

Romans Session 137

Israel's Unbelief Is Consistent With God's Plan 2

Romans 9:1-3 (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,*

We have been talking about the privilege's given to the Israelites, and the blessings given to them while at the same time saying these things could not and would not save them.

He starts his arguments with revealing his great love for them, to the extent that he was ready to sacrifice his salvation if only they could be saved. That was his heart, that was his passion.

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 if 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 rejection 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.

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."*

The first reason mentioned by Paul that contradicts the Jewish idea that Israel's rejection of Jesus proved he could not have been the true Messiah is that Israel's unbelief as a nation was perfectly consistent with God's ancient promises.

He begins by declaring, ⁶ *"But it is not as though the word of God has failed."* (or, more literally, "has fallen"). Paul was referring to Israel's adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises (v4).

The Lord had not abrogated or in any way invalidated the ultimate fulfillment of His unconditional promises to the Jews.

Through Jeremiah, He had long ago assured His people that,

Jeremiah 32:42 (NASB)

⁴² *"For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.'*

Through Isaiah He said,

Isaiah 55:11 (NASB)

¹¹ *So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

Even God's cutting off unbelieving Israel was perfectly consistent with His covenant promises to them. Chastening and punishment are elements of His divine faithfulness, integrity and love and are not to be questioned.

Our own day has witnessed irrefutable proof that, although God has punished the nation for its unbelief, he has not allowed the many trials and dispersions of His people, the deportation of Jews from Israel, first by Assyria in 722 b.c. and by Babylon in 586, and subsequently by Rome, partially in A.D. 70 and all but entirely in 132 to obliterate Israel as a distinct people. After nearly two thousand years (by 1948), the Lord reestablished her in her own land and she was recognized by the world community as an independent and sovereign state.

God's bringing Israel back into her own land, however, does not prove that, as a nation, she is once again pleasing in His eyes.

And, as already mentioned, mere physical descent from Abraham has never made an individual Jew a member of God's holy family.

But as we will see, her salvations will come, along with the kingdom that God promised.

Paul continues to explain how Jewish unbelief does not discredit God's Word; he writes:

Romans 9:6b-13 (NASB)

⁶ *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.*

But even being in the line of Isaac through Jacob, who became Israel, did not make a person a true child of the promise.

For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Not all physical Israelites are true heirs of the promise.

Because Jews were so familiar with them, Paul chooses familiar Old Testament texts to support his point.

The first male descendant of Abraham was Ishmael, whom he had by Hagar, the Egyptian maid of his wife Sarah. Disbelieving God's promise that Abraham would have an heir through her, the barren Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham as another wife and insisted that her husband would father a male heir through her (*Gen 16:1-3*)

As soon as Hagar became pregnant, however, Sarah became resentful and jealous.

In due time Ishmael was born, and, had he been Abraham's only son, would have become the only heir.

Sarah soon demanded that Hagar and her newly weaned son be driven out of the household. (*vv 4-6*)

Although Ishmael was a son of Abraham, and though Sarah, was past the age of normal childbearing, it was through her, Abraham's true wife, that God gave assurance that the true son of His promise would be born:

Genesis 17:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ *But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

²⁰ *"As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.*

²¹ *"But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."*

Genesis 18:10-14 (NASB)

¹⁰ *He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.*

¹¹ *Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.*

¹² *Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"*

¹³ *And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?'*

¹⁴ *"Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."*

It was to that specific passage that Paul referred, when he reminded his readers of God's declaration to Abraham that **through Isaac your descendants will be named.**

Now also, as Abraham's son, Ishmael would receive his own special blessing from God;

Genesis 17:18-20 (NASB)

¹⁸ *And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"*

¹⁹ *But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

²⁰ *"As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.*

But he was not and never could have been the heir of God's promise.
After Sarah died, Abraham had six other sons by a new wife Keturah;

Genesis 25:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.*

² *She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.*

But like Ishmael, none of those could have been the heir of promise.

Not only could the descendants of those sons not be the children of God's promise, but even the privileged descendants of Sarah through Isaac could not become full heirs of the promise merely by their physical lineage.

God has always known that Jews would be spiritually dead and cut off from the promise and from salvation.

⁶ *For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;* states the same truth!

Because some Jews reject Jesus does not prove He is not Messiah, nor does it denigrate the integrity of God.
He knew there would be unbelieving Jews throughout all Israel's history.

To illustrate that reality, Paul turns back to Isaac.

Because Isaac was Abraham's only child of the divine **promise** of Genesis 17:19-21, Paul here refers to Isaac's children as **Abraham's descendants** (the Jews) and therefore the only true children of God in a racial sense.

The entire *nation* of Israel was elected and brought into *divine privilege*.

It was not **the children of the flesh**, Abraham's other children by Hagar and Keturah, but the children of Isaac, the child of promise who were the **descendants** of the promise.

The point being this, that just as not all of Abraham's physical children are to inherit the promise of belonging to the people of God physically, only those of Isaac, so neither do all of Abraham's children through Isaac belong to the people of God spiritually.

The unbelief, sin, rejection, and hostility of Israel toward Christ is not proof He is not Messiah. To the contrary, they fit perfectly with God's promise, which anticipated that not all Jews would believe in Jesus and be saved.

That truth was remarkably illustrated during the time of Elijah.

Because of the continual threats against his life, not only by the priests of Baal but by also by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel, Elijah became convinced that all Israel had become apostate.

Later in the book of Romans, Paul reminds his readers of the prophet's fearful complaint and of God's assuring reply;

Romans 11:3-4 (NASB)

³ *"Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."*

⁴ *But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."*

In other words, even during the ministry of that great miracle working prophet, the vast majority of Israel was thoroughly and openly pagan.

From the very time of the fall, long before God's covenant with Abraham, God established that the only way a person can become righteous before Him is by faith.

The writer of Hebrews explains that, regarding Adam's own sons, the sacrifice of Abel was accepted by God because it was offered in faith and that the sacrifice of Cain was rejected because it was not offered in faith:

Hebrews 11:4 (NASB)

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

we will go forward with this the next time.