

Text: Rom 9:1-5

Title: Israel, the Church, and the Purposes of God – part 3

Intro: A lot of discussion on Israel

- Are all the blessings promised to Israel now given to the church???
- How do Israel and the Church fit within God's redemptive program???
- Why is the relationship between Israel and the Church important???

Last time: we did a survey of both OT and NT texts to gain perspective on what the Bible says about Israel

Prop: This morning we want to address some theological distinctions between covenantalism and dispensationalism—two different ways that theologians interpret the OT—how they view the storyline of the Bible.

Dispensationalism is often misunderstood and/or misrepresented by opponents. Some key points or facets of dispensationalism would include:

- Interpreting Scripture normally as we would any other piece of literature or written communication.
- Understanding the restoration promises to Israel as yet future
- A distinction between ethnic Israel and the Church

Dispensations are not merely different periods of time but administrations in the outworking of God's redemptive purpose.

- The way of salvation has always been by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ
- God's redemptive plan never changes but the way that God administers it varies from one dispensation to another.
- With each generation since the time of Moses, as God's revelation of Himself progressed, there has been more clarity and greater understanding of God's ultimate plan.
- To put it plainly: Dispensationalists believe that all of God's future covenant promises to Israel will be literally fulfilled (Abrahamic, Davidic, New covenants)—including the promises of earthly blessings and an earthly messianic kingdom.

Covenant theology—is a system of interpreting the Scriptures on the basis of two covenants: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. These are not actual covenants that are recorded in the Bible, but what we would call 'theological covenants.'

- Dr. Paul Enns explains this in the Moody Handbook to Theology: "Covenant theology teaches that God initially made a covenant of works with Adam promising eternal life for obedience and death for disobedience. Adam failed and death entered the human race. God however moved to resolve man's dilemma by entering into a covenant of grace through which the problem of sin and death would be overcome. Christ is the ultimate mediator of God's covenant of grace" (MHOT, 531).
- Covenant theology is also the 'seedbed' for replacement theology—that the church has replaced Israel in God's program.
 - They believe that since Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God has replaced Israel with the Church.

- Israel no longer has a future in God's program.
- Thus, the promises that God has made to Israel either 'have been fulfilled' or 'will be fulfilled' in the Church.

Note: there are varying perspectives within both Covenant theology and Dispensationalism.

- The idea is that: even though Israel in the OT was a people and had some genuine believers in God and some not genuine believers in God, Israel was God's chosen nation through whom He dealt with and brought gospel influence to other nations.
- However, because that people (in their unbelief) killed their Messiah, because they missed His coming, His visitation, that state of unbelief has set them aside and all the promises God made to Israel of a king, a kingdom, a land, blessing, and a people are forfeited and given to the NT Church because of their unbelief.
 - And, because we see in the NT that God had planned for His people to be a 'one people of God' (Eph 2-'Jew and Gentile together'—we all come to God by faith, we have access to the Father by faith—then, the church (not Israel) receives all the blessings promised to Abraham in the OT.

Therefore, Covenantalism interprets the OT through the lens of the NT or 'what they believe the NT teaches—then they place what they conclude from the NT as a template over the OT.

- In other wds, Covenant theology reads the Bible backwards—they take conclusions from the NT and import that back into the OT
- For example: when covenant theologians get to the NT and read Ephesians 4, that there is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism...and one body [i.e. the Church]'—then that must mean that God has always purposed a 'one people of God, the Church'
 - So, they read that into the OT and anywhere you see believers, you see the 'Church'

Dispensationalism looks at the OT differently—dispensationalism reads the Bible from the OT forward—we let the OT and NT stand on their own

