



The Epistle to the Romans



Lesson Number 29

ISRAEL'S NEGLECTED ADVANTAGE

^{9:1} I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. Romans 9:1-5 ^{NKJV}

INTRODUCTION

Having affirmed the powerful nature of the love of God, and that no adversarial power is capable of separating us from it, the Spirit now unveils a remarkable example of the love of God. As we embark upon this section of the book of Romans, we enter into an extremely controversial subject: the children of Israel. Although God speaks with consistency and clarity concerning the Israelites, seriously corrupted views of these people have been perpetrated by zealous religious leaders.

In summary, those views declare that God has repudiated the people of Israel, replacing them with the church. The promises made to them have, according to these views, been abrogated, and no longer apply to them.

In the exposition of chapters nine through eleven, I will devote considerable time to revealing the absurdity of these views. I have no regard for them, nor do I highly respect those who have and are proclaiming them. I will show that the point of these three chapters is to show us the indefatigable love of God – how that it is never pledged by Him, only to be abandoned.

The text will also address the objections of the Jews who believed they had, in fact, been forsaken by God. In Divine history, frequent pleas were raised up to God asking why they had been forsaken. Gideon once asked, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, **why** then has all this happened to us? And where are all

His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites” (Judges 6:13). The Psalmist lamented, “*But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies”* (Psa 44:9). Again Asaph cried out, “*O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?”* (Psa 74:1).

Yet, even during those dark times, those with faith appealed to the strong love of God, calling upon Him to turn His face toward them again. “*Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy*

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. TELLING THE TRUTH (9:1a)
- II. THE WITNESS OF THE CONSCIENCE (91b)
- III. THE COMPULSION OF GODLY CONCERN (9:2)
- IV. THEN CAPACITY OF A HEART IN FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST (9:3)
- V. THE ISRAELITES (9:4a)
- VI. REMARKABLE ADVANTAGES (9:4b-5)

face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake" (Psa 44:23-26). Again, listen to the cry of faith: "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again" (Psa 60:1). Again, the faith of David, together with His acquaintance with the nature of God, compelled him to pray, "Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give

us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies" (Psa 108:11-13).

If ever there was a people undeserving of the love of God, it was Israel. Their history is cluttered with murmuring, disobedience, and rebellion. Yet, our text will show that no force on earth or in the realm of darkness was able to separate them from the love of God. That was not owing to His mere attraction toward them, but because of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They will be shown to be enemies at this present time. Yet, a ray of hope will be beamed across the horizon of time. Their sin will not be excused, nor will the love of God for them be repudiated.

With godly wisdom, Paul will confirm that the judgment of God against Israel was thoroughly just. However, He will also show that God still has a regard for this people. He will yet reclaim them through inscrutable wisdom. He will do so

without violating His own holy nature. He will accomplish it without denying His love, or repudiating His promises to the fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They will not be coerced into returning to Him, but gently and effectively drawn by the Gospel, and the Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

Israel still stands as a testimony to the love of God. In all of this we must take care to see the consistency of Divine love. We must also look carefully at the purpose of God, which will not fail of fulfillment. When these things are clearly seen, they will generate a strong and compelling hope within our hearts.

Our condition is not precisely the same as that of Israel. We have been begotten by God, and His laws have been written upon our hearts and put into our minds. However, there is something that is similar about us. We too are loved for the sake of another. Israel is beloved "for the father's sake." For us, the love of God is "in Christ Jesus our Lord." For that reason, it is absolutely dependable, and will never fail those who believe.

TELLING THE TRUTH

"9:1a I tell the truth in Christ . . ." On the surface, it appears as though there is a sudden change in subject matter. However, this is not the case. In salvation, our feet have been set "in a large room" (Psa 31:80). When men are brought to reason in the Spirit, they navigate in exceedingly large realms.

Having expounded the profound truth of Divine purpose, the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit, and the inability of any created thing to separate us from the love God, Paul now speaks of what is in his heart. He is able to do this because of his accord with God.

This is an important acknowledgment. The Jews had charged Paul with despising their nation, saying that he taught things that was "not lawful" for them to receive (Acts 16:21). They said he taught "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise

their children nor to walk according to the customs" (Acts 21:21). While Paul did oppose circumcision as a means to justification, or Divine acceptance (Acts 15:1-2; Gal 5:2), he did not oppose it as a

point of view, for His death (Acts 2:23; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 1 Thess 2:15). It is necessary to establish their judgment was totally wrong in this matter. This is required for at least two reasons.

Still, Paul will show that he has not been unduly influenced by the hatred of his own countrymen. His attitude toward them is compelled by his fellowship with Christ. He views them from the heavenly perspective, crucifying the flesh.

custom. In fact, he even had Timothy circumcised because of the Jews in that region (Acts 16:3). That this was not the pattern of his behavior is confirmed by his refusal to circumcise Titus. In that case, surrounding Jews did not have good hearts or intentions (Gal 2:3).

The reason for this vigorous teaching concerning the Jews should be obvious. As a whole, the Jews had rejected the Lord Jesus, being responsible, from a human

- ❑ The promise of an anointed one who would deliver the people was true (Isa 9:6-7; 61:1-3).
- ❑ The Lord Jesus Christ was that One, the Savior of the world (Acts 2:36; 5:30-31; 13:32-33).

Both of these had been denied by the Jews, and that with great zeal. They rejected Jesus, even though He came to them (John 1:11). They also opposed Paul

because he preached Christ. Five times they had him beaten with thirty-nine (forty save one) stripes (2 Cor 11:24). Paul said of them, they "have persecuted us"(1

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Thess 2:15). Some of them once said, "we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul" (Acts 23:14).

Still, Paul will show that he has not been unduly influenced by the hatred of his own countrymen. His attitude toward them is compelled by his fellowship with Christ. He views them from the heavenly perspective, crucifying the flesh.

