

**Romans 9:4-5** 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, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Last week, we reviewed Paul's passion in his prayer, but now we are going to identify the subject of his prayer. The identification is simply Israelites, but the parts are greater than the whole.

First, we begin with Israelites. This is the name of the nation as a whole. In Genesis, we see where they get the name Israelites. Genesis 32:24-30 – Jacob struggles with the Angel of the Lord. His name is changed to Israel. Jacob figuratively means "heel-catcher." Esau used Jacob's name to mean supplanter or deceiver (Genesis 25:21-26; 27:34-36). Israel means "God who contests and prevails." The account of Jacob contesting with the Angel of the Lord does not mean that he won against God (Genesis 32:24-30). As we know, it is the descendants of Jacob/Israel who are Israel. By the time the Jacob and Esau were grown, they used Israel as a national identity (Genesis 34:7). God states again in Bethel that Jacob is now called Israel (Gen 35:9-12).

In the New Testament, there are two national identities that are used for the decedents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — Jew and Israelite. Jew is a slang term that was coined as being of the people of Judea. The first time it is used is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. In the narratives, it is only used in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, Nehemiah, and Esther. After this, it is used in Isaiah (twice), Zechariah (once), and Jeremiah (ten times). The term Jew is used in the New Testament extensively, 195 times. Paul uses the term 9 times in Romans 1-3. In this section, it is used to identify the individual (Romans 2:17) — "if you" is in the Singular Nominative. This is not speaking of the Jewish nation but of the individual and the individual misuse of the Law. There are other passages in Romans that speak of national identity, being Jew or Greek. But when the term Israel is used, it signifies the nation as God's selected nation; it is not individual and it is not religious. Jew, at times, is more personal and religiously oriented.

In Romans, Paul uses Israelite "Ἰσραηλίτης *Israēlitēs*" and Israel "Ἰσραήλ *Israēl*" exclusively in Chapters 9-11. The first is used only two times and the identification is clear (Romans 11:1). The only other time Paul uses Israelites is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:22. Both of these uses are specific to a descendant of Abraham. Notice that the Pauline use is specific to the genealogical line; there is no reference to those that are of the faith of Abraham (Romans 3:27-30; 4:16). Israel is used more often in Romans, but as stated, only in 9-11, 12 times in total.

Paul's prayer is for Israel. This excludes those who are not of the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Church has an obligation to Israel; the Church exists because God is judging Israel.

The final thought is this — when you see Israel or Israelite in the text, we interpret the passage as speaking of the nation; individuals are in the nation, but it is the nation as a whole that must be understood. This changes many of the verse interpretations that are contained in this section.

The next portion is the phrase “to whom belongs the adoption as sons.” As translated, without reviewing the language, we might say they are supposed to have adoption but many have rejected the Messiah. So if asked “have Israelites obtained the adoption as sons,” the answer that we would say is no, not unless they believe in Jesus and become completed Jews. But...

The phrase “who are Israelites” is a Present Indicative form of “*eimi*.” This is a status. Paul's kinsmen are Israelites; there is not a condition placed upon them other than their birth heritage. After this phrase, we have the construction of a Genitive Plural Pronoun (ὅς *hos*) translated “whose” or “to whom.” The word “belong” is not there but is implied, but not as a verb but as a possession marker. Because of the Genitive use of the pronoun, the concept of possession is understood. This is not a possession concept. It is greater than that. This list defines who they are.

After the pronoun, there are six articles and nouns all joined by five conjunctions (and - *kai*). In verse 5, the pronoun is repeated, followed by another article and another noun (fathers), identifying to whom it was provided. Finally, the prayer/paragraph is concluded with “from whom....” The point is this — from the first “are” through to the final phrase, we have a list with no verbs. We have an obvious connection to the phrase “who are Israelites.” The verb is transferred to the list, either without the verb or with the Present Active indicative “*eimi*,” we have an axiom. This is a truth that cannot be untrue — it is definitive. The “adoption as sons” is not contingent upon the individual. This is not personal salvation, but this is national identity and representative of God's choice as being God's selected.

The confusion comes in when we see the phrase “the adoption as sons.” There is a definite article here and the word “**υιοθεσία** *huiiothesia* (*hwee-ah-theh-see-ah*).” This is the same word as in Romans 8:15. The definition is “to be placed as sons.” Reviewing the other uses of this word, they are all Pauline (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:1-7 – the adoption; Ephesians 1:5-6).

What we need to understand is that this sonship was and is guaranteed to Israel first. Exodus 4:21-23 – “My son, my firstborn, Israel.” Hosea 11:1. This is a declaration in Isaiah and Jeremiah as well (Isaiah 64:8; Jeremiah 3:18-22). The point of the Messiah coming was to heal the people from the rebellion from the Father. Israel, as a nation, is the one that has been declared son from the selection of Abraham. We get to participate in the adoption, but the primary and the “adopt-son” is Israel (Ephesians 2:11-19).