- We take the OT prophecies about Israel 'as they are spoken' because there is a 'history line' from the OT to the NT
- The future prophecies about national Israel are said to have a fulfillment through a redeemed version/saved version of national Israel—God will bring about a repentant national Israel and fulfill all the OT promises He made in the OT.
- Essentially, what Covenantalism says is all the curses of the OT have fallen on national Israel, and all the blessings of the OT have been given to the 'one people of God'—the Church (Jew and Gentile together).
- Dispensationalism says, no. God chose the nation Israel. God had always planned a time of Israel's disobedience and unbelief.
- In 70AD, Titus Vespasian sacked Jerusalem—temple worship was destroyed and the Jews are no longer an entity in God's furthering of gospel witness—they are in a state of unbelief
- Therefore, God hardened Israel in their unbelief and turned to the Gentiles and is spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:16-20).
- When the time of the Gentiles is done, Romans 11 says, then Israel will be provoked to jealousy by the fact that their Messiah, Jesus, is being worshipped by Gentiles and they will repent and mourn for Christ—and God will redeem Jews alive at that time and save them as a national entity.

- God will redeem a national Israel, they will enter into the Millennial kingdom with their Messiah, and we will join with them because we are ‘grafted in’ to the Abrahamic promise.
- This is a basically Dispensationalism.
- Covenantalism sees the church as superseding and replacing Israel.

See: Romans 9:1-5

- Romans 9-11—are very important revelation for the church’s understanding of Israel and God’s redemptive plan
- God tells us how and why He will fulfill His redemptive purposes
- The Apostle Paul could have jumped from the end of chapter 8 and launched right into chapter 12 and began spelling out how we are to live out the gospel, and we wouldn’t have even noticed.
- For 8 chapters, Paul has been speaking about the mercies of God in the gospel. Then, in chapter 12:1—“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”
- So, why the three chapters here??? They seem parenthetical.

In chapter 8, Paul tells us that God is sovereign and working out His ordained purposes. The glaring problem is the Jewish nation and their relation to the gospel that Paul has been setting forth in the first eight chapters.

- The Jewish people, as a nation, had not received the gospel.
- At the time of Paul’s writing, everybody knew of the Jews’ rejection of Christ.
- As a nation, Israel had rejected the gospel.
- As the church was born and began developing, Paul’s own countrymen were often hostile to the gospel of Christ.

Whenever the sinfulness of man seems to overshadow what God has promised in His Word, we tend to doubt.

- You see the promises of God to Israel in God’s Word (in both the OT and NT), and then you see Israel in unbelief and hardened in their rejection of Christ—and the tendency is to doubt and wonder if something hasn’t gone awry in God’s redemptive plan.
- Unless we ground ourselves in these three chapters, we will come to wrong conclusions about God’s plans for the nation Israel.
- Paul is going to assure us just as ‘nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ’ (chapter 8) that ‘nothing can thwart God’s promises to His chosen people Israel.’
- Paul admits that the Jews as a nation have rejected the gospel—and yet, he stands firmly on the idea that the nation Israel still has a place in the redemptive purposes of God.

Important themes in 9-11—

The faithfulness of God. If God gives a promise, He will fulfill it just as He gave it—God ties the fulfillment of His promises to His righteous character.

- These chapters affirm the righteousness of God and His ability to fulfill what He promises.
- If God doesn’t fulfill what He promises, then His character and ability are called into question. And, that’s why Paul brings these chapters forward.

- These chapters urge us to believe God and His promises, even when we see things that seem to hinder or run contrary to what God has said.
- God's plan has no flaws, no errors, or need for readjustment
- God doesn't give a promise and then later change His mind based upon human weakness and sin.
- God doesn't promise one thing and then take it back based on the disobedience of men because it was never based upon man's ability
- Disobedience cannot stop the promises of God because the fulfillment of God's promises is based upon the character and power of God alone.

This is why these chapters are so important for us.

Paul just spoke about God's election of sinners in 8:28ff.