The Spirit enables Paul to show the enormity of Israel's sin without removing hope from them. He **will** confess his deep concern for them and acknowledge their advantages. He will **not** summarily write them off, or affirm they are no longer a people. He will **not** say that the Gentiles have taken their place, or that they will never, as a nation, come to the Lord Jesus. These are all positions espoused by some Gentile theologians, and they are in sharp conflict with the Word of God.

An Extensive Commentary

In chapters nine through eleven, the Holy Spirit provides an extensive commentary of Israel's present and future condition. There is no need for any soul to speculate on this matter. In fact, it is the height of ignorance to do so when God has gone to such great lengths to declare His mind and purpose on the subject. Paul will now declare that he is in full accord with the Lord on the matter of the Jews. Further, his heart is influenced by his understanding.

TRUTH

This is particularly significant because Paul was represented by many as hating the Jewish people. "Truth," in this case, is more than stating something that is not a lie. This is the confession of his heart. It is not a mere statement of a formal creed. Paul is caught up in the truth he has been proclaiming. He has affirmed the Gospel is God's power unto salvation "to the Jew first" (1:16). He has also declared that both condemnation and eternal life will be pronounced upon "the Jew first" (2:7-8). All of this has brought out his inmost person, and are expressions of his "new man."

IN CHRIST

The words that follow flow out from Paul's fellowship with Christ. They are like "rivers of living water" flowing from his "belly," or inmost person (John 7:39).

While the words are intensely personal, they are joined to Omnipotence, because they have resulted from fellowship with Christ. They will therefore minister to our hearts, and assist in clarifying both the nature and intent of the Gospel.

God has called us into the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor 1:9), and as we traffic in the Gospel, that fellowship is enhanced. As we walk in the light (1 John 1:7), not only are our thoughts brought into accord with those of Jesus, we are able to confidently and accurately speak of them. The example before us is excellent, and worthy of our focused attention.

AN ELABORATION

The Apostle introduced us to the foreknowledge and predestination of God in chapter eight (8:29-30). He confirmed they are driving forces in the Kingdom of God, and are both employed in the matter of our salvation. They have been inexorably associated with our calling, justification, and glorification. Although they are the subject of much debate in the religious world, they are intended to buoy up the faith of the people of God.

Now, in a lengthy discourse, the Spirit uses the children of Israel to illustrate how these Divine qualities interface with the salvation of men. He will speak of Divine preferences and their outcome, relating them specifically to Israel. He will also be clear in his definition of Israel. The purpose is to confirm that we are justified in wholly relying upon the Living God through Christ Jesus. Divine favor rests upon Israel, but even more upon the Son, in Whom we have been made accepted (Eph 1:6).

THE WITNESS OF THE CONSCIENCE

"^{1b} ***I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit . . .***" The strength of this statement confirms it is not the mere espousal of a theological position. Much of what is said about the Jews today is nothing more than heartless religious views. They are not insightful, and they have not effected the consciences and hearts of those embracing them. How

differently Paul speaks on the subject.

NOT LYING

"*I am not lying . . .*" In this subject, Paul is unveiling his heart to us. It is not often that such an unveiling occurs, and it is a tribute to those to whom it is unveiled when done. You may recall it is written of our Lord, "*But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all*

men" (John 2:24). The Savior was a sterling example of one who refused to cast pearls before swine, something He Himself warned against (Matt 7:6).

In saying "*I lie not*," the Apostle means that his words are to be taken precisely as they are uttered. They are not veiled or disguised. There is not guile in his words, no hidden inferences or

deceptive tones. The spiritual integrity of the brethren in Rome allowed them to be exposed to some of the most profound longings and insights of the Apostle.

MY CONSCIENCE

“ . . . *my conscience* . . . ” One of the potential blights of academic pursuits is the tendency to ignore the conscience. Many a simple soul has lost their faith because they trusted in study and research rather than the Lord. They were brought to listen to men more than their own conscience.

Others have ignored their conscience, treating it as though it had no importance or directive qualities. Thus their conscience became “*seared with a hot iron*” of neglect. This is the declared condition of false prophets who gave heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons rather than the testimony of their conscience (1 Tim 4:2). I gather from this that they were eventually unable to distinguish between their conscience and the whisperings of demonic spirits. What a tragic condition! Even those hypocrites who brought a woman taken in adultery to Jesus eventually left, “*convicted by their own conscience*” (John 8:9).

The person who walks with God is zealous to maintain a “*good conscience*,” one that does not condemn him (Acts 23:1). Paul confessed he extended himself to maintain a “*conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men*” (Acts 24:16). He lived so that his conscience did not plague or condemn him concerning his conduct toward God or man.

Paul’s conscience, because he honored it and sought to keep it pure, bore testimony to what he said of himself, confirming it was the truth. “*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world . . .*” (2 Cor

1:12). In fact, the goal of his teaching was to produce a similar conscience in others. “*Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith*” NKJV (1 Tim 1:5).

The failure to maintain a good conscience will eventually lead to a

the truth of his words. Those viewing things in this way consider this, and other Pauline affirmations, as his opinions. As such, if true, it could not be received as “*sound doctrine*.”

However, this is shallow and false thinking. The inspiration of the Almighty gives the human spirit understanding,

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shipwreck of ones faith. As it is written, “*I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith*” NIV (1 Tim 1:18-19). The truth of the matter is that you can keep hold of the deep truths of the faith only when you have a “*clear*” or “*pure conscience*” (1 Tim 3:9). God is only served “*with a pure conscience*” (2 Tim 1:3).

Thus, when Paul says his conscience bears him witness, he is confirming he had lived in spiritual sensitivity, and that sensitivity matched his words. He was not spouting some lifeless dogma as the scribes and Pharisees. His doctrine had influenced his heart and tenderized his conscience.

