

Chosen People 6

The Israel of God

Romans 11:1-26

Memory Verses: Romans 11:17

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We've been walking through Romans 9-11 over the summer. We've swam in some of the deepest theological waters the Bible has to offer. We've looked at election, predestination, and free will. We've sampled Calvinism and Arminianism. We've asked one of the greatest philosophical question of the past 2000 years; do we choose God or does he choose us? And we've settled on the answer... YES and AMEN! The saved are called and the called are saved. By faith we believe that though we can't reconcile God's foreknowledge, predestination, election, and our free will choice, God can and has and we will maintain our faith in his word and in his work! We are Chosen but Free.

And so, last week we asked the next logical question: chosen for what? What are we chosen to do? What are we elected to accomplish? And the answer is simple... we are saved to be sent! We are chosen to find the chosen. Theology must lead to mission! We must go!

But today we switch gears. If we are God's chosen people then what about his original chosen people, the Israelites? This question has not only been a theological quagmire for the past 2 millennia, but recently it has become mainstream. Today's most popular podcasters and politicians are asking this one question; Has the Church replaced Israel or is Israel still God's chosen people?

And as we seek to answer this question today, I acknowledged that this issue, like the previous one, has the potential to divide churches, to split congregations, and take our eyes off of the bigger picture. So, as before, I would ask you, if you disagree with anything I say today, that we could remain brothers and sisters in Christ and simply agree to disagree. The way we answer this issue should not divide us.

And, I will also add, I in no way claim to have all the answers. I have read four books to preach these next two sermons. I have combed the internets and commentaries doing research. And though I feel comfortable with the position I have taken, I am open minded and willing to change my thoughts if need be.

So has the Church replaced Israel? There are two main camps. One group says, no, of course not, the church has not replaced Israel as God's chosen people. They believe there now exists two distinct covenant people of God, two brides of Christ, if you will, the church and Israel, each inheriting different promises from God. This position is

considered the modern position and is prominent within the theological system called dispensationalism. The other group says, Israel has had its chance, they rejected Christ, and so God has rejected them. In their place God has risen up the church and they have inherited all of the promises of Israel. This position is called Replacement Theology or Supersessionism and is prominent within a theological system called Covenant Theology.

So where do I stand on this? Do I stand with the camp who believes Israel has been replaced with the church? I do not! I firmly believe that Israel was and forever will be God's chosen people. His covenant to them is unconditional and never ending. But... I also do not believe Romans teaches that God has two redeemed peoples forever walking on parallel tracks. Instead, I believe Paul presents something much more beautiful. In **Galatians 6:15-16** Paul, speaking to Gentile believers calls the circumcised and the uncircumcised the Israel of God. A fulfilled Israel made up of both believing Jews and ingrafted Gentiles. If you had to give my position a name; you could call it Fulfillment Theology. God has not abandoned Israel, God has not replaced Israel, God has fulfilled Israel in Jesus Christ. Israel's calling has reached its destination in Christ and continues to do so through the church. The main point this morning is simple: **God didn't abandon or replace Israel – he has fulfilled Israel in Christ.** Today we are going to discover three truths that reveal why Paul can speak of God's redeemed people as the Israel of God.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first truth concerning the Israel of God is... **God's People Have Always Been Defined By Faith, Not Ethnicity.** Look with me at **Romans 11:1-10**. If Israel has rejected God has God rejected Israel? Paul clearly answers this question. By no means. The evidence that God has not rejected Israel is Paul himself. He is an Israelite and yet he has not been rejected. In fact, he has been clearly chosen as an Apostle, missionary, Pastor, elder, leader of the church, etc... Even in Elijah's days when he thought all of Israel had turned to the Baal's and idols what did God say... I have saved a remnant you don't know of. And it's the same today... and forever. There will always be a remnant.

Going back to what we have read in chapters 9 and 10. Just like Pharaoh, who was given chance after chance and then had his heart hardened by God, Israel has rejected God time and time again, and now they have rejected his Messiah time and time again... And now those who have rejected the Messiah have been hardened. God hardened their minds, their eyes, their ears... (**vs8**). They have stumbled over the stumbling block of Christ (**vs9-10**). But (**vs7**) the elect have obtained the grace of salvation.

Now, here's the test of what we've learned about election. Were they chosen without a choice or was their free will faith and belief a part of

the process? **You can't be a part of the elect apart from faith in Christ!** So who is the remnant of faith? Jews who have been elected by putting their faith in Christ? Yes. Gentiles who have been elected by putting their faith in Christ? Yes. The remnant has never been categorized by anything other than faith. That remnant is called the Israel of God, the church of Christ, consisting of both Jews who remain in Christ and believing Gentiles.

