

## Israel and the Church

Last message in ET's series – someone told me that this has been like calculus for them  
If that's you – school's almost out for summer, but this is the final  
Realize this is heady stuff; commend you for your diligence

Keep in mind as we finish this morning, that ET's prophecy was never intended to answer all our questions, or give us a perfect picture of the future so we don't have to trust God for what lies ahead  
Rather, it's intended to fuel our hope for the good times, increase our perseverance in the bad times, and urge us toward holiness at all times  
I hope that has happened to you this month

With that in mind, end our series on the relationship between Israel and the Church  
It's an issue that receives an obsessive amount of attention when it comes to the ET's  
Made difficult by the fact that the OT generally deals with the people of Israel, while the NT deals primarily with the church  
Leading some people see two different plans of God for two different peoples of God  
I believe that's unfortunate because far from being two *separate* stories . . .  
The Bible is one, unified account of God's unfolding plan for *all* people, over all time

So to flesh this out, I want to give you **5 Biblical Principles** re the Church and Israel, starting in Rom 9 – turn there  
It's here that Paul, more than any other NT writer, deals directly with the relationship between Israel and the Church  
Obviously not going to read every verse – I'll summarize some and highlight others to point out the principles on this issue

The first of which is . . .

### 1. Ethnic Israel is not true Israel (Rom 9:6-8)

6b – *not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel*

Not all who are part of ethnic Israel belong to the true Israel

Says another way in v7a – *Not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring*  
Abraham was the father of the Israelite nation, later to become known as Jews  
Just because you're a Jew, doesn't mean you're automatically a part of true Israel

What's more, being a Jew has no advantage when it comes to being chosen by God  
8 – *It is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the . . .*  
Being a part of true Israel, a child of God – depends on God's choosing, or God's *promise* to bless you with salvation  
Just like he promised to bless Isaac but not Ishmael; Jacob but not Esau  
Even though *all* of them were children of the flesh (9-13)  
The defends God's right to do so (to choose some but not others) in v14-23

Being chosen by God has nothing to do with the blood that runs in your veins  
It's his third way of saying – ethnic Israel is not true Israel

Nor does physical circumcision do you any good  
Circumcision under the Law was the sign of all signs that you were a Jew  
But Paul established in 2:28-29 that it counts for nothing (turn there and read)

Physical circumcision doesn't make you a Jew

A true Jew is one whose sin has been cut away (if you will) by the power and work of the Holy Spirit within a person's soul  
It doesn't come about by a physical action on a person's body

- So neither the presence of Abraham's blood in your veins, nor the mark of circumcision on your flesh – automatically means that you are a chosen child of God, a true Israelite  
Which is why Paul says in 9:6 – *it is not as though the word of God has failed*  
Just because the majority of Jews have refused to believe in Jesus (1-5), doesn't mean God's promise to save them has failed  
Why? Because God's purpose never *included* the salvation of every ethnic Jew  
That's the whole point of v6-13  
Ethnic Israel is not true Israel because God hasn't chosen all of them

Which means – the political nation-state of Israel then and now has nothing to do with the true Israel of God  
Granted, some of those that God has chosen, may live there, and in fact do by virtue of their profession of faith in Jesus Christ and the existence of churches  
Beyond that, a night to honor Israel, if it focuses at all on the nation-state of Israel, has no more spiritual significance than a night to honor Zimbabwe or any other country  
Because *not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel*  
Ethnic Israel is not true Israel

### 2. True Israel includes both Jews *and* Gentiles (Rom 9:24-26)

At the end of his defense of God's right to choose some for salvation and not others, Paul asks a rhetorical question in v22-24 as a way to reason with us (read v22-24)  
What if God has ordained and endured the rebellion/unbelief of some people, in order to show his glory and mercy to others?  
What if that's the case not only with Jews, but with Gentiles?  
What if God has chosen to include *Gentiles* among those he calls his own?