THE WITNESS

Addressing an Objection

Some might object to such an affirmation, saying that the testimony of the conscience is vastly inferior to the inspiration of God. Thus, they reason, it would have been better to say God had inspired Paul to say this, rather than affirming his conscience bore witness to

moving the individual to think and speak in concert with the Lord (Job 32:8). What had been revealed to Paul had been embraced by faith. His understanding was effected by this, and his conscience kept pure and profitable because of it.

The fact that the “*witness*” of Paul’s conscience perfectly correlates with Scripture confirms it reflected the very “*mind of Christ*.” That witness confirms he was inspired, making it incumbent that we receive these words as from the Lord.

IN THE SPIRIT

This further corroborates that Paul was not giving us a personal opinion—one that could be rejected, while another quite different view was preferred. The Holy Spirit Himself confirmed the testimony of Paul’s conscience. What he now declares is not only validated by his conscience, but by the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul’s attitude toward the Jews, which he will now declare, was not driven by human sentimentality. He was not brought to this position because he was a Jew, but because he was in fellowship with Christ Jesus. The truth of God had fashioned his persuasion, and it was in perfect accord with the promises of God.

THE COMPULSION OF GODLY CONCERN

“*2 . . . that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.*”

Other versions read, “*heaviness and continual sorrow,*” KJV “*sorrow and*

unceasing grief,” NASB “*sorrow and unceasing anguish,*” NIV “*great grief and*

unceasing pain,”^{YLT} and “filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief.”^{NLT} To say the least, these are unusually strong expressions. They reveal a facet of spiritual life that is not common in our time. They reflect a spirit that is the opposite of pride and selfishness. This great sorrow and grief is not remorse for sin. It is not prompted because of the awareness of personal deficiencies. Rather, it is brought on by an acute awareness of the condition of someone

run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law” (Psa 119:36). This same sorrow was experienced by Jeremiah: “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (Jer 9:12; Lam 3:48).

What Paul knew of the Jews caused “great sorrow,” or “great heaviness.” It was a burden difficult to be borne. It even influenced his outward manner, which I

between this declared response to the state of the Jews and that of much of the contemporary church. Swathed in Divine fellowship, with a tender conscience confirming the properness of his response, and the Holy Spirit bearing witness to its truth, Paul declares he had “great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart” over the Jews. In view of this, I find it exceedingly difficult to tolerate the attitude of many who write the Jews off as though God had no heart at all for His ancient people.

What the Apostle now acknowledges is true, and is no lie. It is confirmed by his conscience, and by the Holy Spirit. It is in accord with the nature of God and His “eternal purpose.” It is a frame of spirit that is so precise, it will be a proper introduction to a declaration of the profound working of the Lord.

Ezekiel’s Experience

On one occasion, when God was getting ready to judge Jerusalem, He allowed the prophet Ezekiel to see what was going to happen. In a telling revelation of how God feels about those who sorrow because of the state of the Jews, He revealed to Ezekiel how such people had touched Him. “And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek 9:4). When the harsh judgment began. The manner in which it is described tears at the heart. “Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women.”

else—particularly the children of Israel.

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GREAT SORROW

Here, I prefer the KJV word “heaviness” to “great sorrow.” This is when sorrow presses the human spirit down with sadness and distress. It is not that Paul was weighed down with sorrow all of the time. The idea is that the recollection of the Jews always was accompanied with great and oppressive sorrow. It is the kind of sorrow Samuel had when he wept for rejected Saul (1 Sam 15:35). It is the same sorrow experienced by David: “Rivers of waters

gather to be the emphasis of “great sorrow.” It was associated with such things as tears and a fallen countenance—much like that experienced by Nehemiah (Neh 2:1-3). For this reason, Jesus “wept” over Jerusalem, being outwardly effected by their condition (Luke 19:41). A similar weeping took place at the tomb of Lazarus, when our Lord confronted massive unbelief (John 11:35).

CONTINUAL GRIEF

Whereas “great sorrow” was more external than internal, so “continual grief” focuses on inner effects. Thus he adds the words “in my heart”—or at the very center of his being.

It is important to again note the described condition was not brought on by personal sin or weakness. Paul’s heart was so sensitive it could be influenced by the condition of other people. I am struck with the sharpness of the contrast

The wrath of the Almighty had been stirred up by the wickedness of His people. Yet, the Lord gave one qualifying word, and it concerned those who had been sighing and crying because of the abominations found among His people. “But come not near **any man upon whom is the mark**; and begin at my sanctuary” (Ezek 9:5). In this case, God took due notice of those who were concerned for His people. His attitude has not changed, as our text will affirm.

THE CAPACITY OF A HEART IN FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

“³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh . . .” Remember, Paul has affirmed this is the truth, and that it is

not a lie. He has declared that his conscience testifies to its truth, and that the Holy Spirit also bears witness to its reality. This is not, then, a rhetorical overstatement or exaggeration. It is

obviously a strong statement, and thus must not be brushed aside as though it had no relevance for us.

I COULD WISH

"I could wish . . ." Nearly every translation reads the same way. A few depart from this expression: *"I have a desire,"*^{BBE} *"I would be willing,"*^{NLT}, and *"I could pray."*^{NJB} Grammarians point out that this is written in the past tense: i.e., *"I wished myself,"*^{Duoay-Rheims} *"I have wished,"*^{Darby} and *"I was wishing."*^{YLT} All of that, however, seems to me to be a distraction. The point Paul is making is not WHEN he had the desire, but WHAT the desire was.

