

“DOCTRINE THAT DANCES”

Studies in the Basic Teachings of the Christian Faith

Romans 9:1-11:36

“Israel: Past, Present, Future”

Introduction: The purpose of this sermon is to provide a survey of what the Bible teaches about Israel. This doctrine informs the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the church.

Key Terms:

Israel – A nation composed of 12 tribes chosen by God for a special relationship regulated through several covenants.

Israelites/Jews/Hebrews – physical descendants of Jacob (Israel – Genesis 32:28)

Remnant – Israelites/Jews/Hebrews who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ

Church - The Church consists of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are redeemed through His blood, and are born again by the Holy Spirit.

I. Israel Past (Romans 9:1-29)

- a. Paul is expressing his emotion over the issue of Jewish rejection of the Gospel (Exodus 32:32). Israel benefited from multiple covenants with God, the law of Moses, and the Levitical priesthood. The fathers or patriarchs of Israel are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul affirms that Jesus of Nazareth was born in the family of Israel, and He is God over all things. One Person, two natures (Divine and human). His divine nature is uncreated, and His human nature had a start date (incarnation – when the Word became flesh – John 1:14)
- b. God’s word has not failed concerning Israel. Paul distinguishes ethnic Israel as a whole group from the remnant of ethnic Israel that accepted Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. God does not have to save every individual Israelite to fulfill His promises. Paul is concerned with proving that God’s promises are being fulfilled even though some Israelites rejected Christ. Salvation is not by human birthright or works. Paul witnessed people hardening their hearts and rejecting the Gospel which is no different than Pharaoh hardening his heart and disobeying God’s command to free the slaves (Hebrews 3:8, Acts 19:9) . **God used Pharaoh’s hard heart for His purposes and He is using the hard hearts of Israelites for His purpose – remember Paul is addressing the dilemma of those in Israel who rejected the Gospel.**

- c. Paul addresses the fairness of God exercising His sovereign choice in who is able to respond and who is hardened. The question of fairness assumes a position of moral superiority to God. This is a challenge to God's character. God's choice is always righteous (John 1:12-13). I do not expect to resolve the predestination debate in one sermon; however, **If you end up in heaven God gets the credit, if you end up in hell you get the credit.** A case can be made that the vessels of wrath prepared themselves for destruction because all have sinned and all of humanity inherited a sin nature from Adam. God is being long-suffering by delaying His wrath until the final judgment (Matthew 5:43-48). Paul quotes Isaiah to drive home the point that God kept His promise to make the children of Israel numerous while only saving a remnant.

II. Israel Present (Romans 9:30-11:10)

- a. Righteousness is obtained by grace through faith. The Israelites who rejected the Gospel tried to obtain righteousness by the works of the law. Christ became a stumbling stone to people trying to obtain righteousness by works of the law. Honor-shame culture emphasizes the importance of relationships within the community. Humanity brought shame/dishonor upon itself through sin. Those who believe in Christ are justified and restored to honor in God's family.
- b. Righteousness is obtained by believing in Jesus. Any doctrine that teaches salvation by works is false doctrine. God sends preachers to proclaim the way of salvation. Paul quotes the story of Elijah to support the existence of the remnant of Israel. God intervened during one of the darkest seasons in OT history and preserved a believing remnant. Paul also explains that spiritual blindness is the cause of national rejection of the Gospel. This spiritual blindness was prophesied by Isaiah and David.

III. Israel Future (Romans 11:11-36)

- a. Paul explains how there is still hope for unbelieving Israel because God is using their spiritual blindness in the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul understood the significance of the Jewish people in salvation history (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Jeremiah 51:5).
 - i. **Olive Tree Metaphor:** Israelites are natural branches of the cultivated olive tree (relationship with God). Gentiles are branches from a wild olive tree (no relationship with God, pagan). Gentiles are given access to the Gospel, and those who respond are grafted into the cultivated olive tree. Israelites who rejected the Gospel are removed from the cultivated olive tree. Paul's argument is this- Gentiles have no occasion to boast or look down on the unbelieving Jews because if they repent and believe, they can be regrafted into the olive tree because they are the natural branches.

- b. When the full number of Gentiles are saved, the temporary blindness of unbelieving Israelites will be removed. End times prophecy supports the narrative that unbelieving ethnic Israelites will turn to faith in Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation period.
- c. Verse 28: The Gospel is the message of salvation through faith in Christ. The election is the special relationship God has with ethnic Israel (the people group as a whole). In the context of the first-century Roman Empire, when the church was a small, persecuted minority viewed as a sect of the Jewish religion, Christians experienced persecution from some Jewish people. Paul did not grow bitter or hateful toward his people; he desired to see them saved. Paul understood that all things – including the spiritual blindness of Israel was working for the salvation of Israel.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16, NKJV).

Dr. Erin Daniel Bell

Sunday, July 27, 2025