We need to understand that we are participants...for now (Romans 11:17-21). God was gracious to us and to Israel by allowing the other nations to participate in the "ekklesia" (Romans 11:11-15), but notice that the grafted gentile believers are for a purpose, to make Israel jealous.

Israel has not been rejected; they have not lost the designation of being placed as a son (Romans 11:1-6). This concept needs to sink in. God's grace is still upon them. Right now, they are enemies, having not believed, but they are still beloved because of God's choice (Romans 11:28). It is necessary to be clear at this point, this is about the nation, not the individual. An Israelite is currently God's son as designated through God's selection, even though that person is not "saved" because they do not believe in Jesus.

National selection accomplishes the will of God on earth, but many individuals in Israel throughout history have been unrighteous and not redeemed. This is evident throughout all the Hebrew Scriptures and is clear in Romans 4. We need to be so ingrained with the fact that Romans 9-11 is about national identity, not about a personal declaration of righteousness. Salvation is not about going to heaven, but about the final preservation of the promises. When Israel is finally saved and restored, the population will also be righteous, having believed.

The idea of national identity will play a key role in our interpretation of Romans 9-11 (Romans 9:10-18; 21; 10:13-15).

Moving on in the verse, we come to the next benefit that Israel has, the glory. First of all, glory is "**δόξα** *doxa* (*dah-khsah*).” It is defined as splendor, brightness, honor, or positive reputation. Kittel places this in the word group of "*dokeo*," to think well of or to be counted as something. The primary understanding of this word is that Israel had with them the glory of God, but there is more.

First, let us see the glory of the Lord in the Old Testament as it relates to Israel. God told Moses in Exodus 4:17 that with his staff he would perform God's signs, the 10 plagues are a glorification of the Lord (Romans 9:17).

In Exodus 13:21-22, God went before them in a pillar of cloud and a pillar fire, it does not say that this is the glory of the Lord, but the implication is safe.

The first time we see the words glory of the Lord is in Exodus 16:4-13. As a response to the grumblings of Israel, God says you will see the glory of the Lord in that He provided for the people even in their stubbornness and that they will know that "I AM the Lord your God."

In Exodus 24:16-18, the glory of the Lord was once again in the cloud and it appeared to be a consuming fire.

Exodus 40:33-38 – The glory of the Lord rested upon the tabernacle, both by day and by night, in the sight of Israel. The building of a mobile tabernacle, with all the efforts of Israel, thought to be roughly 3 million people, it took about nine months. Historians conclude that it was more awe-inspiring than most of the permanent structures of the day. Seeing 3 million Israelites camped with this enormous tabernacle layered with the finest materials around would have been enough to strike fear in most, but then to have the very blinding glory of God by day and by night, was enough to be warning to Canaan as they entered.

Numbers 14:10-12; 20-23 – Nevertheless the glory of the Lord remained with Israel.

2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 5:11-14; 7:1-3 – Solomon builds the temple and the glory of the Lord enters into the temple. These examples of the glory of God in Israel, both in the tabernacle and in the temple, were given the name Shakina Glory, by Hebrew historians. The word is not used in the Old Testament. The term shakina comes from the Hebrew word (Shechem – To Reside), the glory that dwelt. This was all witnessed and seen by the fathers as they went from Egypt and was finally fully realized in the temple.

During the time of the great sin of Israel serving false gods and worshiping the moon and the sun, God judges them with the Babylonian captivity and Ezekiel was given a vision (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18-19; 11:22-25). Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Ezra and Nehemiah build the temple and the city, but it does not state that glory of the Lord filled that temple.

Haggai 2:3-9 — during the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra and Nehemiah), the word of the Lord through Haggai tells of a new house greater than the former and the glory will be filled once again. The glory of the Lord that was seen by the fathers will not return until the Millennial Reign. This is the glory that is spoken of in Romans 9. It was wondrous, terrifying, powerful, awe striking. They had it, it was taken away, but it will return and the glory will be once again in Israel and be witnessed by all the earth.

That glory that will return is Jesus Himself. During the First Advent, Jesus came as a servant, Matthew 20:20-28. In this life, suffering comes before glory. The glory of Jesus only refers to what will be.

Matthew 16:24-27 – The Son of Man will come in glory to recompense in accordance with their deeds. This is not salvation but a picture of the entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. Matthew 17:1-3 – Jesus gives a glimpse of His glory to Peter, James, and John. Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31 – Jesus returning with the glory of God and will reign on earth from the new temple. But this is not the final glory. Revelation 21:10-11; 22-27.

This is the glory that is an identifying marker of Israel. It is to Israel, to whom it was originally given and to whom it will be given again. We stand as those graced to participate in what has been given to God's selected.