The word *"wish,"* contrary to its ordinary use, does not reflect a casual and inconsequential desire. Rather, it is a strong and compelling desire. Sometimes, it is translated *"pray,"* as in *"pray to God"* (2 Cor 13:7). John used this very word (ἐύχομαι) to express his strong desire for Gaius, who was especially close to him. *"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth"* (3 John 1-2). James also uses this word in James 5:16, where he admonishes *"pray for one another."*

This is not, then, a casual or heartless expression. Here is a desire driven by the heart, not the mind. It is one confirmed by a pure conscience and ratified by the Holy Spirit. It is the expression of someone in fellowship with Jesus Christ, and is the truth. I cannot think of a way of stating a valid desire more strongly.

The expression *"could wish"* means if God had provided for the Jews to be saved in this manner, Paul would gladly acquiesce to it. There was no lawful means he would shun for the salvation of his brethren.

ACCURSED FROM CHRIST

And what is it that Paul so strongly desired? It is too weighty for timorous or frivolous hearts: *"that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren."*

At once the stereotyped theologians rush to our aid, stating that such a thing is impossible – that it is incredible to even think one can be *"accursed from Christ."*

And thus their folly neutralizes the text, making it of no consequence whatsoever. It paints Paul as a hasty writer, who had little or no regard for the truth which had set him free. However, Paul said what he meant, and told us it was *"the truth."* His conscience attested to its accuracy, as well as the Holy Spirit, who *"searches all things"* (1 Cor 2:10).

There are at least two things revealed by those who cannot receive this saying. **First**, they are unaware of the intense desire of godly people for those to whom

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salvation is promised. **Second**, they lack acquaintance with the Divine estimation of the children of Israel.

Moses

The reaction of Paul to Israel is much the same as that of Moses. On one occasion, when the Lord was especially provoked by Israel, Moses returned to Him from the people. One of the strongest intercessions of Scriptural record took place at that time. Here are Moses' words. *"Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written"* (Ex 32:31-32).

Note that Moses' sentence is broken off abruptly, remaining unfinished: *"if Thou wilt forgive their sin- ."* At that point, words failed him, and there was no further plea he could make. He then laid himself, as it was, upon the altar of

appeasement. Before returning to the Lord, he had told the people, *"Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin"* (Ex 32:30). Yet, he had taken no sacrifice with him, and had presented no atoning blood before the Lord. Instead, he offered himself for the *"atonement,"* seeking the preservation of the children of Israel.

This appeal **did** have an effect upon God. First, He told Moses would only blot those out of His book who had sinned against Him—and Moses had not done that. *"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book"* (v 33).

Those who say such a thing is not possible will have to answer to God for their insolent sayings. The Lord then told Moses, *"Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them"* (v 34). Even though the Lord *"plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made"* (v 35), yet they had gained some mercy because of Moses' powerful intercession.

We have every reason to believe that Paul's profound desire for Israel also had an effect upon the Lord. He saw the salvation of Israel as something that would bring great glory to God, even if it was at the expense of himself being cursed.

Throughout the eleventh chapter of this good book, the reasoning will confirm the legitimacy of Paul's desire. It will also point out the absurdity of those who malign the Israelites, saying they are no longer a people.

MY COUNTRYMEN

Paul is not talking about spiritual Israelites, but of his *"kinsmen according to the flesh."*^{KJV} In Christ, we have no *"kinsmen according to the flesh,"* for no such distinctions are found in Him (Gal 3:28). Further, the kinship was not through his father and mother, but through Abraham, the father of the

nation. While the relationship was “kinsmen according to the flesh,” it was based upon Divine choice and favor.

It is true that there is a spiritual

Israel within Israel (Rom 9:6). However, that it not what Paul is talking about. He is speaking of the fleshly offspring of Abraham, to whom promises were made

by a God who cannot lie. The relationship is founded upon “flesh and blood,” but his love for them is not. His heaviness and sorrow are flowing from a larger river.

THE ISRAELITES

^{4a} . . . **who are Israelites . . .** “Let there be no doubt about the people intended. Paul is NOT referring to, what is commonly called, “spiritual Israel.” This is not a reference to the church, the redeemed, or those who are in Christ Jesus. These are his “kinsmen according to the flesh,” his “people, my Jewish brothers and sisters.”^{NLT} Of course, if God no longer recognizes these people, Paul could not have spoken in this manner. In fact, as we will see, it is precisely because of God’s attitude toward them that the Apostle has such strong feelings for them.

Years ago, I was with my beloved father when a young skeptic sought to challenge him with a question. Because he questioned the integrity of the Scriptures, he protested, “Give me one word that proves the Bible is true!” My father simply answered, “JEW!” This people cannot be accounted for apart from the working of the Lord. These are the only people for which an extensive history is provided in Scripture. Even though they were “the fewest of all people” (Deut 7:7), yet inspired volumes are written concerning them. Of the fifty chapters in Genesis, thirty-nine of them are about the beginning of this nation. The remaining thirty-four books of, what is called, “the Old Testament” deal preeminently with Israel. The books of Esther, Ruth, Jonah, and Obadiah, while mentioning other nations, obtain significance because of the Jews and their prophets. Other nations are mentioned primarily because of their identity with Israel.

Remove the Jews from the Scriptures, and what is left loses any semblance or of order of intelligence. Without the Jews, Jesus and the Gospel cannot be properly comprehended. They both postulate the

existence of the Jewish nation—“Israelites.”

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

In order to understand the meaning of “Israelites,” we must go back to Abraham, who was the progenitor of this nation. The first call of Abraham,

The word “Israel” is found a staggering 2,566 times in Scripture. Seventy-five of those references are found from Matthew through Revelation. Every child of God should have a good understanding of this name, and the nation with which it is identified.

originally called “Abram,” is recorded in the twelfth chapter of Genesis.