That's a bombshell – it's one thing for God to choose/not chose some *Jews*  
But it's a whole 'nother ball game to include *Gentiles* among those he calls  
*Indeed*, that's exactly what he's done  
25-26 – he applies an OT prophecy, originally intended for Jews, to Gentiles  
In doing so, he calls Gentiles that he has ordained for salvation – *my people*, and *beloved*, and *sons of the living God*  
Which sheds a whole new light on v8 – *it is not the children of the flesh . . .*  
Including Gentiles  
True Israel includes both Jews *and* Gentiles

Peter says the same thing to the church at large in **1 Pet 2:10** – *Once you were not . . .*  
To the church in Galatia (Turkey) **Gal 3:7** – *Know then that it is those . . .*  
And to the Gentile church in Philippi (**Phil 3:3**) – *We are the real circumcision . . .*  
And again in **Gal 3:29** – *If you are Christ's, then you are . . .*  
All of which means that the people God calls to himself, regardless of lineage, *are* the children of promise, *are* the children of God, *are* true Israel – Jew and Gentile alike

Which means . . .

### 3. There is *one* people of God, not two (Eph 2:14-16)

In v11-12 he's talking about the differences between Jews and Gentiles

And that before Christ, Gentiles were w/out God, strangers to the covenants of promise  
Then says in v13-16 – don't know how it could be any clearer that there's 1 people of God

This is a huge issue for some people who call themselves Dispensationalists

They believe that there are two separate people of God – Israel and the Church

With two plans of God for each people

This church age is an interruption in God's primary plan; A parenthesis . . .

Because the Jews rejected Christ, so God turned to the Gentiles for a time

Therefore the purpose of the ET events are to get things back on track with God's primary plan for Israel, in order to restore them as an ethnic nation

That's dispensationalism

The problem is, those who hold such a view are forced to diminish or explain away Scriptures like this in Eph 2

Or like **Gal 3:28** – *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither . . .*

Your sex doesn't matter, your social standing doesn't matter, and your lineage doesn't matter – We are one people of God, not two

This is also one of the truths of Rom 11 where Paul describes the people of God as *one* olive tree (illustration)

He doesn't talk about 2 olive trees – one representing believing Jews; the other Gentiles  
Speaks of 1 olive tree, to describe 1 people of God, comprised of both Jews *and* Gent's

Having said all that . . .

### 4. God has preserved a remnant of Jews for salvation (Rom 9:27; 11:5)

Despite Paul's anxiety over the unbelief of the Jews, he knows that God has preserved a remnant (a small group of people faithful to him)

He says so explicitly in Rom 9:27 where he applies a prophecy from Isaiah to the present day situation – *Though the number of the sons . . .*

Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, but some do

Problem is, then and now, it doesn't look like it sometimes

Even though many Jews have heard the truth about salvation through faith in Christ, they still reject it – 10:21

Even though they've heard and understand, they still don't believe, and come to him

Which causes Paul to ask in 11:1 . . . *Has God rejected his people?*

Is that why they're not turning to Christ?

*By no means!*

After all, I'm a Jew and I'm saved – 1b; That's proof enough

2 – *God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.*

Furthermore, just like God preserved a remnant against all odds in Elijah's day

5 – *So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace*

7 – referring to salvation, he says . . . *The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened*

Point is – all is not lost; God *has* preserved a remnant of Jews for salvation, but only a remnant; The rest were hardened

- He describes that hardening in v8-10

Then in v11-16 he says the purpose of that hardening was to offer salvation to the Gentiles, and in doing so . . .

Israel would become jealous, see the light, and turn to Christ themselves

Let me illustrate it with this graphic –

**Jewish unbelief → Gentile blessing and salvation → Jewish jealousy and salvation → More Gentile blessing**

That's the way it's been going from the time of Christ until now

- After describing all that with his olive tree illustration in v17-24 . . .

He re-caps the entire argument with this conclusion in v25-27 . . .