Look back at **Romans 9:6-8**. Israel has rejected the Messiah but the plan of God has not failed? Why? Because there are those of Israel who are not of Israel. There are those of Israel who are not of the offspring of Abraham. There are those of Israel who are Israel because of the promise through faith. This of course is referring to the church who continues the plan of redemption by spreading the message of the Gospel. How can the church also be Israel? Not through ethnicity... but through faith! Just as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David were saved by faith and were part of the remnant... we too through faith are part of the remnant! We see this in **Romans 2:28-29**, and **Galatians 3:7**. God's chosen are not elected by DNA, they are elected through faith! **God doesn't recognize spiritual family trees; he recognizes us as family through spiritual belief. God didn't abandon or replace Israel – he has fulfilled Israel In Christ.**

The second truth concerning the Israel of God is... **God's Covenant Has Expanded, Not Been Replaced**. Look with me at **Romans 11:11-24**. Has God rejected Israel? No... they are part of the remnant known as the Israel of God and the church of Christ. Which brings Paul to his next question... why did God allow them to stumble? Was it so they would fall and fail as the chosen people of God? Again, by no means. Two reasons... First, so the door could be opened for the nations to hear the Gospel, and two, so the Jews would be Jealous again to be a part of the Israel of God.

And to illustrate this new work that God is doing with the Israel of God and the church he gives us an illustration of an Olive Tree. Paul says, imagine a Olive Tree. Not two trees... not one called the church and one called Israel. One tree. He doesn't say God chopped one down and planted another... There has always been one tree... one covenant people... the people of God who have placed their faith in him. And notice he says some are natural branches... Israel... and some are wild and grafted in... gentiles... but they are all a part of one tree, one body, one bride! And now the Jews and the Gentiles both share one root. We share in the promises and inheritance of Abraham. We share in the blessings of salvation through faith in the messiah. We are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit. We have the same hope of resurrection. How? By Christ! Through faith in Christ and salvation in Christ... the Jews and the

Gentiles share in the same olive tree! Who is the olive tree? Christ! Look at **Galatians 3:26-29**, **Ephesians 2:11-13**, **John 9:16**. **There is only one tree... and we are all extremely blessed to be grafted into it.**

Imagine an old family home that has stood for generations. Great great grandparents built it and have passed it down to their children. And then at somepoint, through adoption new sons and daughters are brought in and welcomed into the family? Do they bulldoze the house and build another one? No. They are welcomed into the existing house and now sit at the same table. Share the same inheritance, bear the same family name. They didn't replace anyone, they were brought in to an already established family. And then in **vs18** we are reminded to not look down on those branches that have been cut... why? Cause we are hoping that through our love for them they will once again be grafted back in. **God didn't abandon or replace Israel – he has fulfilled Israel In Christ.**

The third truth concerning the Israel of God is... **God's Promises Reach Their Fulfillment In Christ**. Look with me at **Romans 11:25-26**. For generations, Christians have asked, "who is ALL Israel?" The answer can be found in the statement... "And in this way all Israel will be saved." Some translations say ... and so all Israel will be saved. For reasons I don't have time to get into, this is not the general, nor common translation. "And in this way" should be the commonly accepted translation, and it fits.

Meaning... Paul is saying... in this way... through everything I've just described... Israel will be saved. Through a preserved remnant of believers. Through the grafting in of the Gentiles. Through one olive tree. Through one covenant people. Through one Messiah. Through the church of Christ; the Israel of God. In this way all of Israel will be saved. The fulfillment of Israel is in the salvation of Christ and the body of believers known as the Israel of God, All Israel, the church. This is why we see Peter say this in **1 Peter 2:9**; we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. We aren't stealing Israel's identity. We are grafted into Israel's identity through Christ.

Think of a relay race. Four runners, one baton. Each runner has a different leg of the race but when they pass the baton a new race doesn't start... its still the same race. Israel began the race. Abraham passed the baton to Isaac who passed it to Jacob who passed it to Joseph who passed it to Moses... and after Christ they passed it to the remnant of Jewish believers, and in these days they have passed it along to the gentile church.... But at the end of the race... all of us stand on the podium together. Listen... God didn't start a new story with the church... he is merely writing a new chapter in the only story there is... HIS Story! **Every promise God made to Israel, finds its "Yes" in Jesus Christ. God didn't abandon or replace Israel – he has fulfilled Israel In Christ.**

Application

Church, this isn't just a theological discussion to satisfy our curiosity—it changes our identity. If you belong to Christ, you don't have to wonder whether you belong in God's family or whether His promises include you. You have been grafted in by grace. You are part of the people of God, not because of your ethnicity, your heritage, or your religious résumé, but because of your union with Jesus Christ. That means every promise God has fulfilled in Christ is yours by faith. So stop living like an outsider trying to earn a seat at the table. In Christ, you've already been welcomed home.

Conclusion

So, let's go back to the question we began with; Has the Church replaced Israel? I don't believe that's the story the Bible is telling us. Imagine holding an acorn in your hand. It's small. Ordinary. Unimpressive. But inside that tiny seed is the promise of a tree. When that tree grows to the size of a large building, no one looks at it and thinks... that tree replaced the acorn. The oak tree is the fulfillment of that acorn. Everything the acorn was created to become reached its full expression as a giant tree. Israel was never an end in itself. Israel was God's chosen covenant people through whom he would reveal Himself, bring forth the Messiah, and bless the nations. And when Jesus came, he didn't discard Israel's story, he fulfilled it. Everything Israel was called to be found its perfection in Christ. Because... **God didn't abandon or replace Israel – he has fulfilled Israel in Christ.** And if you are in Christ... then by grace, you are part of the Israel of God.