Prior to Abraham

Prior to this, Terah, Abraham’s father, together with Abram, his wife Sarai, and Lot [his grandson], had “went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan.” We are told they “went as far as Haran, and settled there” (Gen 11:31). There, Abram’s father Terah died at the ripe old age of 205 (Gen 11:32). That was about the year 1921 B.C. This ended a period of nearly 2,000 years, to which only eleven chapters of the Bible are devoted. Of those eleven chapters, four are devoted to a period of about one year, the time of the flood (chapters 6-9). That leaves leaves seven chapters in Genesis in which nearly 2,000 are covered.

Why Bring This Up?

Remarkable and extended details of Divine history begin with the call of Abraham. This accentuates the importance of what started with Abram. When the Lord began working with him, He changed his name, as well as that of Sarai, his barren wife (Gen 17:5,15). The Lord was beginning a new thing. He was going to bring forth a chosen people from a chosen man and woman. God repeatedly made this promise to Abraham.

“And I will make of thee a great nation . . . And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered . . . Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee . . .

Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation . . . I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.” (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5-6; 18:18; 22:17).

I understand that the consummation of this blessing is found in those who are in Christ Jesus, who was the ultimate Seed of Abraham. However, as our text will confirm, the nation of Israel is integral to the Abrahamic promise. God’s promise included a fleshly nation coming from Abraham. That is the nation to which our text refers: “who are Israelites.”

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME ISRAEL

The word “Israel” is found a staggering 2,566 times in Scripture. Seventy-five of those references are found from Matthew through Revelation. Every child of God should have a good

understanding of this name, and the “father” (Jacob) and nation with which it is identified.

God called Jacob “Israel” when He changed his name. This occurred when Jacob wrestled with a heavenly messenger through the night. When the day began to dawn, and the angel demanded, “Let me go, for the day breaks,” Jacob responded, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” It was then that the messenger responded, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed” NKJV (Gen 32:26-28).

Jacob was the last among “the fathers,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; Deut 30:20; 1 Chron 29:18; Acts 3:13). In fact, in a most unique way, the Lord is called “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:6,15; 4:5; Matt 22:32; Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37; Acts 7:32).

There are precious few people with whom God has so identified Himself. He is also called “the God of Shem” (Gen 9:26), one of the revealed Messianic progenitors (Lk 3:36). He is also called “the God of David” (2 Kgs 20:5; Isa 38:5), “the God of Hezekiah” (2 Chron 32:17), “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego” (Dan 3:28), and “the God of Daniel” (Dan 6:26) – all Jews.

He is also called “the God of the Hebrews” (Ex 5:3), “the God of the Jews” (Rom 3:29), and “the God of Israel” no less than ninety times (Ex 5:1; 24:10; 32:27; 34:23; Num 16:9; Josh 7:13,19,20; 8:30; 9:18,19; 10:40,42; 13:14,33; 14:14; 22:16,24; 24:2,23; Judges 4:6; 5:3,5; 6:8; 11:21,23; 21:3; Ruth 2:12; 1 Sam 1:17; 2:30; 5:7,8, 10,11; 6:3,5; 10:18; 14:41; 20:12; 23:10,11; 25:32,34; 2 Sam 7:27; 12:7; 23:3; 1 Kgs 1:30,48; 8:15,17,20,23, 25:26; 11:9,31; 14:7,13; 15:30; 16:13,26,33; 17:1,14; 22:53; 2 Kgs 9:6; 10:31; 14:25; 18:5; 19:15,20; 21:12; 22:15,18; 1 Chron 4:10; 5:26; 15:12,14; 16:4,36; 17:24; 22:6; 23:25; 24:19; 28:4; 29:10; 2 Chron 2:12; 6:4,7,10, 14,16,17; 11:16; 13:5; 15:4,13; 20:19; 29:7, 10; 30:1,5; 32:17; 33:16,18,23;

34:23,26; 36:13; Ezra 1:3; 3:2; 4:1,3; 5:1; 6:14,21,22; 7:6,15; 8:35; 9:4,15; Psa 41:13; 59:5; 68:8, 35; 69:6; 72:18; 106:48; Isa 17:6; 21:10,17; 24:15; 29:23; 37:16,21; 41:17; 45:3,15; 48:1,2; 52:12; Jer 7:3,21; 9:15; 11:3; 13:12; 16:9; 19:3,15; 21:4; 23:2; 24:5; 25:15,27; 27:4,21; 28:2,14; 29:4,8,21,25; 30:2; 31:23; 32:14,15,36; 33:4; 34:2,13; 35:13,17,18,19; 37:7; 38:17; 39:16; 42:9,15,18; 43:10; 44:2,7,11,25; 45:2; 46:25; 48:1; 50:18; 51:33; Ezek 8:4; 9:3; 10:19,20; 11:22; 43:2; 44:2; Zeph 2:9; Mal 2:16; Matt 15:31; Luke 1:68).

Jesus is called “the Consolation of

In fact, it is not possible to think correctly about the Lord without being mindful of the Israelites! He has tied His name to that nation, which can only be accounted for by the intervention of God Almighty.

Israel” (Lk 2:25), and “the King of Israel” (John 1:49; 12:13). He is declared to be the Prophet raised up unto Israel (Acts 7:37), and the embodiment of the Word “God sent unto the children of Israel” (Acts 10:36). The New Covenant has been made “with the house of Israel” (Heb 8:8,10). John the Baptist came baptizing in order that Jesus might “be made manifest to Israel” (John 1:31). God has exalted Him “to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). With strength Paul affirmed, “God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). Paul accounted for himself being a prisoner by saying, “for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20). In our former lives, we Gentiles were characterized as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12).

