

Israel in Romans

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Many today believe that the physical nation of Israel is God's chosen nation. Now, there is no question that they once were (in the Old Testament period), but the Bible clearly teaches that the Jews are no longer God's special people. We could consider numerous scriptures from numerous sources in making this point, but in this article, I want to focus specifically on the book of Romans.

Let's begin in the beginning. Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek." Notice what it is that has the power to save. It is the gospel. I believe that Jews can be saved today. That is not the issue. The issue is: are Jews saved merely because they are Jews? According to this verse, the power of salvation is not lineage or heritage, but rather the gospel of Christ. In order for a Jew to be saved, they must obey the gospel of Christ. This gospel was first taught to the Jews, and thus it was "to the Jews first" but now, every person, whether Jew or Gentile can be saved if they embrace the gospel of Christ.

In Romans 2, as Paul discusses judgment, he says in verse 11, "For there is no respect of persons with God." Whether Jew or Gentile, we will all face judgment. This point is clarified in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

In the third chapter of Romans, Paul says regarding the Jews and the Gentiles that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood..." (vv. 23-25). All are guilty of sin, and therefore all need forgiveness. How do we receive forgiveness and redemption. Through Christ Jesus! But the blood of Christ is not unconditionally applied to the Jews. Verse 25 says that one must have "faith" in His blood. Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah. How can it be said that they are justified when they do not believe?

Romans 5 makes many of these same points. Jesus died for the ungodly (5:6) and we are justified by His blood (vv. 9). How do we contact His precious blood which was shed at His death? Romans 6:3 says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Jews deny the saving power of Jesus' blood and they certainly haven't been baptized into Jesus' death. This confirms that they cannot be saved...unless of course they change their ways and embrace the gospel of Christ.

In Romans 7, Paul makes a powerful comparison in verses 1-6 that clearly illustrates the point of this article. He says in verse one: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" Paul is here addressing the Jewish-Christians. These were the Christians who had formerly been Jews, who knew the ins and outs of the law of Moses. Then he goes on in verses 2-3 to illustrate the point made in verse one. A woman "is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Marriage is for life, but the bond of marriage is loosed when one spouse dies. "So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from the law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." The

point is simple. If a woman leaves her husband and marries another, she is in adultery, but if her husband dies, she is "loosed from the law" and free to remarry. Paul then applies these points to the Jews' relationship to the law. They were "dead to the law by the body of Christ." The law had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-16; Eph. 2:14-16). It was no longer in effect. Therefore, the Jews were released from the bondage of the old law and free to remarry the "newness of spirit" in Christ Jesus (vv. 4-6). The Law of Moses no longer justifies. One is saved through Christ. Jews today seek justification according to the law, not Christ, which is the very opposite of what this passage presents.

Paul says in Romans 9:3, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Yes, Paul does refer to His fellow Jews as "brethren" here, but he uses this term not in the sense that they were his spiritual brethren (i.e. saved), but rather in the sense that they were his "kinsmen according to the flesh." But the point I want to make here is that the Jews were accursed. If they were not accursed, then why would Paul say "I...wish that myself were accursed from Christ *for my brethren*." Paul was not accursed, but the Jews (who had not embraced Christ) were! And if they were accursed, they had to be lost. Then, in verses 6-7 the apostle goes on to say, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed by called." The Jews were physically the children of Israel and Abraham, but in a spiritual sense they were not. In Galatians 3:9, God says, "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham," and in Galatians 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." In other words, Christians are the true Israel today. We are the seed of Abraham. We are the "seed of Isaac" that Paul speaks of in Romans 9:7. This necessarily implies that the Jews who rejected Christ ceased to be "God's Israel."

Later in Romans 9, Paul quotes a prophecy of Isaiah in verse 27, "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." This verse would make absolutely no sense if *all* the Jews were saved simply because they are Jews. No, a "remnant" would be saved "according to the election of grace" (11:5). Those Jews who were/are saved are such because they have chosen to believe in and obey Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:1-2 says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." If Paul prayed that His Jewish friends *might be saved*, the implication is that they were not saved. This is clear. Jews are not saved simply because they are Jews. Paul goes in in chapter ten to discuss what is necessary for salvation. He says in verse 9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Two conditions for salvation are stated here: belief and confession. The Jews refuse to confess Christ and they certainly do not believe that He is the Son of God, so they are not saved.

I want to conclude this rather lengthy article in Romans 11 which says more about this subject than any other chapter in Romans. There are a three verses in this chapter that many denominational people want to use to argue that all Jews will be saved...

Romans 11:1, "I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

The question in verse one is rhetorical. The point is that God has *not* cast away His people (the Israelites). So then they must be saved, right? Wrong! Paul clarifies what he means in the latter part of verse one. God had not cast away His people, the evidence being Paul himself! Paul

was a Jew physically...but He was a Christian, and that is the point. The Jews were not thrust away from God in the sense that they could not possibly be saved. They COULD be saved, if, like Paul, they turned to Christ.

Romans 11:26, "And so all Israel shall be saved..."

If one took this statement and neglected its context, they might conclude that all Jews will be saved. That seems to jive well with modern ecumenical theology, but it is not what the passage is teaching. The word "so" here means "in this manner." Let's read the verse with this new understanding, and in context. "And in this manner all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." The Deliverer is Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse. Through Him, the Jews can be saved. "In this manner" (through the Deliverer) the Jews can obtain salvation. But what if certain Jews reject the Messiah? They will be damned!

Romans 11:29, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (irrevocable)."

Many conclude here that the Jews, because they were once the people of God, will always be the people of God. God's gift to them in the Old Testament (the fact that they were His special people) is "irrevocable." But that is not Paul's point. Paul is simply reaffirming what he wrote in verse one. "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid!" The Jews could still be saved. God hadn't forgotten them. They once were His chosen people, and they could still be a part of His Kingdom. In that sense, the gift was irrevocable. But again, in order for them to be saved then, and today, they must turn to the Messiah! "In this manner" they can be saved.

Furthermore, there are many statements in Romans 11 which plainly declare the Jews' lost condition without Christ. Paul says in verses 13-14, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them." This is comparable to the statement found in Romans 10:1. If Paul's prayer was that some of them *might* be saved, then it is obvious that they were not all saved. Furthermore, the "parable of the olive tree" in verses 16-21 shows that the "natural branches" (the Jews) had been cut off and the Gentiles grafted in. Verse 22 says, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God."

In conclusion, the book of Romans clearly teaches us that in order for a Jew to be saved, he MUST embrace Jesus Christ. There is no other way (Jn. 14:6; Ac. 4:12).