- If God's election of Gentiles secures them, what about Israel as God's elect nation???
- Israel is God's chosen people.
 - Deut 7:6—"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."
 - Ex 19—"...you shall be My own possession among all the peoples..."
 - Psalm 135:4—"For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession."
 - Isa 41:8-9—"But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.'"
 - Isa 43:10—"Israel is called 'My Servant whom I have chosen'"
 - Isa 44:1-2—"But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.'"
 - Isa 45:4—"...Israel My chosen one"
 - Amos 3:2—"You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."
 - Romans 11:1-2—"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?"
- If we are elect, foreknown, predestined, and nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus—why is God's chosen people seemingly separated from the Lord???
- If God has promised us eternal life and secured us by His HS, then why is Israel, God's chosen, separated from their Messiah???
- Why have the people of God, chosen in the OT, seem to be not linked to God but separated from Him???
- Why is Israel separated from God's love...as a nation???
- Why has Israel seemingly lost the privileges that were given???

This is what 9-11 is about—and these chapters culminate in 11:33ff—can anyone counsel God on how He will fulfill His redemptive plan???

- When man thinks he's figured out what God is doing, the Lord fulfills His Word in ways past finding out.
- The majesty and wisdom of God's redemptive plan unfolded in Romans 11 cause the Apostle Paul to erupt in praise and adoration.
- Paul's doxology applies not only to our justification by faith but also to God's future plans for Israel.
- 'How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!'—
 - 'judgments'—are God's purposes or decrees which are beyond human understanding
 - Psalm 36:6—"Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast."
 - 'ways'—are the methods God chooses to accomplish His purposes
- Rom 11:34—"For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?"—quoted from Isa 40:13—God's ways are beyond finding out—"you thought God took back His promise but He did not"—He is still fulfilling it but in new, unfathomable ways
 - There's no human being that can counsel God on how His plan must be fulfilled
- 11:35—"Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?"—who has given counsel to God or contributed anything concerning God's perspective???
- 11:36—"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."—there's no way for man to get in—there's no way for any human being to contribute anything to God's redemptive purposes—whatever God decides, He alone decides; what He promises, He fulfills for His own character's sake.
- If Paul makes this his worship at the end, you can bet that's where he is going in the beginning of these chapters.
- God's plan is flawless and worthy of our awe and wonder.

Romans 1—Paul not ashamed of the gospel, and man is born a suppressor of the truth

Romans 2—both Jew and Gentile are without excuse before a holy God—Jews cannot claim the Law and Gentiles cannot claim ignorance—God will show no leniency in His judgment

Romans 3—there's no human being that is righteous—man doesn't seek God—God alone is the One who justifies

Romans 4—Abraham believed God and

Romans 5—we are justified by grace alone through faith alone

Romans 6—not in bondage to sin

Romans 7—cannot overcome sin without the HS

Romans 8—we have the HS and have power over sin and God is working out His plan and nothing can separate us from the love of God

Romans 9—at this point a Jew would wonder why his countrymen are separated from their Messiah and the promises of God yet unfulfilled

- Why are Israelites experiencing this devastating separation from their God???
- Are God's promises revokable???
- Has God's Word failed???

Gentiles—would be wondering how they could be secure in their salvation when God's chosen people Israel are presently hardened in unbelief.

- Is God unjust??? Has His Word failed???
- Some in Rome may have thought that Israel has failed and the promises given to Israel are now upon us, the church.
- What Paul explains is that it doesn't matter how many obey or disobey because God's promises are not limited to man's performance but God's.
- God's promises are based upon the righteous character of the One who makes the promise.
- God's promises are not revoked because massive numbers of Jews have rejected Him.
- If an entire nation corporately rejects Christ, the promises of God remain unchanged.

Presently, God is saving a remnant (of Jews) but He will fulfill His promise.