The Relevance of These Things

These facts have a great deal of relevance to the text with which we are

dealing. If it is true that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim 3:16), and that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation . . . but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20-21), then we are brought to an obvious conclusion. The Holy Spirit has extended Himself to impress “the Israelites” upon our thinking. **In fact, it is not possible to think correctly about the Lord without being mindful of the Israelites!** He has tied His name to that nation, which can only be accounted for by the intervention of God Almighty. **It is impossible that a single individual could have come from Abraham and Sarah, to say nothing of a “mighty nation.”**

These are the people to whom our text refers. They are the ones who caused Paul to have great heaviness and sorrow of heart. There is no record of any person of God having such concern for any other people. Jeremiah’s tears flowed because of the condition of the Israelites (Jer 9:1; Lam 3:48). The Lord Jesus Himself wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Paul had heaviness and sorrow of heart because of them (Rom 9:1-2). There is no record of a Prophet, the Lord Jesus, or an Apostle weeping over a Gentile city. That does not mean God had no concern for such places. He did have an interest in the little children and cattle of Nineveh (Jonah 4:11).

An Exclusive Attitude

There is an overwhelming tone of Scripture concerning “the children of Israel” according to the flesh. It is true that they are consistently upbraided for their obstinance and unbelief (Rom 10:21). They were judged for their rejection of the Savior, because they did not know they were visited by the Lord of glory (Lk 19:44). Yet nowhere is it said they are “without hope.” **The door of salvation has been left ajar for them!** In fact, this section of Romans will affirm they will yet be forgiven and blessed, coming back from their spiritual deadness.

You should live close enough to the

Lord that the word “Israelites” sparks both sorrow and anticipation within your heart. If David could say, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee,” and “Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem,” how much more can we join with Paul in the attitude he evinces in our text (Psa 122:6; 51:18). There was good reason why Jeremiah admonished those surviving the assault of Nebuchadnezzar, “You who have escaped the sword, Get away! Do not stand still! Remember the LORD afar off, And let Jerusalem come to your mind” (Jer 51:50).

The Israel of God

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul refers to “the Israel of God.” “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). Many have taken this to mean “the church,” with no regard to the nation of Israel. However, that view is much too simplistic. It is true it does not refer to fleshly Israel. It does, however, refer to the “children of Abraham,” namely those who have believed. The third and fourth chapters focus on Abraham, showing that justification came by faith, not by works (3:7-18). He also shows that those in Christ Jesus are Abraham’s children—promised children, just like Isaac (4:22-31).

The point is that the expression “the Israel of God” has no significance if Israel as a nation no longer exists. Those whom God has accepted, both before Jesus and following Him, have been part of the true Israel, which is a nation within a nation. They are the “remnant” to which Paul will later refer (9:27; 11:5). Those of this number who are Gentiles in the flesh, have been grafted in to the Israelite tree, of which Abraham is the “root” and the promises are the “fatness” (11:17).

THE LAND GIVEN TO THEM

It would not be appropriate to leave this subject without mentioning the land that was given to Israel. This was a key aspect of the promise given to Abraham, and lends itself to the distinction of the nation springing from him.

In the entire history of the world, there

is only one piece of real estate where God placed His name. He refers to this area as “My land” (2 Chron 7:20; Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7; 16:18; Ezek 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6). It is also called “His land,” and associated with His people (Deut 32:43; Psa 10:16; Ezek 36:20; Joel 2:18; Zech 9:16).

This land was promised to Abraham for a possession. He promised, “Unto thy seed will I give this land . . . And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it” (Gen 12:7; 15:7).

The promise was renewed to Isaac. “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father” (Gen 26:3).

It was also renewed to Jacob. “And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee I will give the land . . . Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession” (Gen 35:12; 48:4).

The borders of the land are outlined in Numbers 34:3-12. “Your southern side will include some of the Desert of Zin along the border of Edom. On the east, your southern boundary will start from the end of the Salt Sea, cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go south of Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and end at the Sea. Your western boundary will be the coast of the Great Sea. This will be your boundary on the west. For your northern boundary, run a line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor and from Mount Hor to Lebo Hamath. Then the boundary will go to Zedad, continue to Ziphron and end at Hazar Enan. This will be your boundary on the north. For your eastern boundary, run a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham. The boundary will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue

along the slopes east of the Sea of Kinnereth. Then the boundary will go down along the Jordan and end at the Salt Sea. This will be your land, with its boundaries on every side.”^{NIV} Is this text not arresting for its amount of detail? (See map above)

The land has never been fully possessed by Israel. Under kings David and Solomon it reached its greatest extent.



Yet, even then, the people did not occupy much of the land. Enemies resided there, although they paid tribute to both David and Solomon (1 Chron 18:2; 1 Kings 4:21).

The Relevance of the Land

Through the Prophets, and after the Babylonian captivity, God promised He would bring His people back to their land (Jer 16:15; 24:6; 32:37; Ezek 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; Zech 10:10). The things related to this return confirm it involved more than merely inhabiting the land. That return is associated with a dramatic change in the people themselves.

- They will be given a heart to know the Lord (Jer 24:7a).
- They will be His people, and He will be their God (Jer 24:7b; 32:38).
- They will return to him with their whole heart (Jer 24:7c).
- God will give them one heart and one way (Jer 32:39a).
- They will fear Him forever (Jer

32:39b).

- ❑ God will feed them and cause them to lie down in safety (Ezek 34:14-15).
- ❑ He will purify them from all uncleanness (Ezek 36:25).
- ❑ He will give them a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26a).
- ❑ He will remove the stony heart from them (Ezek 36:26b).
- ❑ He will put His Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in His statutes (Ezek 36:27).
- ❑ God will make them one nation, and they will no longer be divided (Ezek 37:22).
- ❑ They will be under the true Shepherd, and will walk in God's judgments (Ezek 37:24).
- ❑ They will be strengthened in the Lord (Zech 10:12).