25 – *a partial hardening has come upon Israel* – a disposition of unbelief; a spiritual blindness (v8-10) has come up some of ethnic Israel

25 – *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in* – until all the elect Gentiles are saved

26 – *And in this way* – according to this ongoing process of Jewish unbelief, Gentile salvation, Jewish jealousy, and Jewish salvation

26 – *all Israel will be saved* – referring to the remnant/elect of Israel that was not hardened, that God has preserved for salvation

It's happening through the covenant of forgiveness in Christ, just like Isaiah said it would 700+ years earlier

Some would advocate based on this phrase, that every single Israelite alive at the time of Christ's return will somehow be saved

First of all, this saving process isn't limited to the future

Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Christ at the cross – it's in the future tense because he was quoting what was future to Isaiah when he wrote it in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC

In v30-31 he speaks of this saving process in the present tense (read 30-31)

It's ongoing now, and has been since Christ died and rose again; Not limited to future

Secondly, you can only advocate that *all* Jews will be saved if you lift this verse out of the context of the passage . . .

Where Paul has spent the last 3 chapters making the point that God has only preserved a *remnant* of Jews for salvation

So in this context, when put it all together – *all* refers to *all* the elect of Israel, the remnant

- God has preserved a remnant of Jews for salvation, who *are* being saved, and will continue to be saved, until their full inclusion is complete (12)

Until then, a partial hardening has come upon ethnic Israel, from Christ's day to now, in order to offer salvation to the Gentiles, make the Jews jealous, and in this way save all the elect of Israel through God's promise of righteousness in Christ, through faith

### 5. The OT promises to Israel apply to the church (various Scriptures)

In light of the fact that there's one people of God comprised of both Jews and Gentiles . . .

The big question is – What do we do with the “forever” promises of land, nation, a king, and so on, that God made to the Israelites in the OT?

The precedent in Scripture is that they apply to the church, true Israel

- See that in God’s promise to choose a people for himself  
Stated explicitly to Abraham in Gen 17 as an everlasting covenant/promise, and reiterated to the Israelites in **Lev 26:12** – *I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.*  
But Paul applies it to NT believers in the church in **2 Cor 6:16** – *We are the temple* . . .

So the OT promise of God choosing a people for himself, originally made to ethnic Israel, now applies to the church

- Same is true of the new covenant promise of salvation, originally made to Israel in **Jer 31:31,33** . . . originally made to Israel . . .  
This text is directly quoted in Heb 8, and applied to *all* those God calls in **Heb 9:15**  
*Promised eternal inheritance* – of knowing God and being forgiven of our sins

So the OT promise of salvation under a new covenant, originally made to ethnic Israel, now applies to the church

- Here’s another one – the OT promises of a Messiah to save and deliver Israel, has been fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ to save and deliver *all* people – Jews and Gentiles alike  
*For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved* (Rom 10:13)

The OT promise of a Messiah, originally made to Israel, now applies to the church

- The OT promise of a king from David’s lineage (2 Sam 7), who would *forever* rule over the kingdom of Israel  
Is once again fulfilled in Christ, who is from David’s lineage, ruling now in the hearts and lives of those who call him Lord . . .  
And who will rule on earth in the M over *all* people and *all* nations

The OT promise of a king from David’s line, originally made to ethnic Israel, applies to the church – both now and yet-to-come in a super-sized way  
Not just over ethnic Israel, but over *all* people and nations

Closely associate with that promise is . . .

- The promise to Israel that they would forever dwell in the land of Palestine  
First mentioned to Abraham in **Gen 17:8** – *I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.*

This promise is yet to be fulfilled in the M when believers from *every* tribe, tongue, and nation (not just Jews), will reign with Christ over the *whole* earth, not just the land of Palestine (saw that last week in Ps 72 and Rev 20)

Just like the OT promise of a king was expanded to include all people, so too this OT promise of land will be expanded to include the whole world, including the new earth in the eternal state

- God promised Abraham in Gen 12 that he would be the father of great nation  
Originally thought to apply just to the nation of Israel . . .  
Peter applies it to believers everywhere in **1 Pet 2:9** – *You are a chosen race* . . .  
As sons of Abraham and Abraham’s offspring, all believers of all races *are* the great nation originally promised as a blessing to Abraham

The OT promises to Israel apply to the church; Which means . . .

There’s one people of God – the church, true Israel, including a remnant of Jews  
And one plan of God – salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ

For one purpose of God – to establish his kingdom and glorify himself forever

We are one