- What these chapters teach us is that whatever God promises He will fulfill to the exact detail
- Why? Because those promises are tied to His righteous character
- God's flawless plan to save sinners and His meticulous sovereignty to bring it about is all tied to God Himself.
- God's unfathomable wisdom to redeem sinners, even Israel, is based upon His righteous character.
- God's faithfulness to carry out His redemptive plans is based upon His holy character.
- God cannot give a promise and then revoke it because people disobey.

What Paul teaches in Romans 9-11 is that even though Israel as a nation is in a season of hardened unbelief and rejection of Messiah, such a surprising turn of events is not a surprise to God.

- In fact, in the surpassing 'riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God' God is fulfilling His plan to redeem sinners, and in the future, Israel as a nation.
- We are swept up in God's faithfulness to Israel.

Notice: 9:1-6a—Paul is expressing a burden that ought to be our burden

- Paul's burden is not for the conversion of his countrymen
- The highest, most supreme desire a Christian can have is not for the conversion of another, but that the righteousness and glory of God would be displayed—that God's righteousness would be vindicated and however God chooses to fulfill His redemptive purposes in whatever season of life is up to Him.
- Paul's burden here is not specifically for the conversion of individual Jews, even though that would be a righteous desire.
- Paul's burden is for the promises made to God's people would be fulfilled so that God's righteousness and power would be vindicated among the nations.
- Paul's desire goes far beyond the sentimental expressions of desire for God to save people.
- Paul's desire is for the 'unsearchable judgments' and 'unfathomable ways' of God to be put on display and vindicated among the nations.
- Paul wants the faithfulness of God put on display.

God's plan unfolds in these three chapters: chapter 9—election; chapter 10—rejection; chapter 11—reception.

- In chapter 9, the absolute sovereignty of God is seen in 'election'

- In chapter 10, the moral responsibility is seen in rejection.
- In chapter 11, the final/ultimate purpose of God is seen in reception (that is, the future reception of Israel back into the purposes of God).

Notice also: these chapters begin with sorrow and ‘unceasing grief’ but end in exultation.

- Paul faces the problem of Jewish unbelief as he sees his fellow Jews headed to destruction—and step-by-step he unfolds God’s solution and is brought into the presence of the God who works all things after the counsel of His own will.
- If you think about it, Paul is a Jew sent to Gentiles to proclaim the gospel—and some of his fellow Jews may have accused him of being only concerned with this new covenant ministry to the Gentiles—that Paul is so wrapped up in the gospel that he cares not for his own people.
- Paul begins by explaining his burden for Israel as a nation and for God’s righteous character to be revealed

Notice:

The integrity of Paul’s burden.

9:1-2—“I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.”—Paul’s conscience was burdened but notice that he ties it with Christ

- ‘I am telling the truth in Christ’—in other wds, Paul’s personal burden for Israel is a mirror example of God’s burden for Israel.
- ‘my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit’—only when the HS controls the conscience can it be trusted
 - Some will say, ‘My conscience is clear’
 - But what Paul says is that his conscience is guided by the HS Himself so that his sorrow and unceasing grief is the same as God’s.
- Often, we are burdened for the conversion of someone—a spouse, a child, a grandchild—and often that desire is mixed with personal motives—such as: a better marriage, more obedient children, the relief of knowing you children will one day be in heaven.
- We certainly want to see people saved but often we are not thinking about the promises of God—we simply want some personal relief or benefit from someone’s conversion.
- Sometimes we want a child to believe so that they stop embarrassing us with their rebellion.
- Sometimes we want a spouse to believe because we want a happier marriage.
- Sometimes we want a child to believe so that we don’t worry any more about their eternity.
- Those are all temporal benefits.
- Paul’s grief is essentially the same grief that His Savior has for Israel.

Paul is not sentimentally concerned.

- In Matt 23:37, Jesus expresses the same kind of grief—“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.”
- In John 11, Jesus wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus—not merely over the burden of sin/death—but the context also He was grieved over the people not believing in Him

The principle: when we line up our desires with the desires God has revealed in His Word, we can have a conscience informed by the HS.