These are only representative of a host of Divine commitments to the children of Israel – the ones for whom Paul had great heaviness and sorrow of heart. It is these commitments, and Israel's present failure to appropriate them, that causes the sorrow.

The Lord Jesus' Prophecy

Confirming that God has not abandoned the children of Israel, Jesus said this concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in 70 A.D. *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"* (Luke 21:24). Our Lord left the door of hope ajar, showing that the judgment against Israel was temporal, and not like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, who *"suffered the vengeance of eternal fire"* (Jude 7).

Paul's Prophecy

Later, Paul will affirm that **partial** blindness has occurred. *"Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in"* (11:25). Again, a limit, known only to the Lord, is placed upon the blindness that has happened *"in part"* to Israel. The prophecies of both Jesus and Paul indicate a termination to the preeminence of the Gentiles.

CONCLUSION

Because Israel is the subject of chapters nine, ten, and eleven, this will suffice to introduce them. My point in giving this rather extensive introduction is to confirm WHY Paul had heaviness and sorrow of heart because of the Israelites. This was no sentimental reaction. Nor, indeed, did it reflect a mere fleshly attachment to his own nation. His attitude was driven by his possession of the mind of Christ, and fueled by his fellowship with the Son of God.

In this passage, God is speaking to us. He is confirming His commitment to what He has promised. He is showing us a concrete example of His foreknowledge and predestination. In this text, He unfolds some of the involvements of calling, justification, and glorification. He is unveiling what it means to be *"for"* someone, and how He can *"work all things together for the good"* of His people. The Spirit will not only speak candidly about these matters, but firmly, so as to anchor our faith in God. I want to emphasize that this is not a departure from the great theme of justification. We will see more fully what it takes to save!

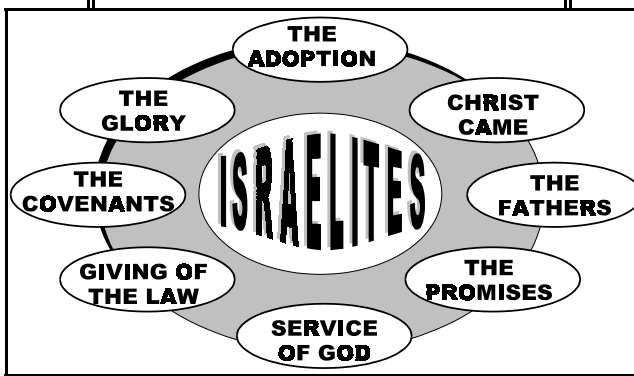
REMARKABLE ADVANTAGES

"^{4b} . . . to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

Among other things, this text will confirm to our hearts that it takes more than information to save us. There are NO external advantages that can bring a person or a people into Divine favor. Without a change of nature and the obtainment of the righteousness of God, there can be no salvation!

What is more, it is inconceivable that any one could have received more outward advantages than Israel. If anyone could remain in the flesh and unregenerated,

yet dwell in the house of the Lord forever, it would have been Israel.



Remember, the Spirit has declared there is *"none righteous, no not one"* (3:10). Now He will take us to the premier fleshly people, showing that, with all of their advantages, they did not attain to the righteousness of God. No person can feel safe who maintains only an outward

identity; i.e., being associated with a church or some other religious body. Although it is common to find this sort of attitude, it is altogether unjustified. If Israel could not rely on the outward advantages they had, you can be sure no one today can. Her advantages came from the Lord, and yet they did not change her nature!

Why, Then, Mention These Advantages?

In view of this, why take the time to mention these remarkable advantages? As I have mentioned, it will show us that salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast. This will confirm to our hearts that our faith and hope must be in God, not in a system—even a revealed system!

However, it will show us something else. The Lord will confirm that while

many of the Israelites did not partake of the benefit, God's Word to them was not in vain. The Lord is capable of fulfilling His word, even though everything seems to be against it. He can work everything together for good, even though there appears to be no possible way for that to be accomplished.

TO WHOM PERTAIN

The word "pertain" means "belongs to." Other versions read, "to whom belongs,"^{NASB} "Theirs is,"^{NIV} "to them belong,"^{NRSV} "whose is,"^{ASV} "who have,"^{BBE} and "they have."^{NLT}

Observe that every translation puts the word in the present tense, and properly so. No version puts the word in the past: i.e., "pertained," or "belonged," or "had," or "was." The Spirit will not present to us something that Israel had, but lost. These advantages still belong to THEM. They are not benefits that have passed from the Israelites to the Gentiles. Rather the Gentiles have passed from alienation into these benefits.

Moses' Plea

When the Lord declared He would destroy Israel and raise up a great nation from Moses, the servant of God, knowing the mind of the Lord, pled effectively with Him. "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?' Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever'"^{NKJV} (Ex 32:12-13).

Again, when the children of Israel provoked the Lord by refusing to take the land of Canaan, the Lord again said, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Num 14:12). Quickly Moses pled with

God again, and with great effectiveness. "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, **Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness**" (Num 14:13-16).

To this day, there remain precious few people who are able to so plead with the Living God! Moses saw that God would be dishonored by utterly removing or totally rejecting His people – something

To this day, there remain precious few people who are able to so plead with the Living God! Moses saw that God would be dishonored by utterly removing or totally rejecting His people – something that is vehemently denied by many pretended theologians.

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In this text, Paul is speaking after the manner of Moses. He is confirming WHY the Lord will yet deal favorably with Israel. His name is upon them, and great promises have been given to them.

We do well to take these words into our hearts, for they form the foundation for what the Spirit will affirm in the remainder of this chapter, together with chapters ten and eleven.

