day was so deeply steeped in the legalistic works righteousness of rabbinical traditions, and because God's plan to offer salvation on equal terms to Gentiles was a mystery not fully revealed in the Old Testament, Paul devote chapters 9-11 of Romans to clarifying the place of Israel in the present church age.

As the apostle explained to the Church of Ephesus;

Ephesians 3:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ *By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,*

⁵ *which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;*

⁶ *to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,*

In Romans 9:6-33 Paul gives four basic reasons why the gospel of Jesus Christ is not blasphemous heresy and in particular why its rejection by most individual Jews and by Israel as a nation does not impugn God's righteous and just character, does not alter the means of salvations, and does not relinquish the place of Israel in His ultimate plan of redemption.

First, Paul declares that the unbelief of Israel is consistent with God's promises;

Romans 9:6-13 (NASB)

⁶ *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;*

⁷ *nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."*

⁸ *That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*

⁹ *For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."*

¹⁰ *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;*

¹¹ *for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,*

¹² *it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."*

¹³ *Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."*

Second, that it is consistent with His Person;

Romans 9:14-24 (NASB)

¹⁴ *What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*

¹⁵ *For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."*

¹⁶ *So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

¹⁷ *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."*

¹⁸ *So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.*

¹⁹ *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"*

²⁰ *On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?*

²¹ *Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?*

²² *What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?*

²³ *And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,*

²⁴ *even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.*

Third, that it is consistent with God's prophetic revelations;

Romans 9:25-29 (NASB)

²⁵ *As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"*

²⁶ *"AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."*

²⁷ *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;*

²⁸ *FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."*

²⁹ *And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."*

Fourth, that it is consistent with God's prerequisite of salvations by faith;

Romans 9:30-33 (NASB)

³⁰ *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;*

³¹ *but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.*

³² *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,*

³³ *just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*

As discussed in the previous chapter, Paul began his correction of Jewish false belief about the gospel of Jesus Christ by declaring his own unequivocal love for the unbelieving Israel;

Romans 9:1-5 (NASB)

¹ *I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,*

² *that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.*

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,*

⁴ *who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,*

⁵ *whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

Almost inconceivably, calling the Holy Spirit as witness, he declared that, because of his “*unceasing grief*” over their eternal alienation from God, he would gladly sacrifice his own salvation, of doing so could redeem his fellow Jews, his “*brethren, [his] kinsmen according to the flesh*” (vv 1-3).

Apart from Jesus own statements during His incarnation, no greater human testimony of compassion and willing sacrifice for the sake of others is recorded in all of Scripture.

The apostle, could not, of course, accomplish such a thing, but he was compelled to assure unbelieving Jews of his great love for them and his desire for their salvation before he declared to them the more than unwelcome news that all of their gracious and unique God-given advantages and blessings were of no avail before Him id they rejected His own Son as savior and Lord

Romans 9:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,

⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

By implication he was saying that, in rejecting Jesus Christ, Israel rejected God and lost her status as God’s favored, divinely bless nation.

She would no longer be the apple of God’s eye, no longer be the people upon whom God would pour out His great blessings of care and protection.

The question is, “Doesn’t this rejection by God constitute a violation of His promises and thereby sacrifice His integrity?”

It was the basis of such reasoning that Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah and felt justified in that rejections because they concluded it was based on a sound defense of the character of God. And they reasoned, such almost unanimous rejections had to prove Jesus was not the Messiah.

But Paul now begins to give them the first of the reasons, that contradicts the prevalent Jewish idea that Israel’s rejections of Jesus proved he could not have been the true Messiah. And the reason is that Israel’s unbelief as a nation was perfectly consistent with God’s ancient promises.

And we will take that further next time together.