THE ADOPTION

Nearly all versions read "adoption." Some read "sonship,"^{RSV} "the place of sons,"^{BBE} "God's special children,"^{NLT} "God's chosen children,"^{New Century} and "adopted as children."^{NJB}

This is not the "adoption" previously mentioned (i.e., "the Spirit of adoption," or "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" – 8:15,23). However, it is related by type and shadow to the sonship of those in Christ, and the coming resurrection of the dead.

"The adoption," in this case, speaks of the national distinction of Israel before God Almighty. In "the adoption" of Israel, we have one of the singularly most remarkable matters in all of history. Here was an entire nation, a whole body of people, who were preferred and blessed by God completely independently of any merit. Their adoption was traced strictly to the will of God, not their own free will. Their adoption was **not** a matter of their choice, but of the choice of God Himself. I have no interest, at this time, in correlating this with the matter of our salvation. That is something I will address later. Now, however, it is imperative that we see this remarkable working of God: "the adoption" of Israel.

God spoke often of this matter, challenging Israel to consider their standing before Him. When preparations for Israel's deliverance from Egypt were set in motion by God, the matter of their identity with Him was brought up. Moses was commanded to say to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is **My son, even My firstborn**" (Ex 4:22). Hosea referred to this mighty deliverance in these words, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called **My son** out of Egypt" (Hos 11:1). That is a reference to "the adoption." Later, as they traversed through the wilderness, Moses told the people, "Ye are **the children of the LORD your God**" (Deut 14:1). That is a reference to "the adoption." Through Jeremiah the prophet, God lamented, "for I am a **Father to Israel**, and Ephraim is **My firstborn**" (Jer 31:9). That is a reference to "the adoption."

Even when Israel was inexcusably wayward, God spoke of this relationship. *“Is Ephraim **My dear son?** is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, **I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD**”* (Jer 31:20). That is a reference to *“the adoption.”*

God’s desire for Israel was unique. They remain the only nation with whom God has identified Himself. How eloquently Moses stated the case. *“The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; **but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt**”* NKJV Deut 7:7-8). This is precisely the same reasoning the Spirit will introduce in this section of Romans – a preference for Israel because of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (11:28). Just as every one who has been adopted by God, whether it be fleshly Israel, or the body of Christ, insightful souls respond, *“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake”*^{NKJV} (Psa 115:1).

Should the Jews begin to boast in their national heritage, the Lord reminds them they were adopted through Abraham, not because of their works. *“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: **for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him**”* (Isa 51:2). In this case, the people did not first increase, then experience the adoption. Rather, they were first chosen, and then increased, as confirmed in Deuteronomy 10:22: *“Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now **the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.**”*

There was no other nation of whom it was said: *“Thou shalt be blessed above all*

people” (Deut 7:14). To this day, of what other fleshly nation can it be said, *“Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!”* (Deut 7:14). While the saints of God are, indeed, a *“holy nation”* and a *“royal priesthood”* (1 Pet 2:9), it was first said of Israel, *“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation”* (Ex 19:6).

It is no wonder that Paul said to the Gentiles at Rome, *“For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings”* (Rom 15:27). Although he here refers to Jews who are in Christ Jesus, Paul states a principle that extends to the entire nation.

There was no other nation of whom it was said: “Thou shalt be blessed above all people.” To this day, of what other fleshly nation can it be said, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!”

They remain the first nation birthed by God! It is the truth, *“the adoption”* pertains, or belongs to, them!

Paul knew all too well how Israel had departed from the Lord, even stooping to murdering His only begotten Son (Acts 5:30; 7:52). He knew God had given them a *“bill of divorcement”* (Jer 3:8; Isa 50:1). He knew Jerusalem was being left desolate because the Jews did not know the time of her visitation (Lk 19:44). He had confronted their obstinance in the rejection of the glorious Gospel he was given to preach (Acts 13:46). Yet, he also knew *“the adoption”* pertained, or belonged, to them. By faith, he had a high regard for the choice of God.

Yet, the Apostle also knew the nature of God and the immutability of His promises. He could sorrow and have hope at the same time concerning Israel, to whom pertained the adoption. He knew God had promised, *“With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; **But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, Says the LORD, your Redeemer. For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, **So have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, **But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed, Says the LORD, who has mercy on you**”***** (Isa 54:8-10). To the Israelites belongs *“the adoption!”*

THE GLORY

Some versions read *“the Divine glory.”*^{NIV,NIB} This is a proper rendering, for the glory of God is what belonged to them. The New Living Translation reads, *“God revealed His glory to them.”*

After the giving of the Law, Moses reminded the people of the true words they had said. *“Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives”* (Deut 5:24). There is not a fleshly people in all of history that have enjoyed such a revelation of Divine glory! To Israel belongs *“the glory.”*

Their deliverance. Israel’s deliverance through the Red Sea is associated with the glory of God. When the delivered people sang praise to God for the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, they said, *“Thy right hand, O LORD, is become **glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy**”* (Ex 15:6). To them pertained, or belonged, the glory.

Cloud and pillar. When God led the children of Israel, He did so with pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

Of that cloud it is written, “*behold, **the glory of the LORD** appeared in the cloud*” (Ex 16:10). The glory pertained to Israel, and to Israel alone.

Dedication of the Tabernacle.

When the Tabernacle was dedicated, a cloud of glory rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled it. “*Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and **the glory of the LORD** filled the Tabernacle*” (Ex 40:34). During this time, the glory of God was so great upon the Tabernacle that it is written, “*And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and **the glory of the LORD** filled the Tabernacle*” (Ex 40:35).

On another occasion, when the leadership of Moses and Aaron was being questioned by the people, the glory of God again appeared over the Tabernacle. “*And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the Tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared*” (Num 16:42).

Ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant was a key piece of furniture in the Tabernacle and Temple. There was a mercy seat of pure gold upon this ark—a sort of lid. It was a single piece, fashioned with two cherubim, one at each end. Their wings were spread, and they faced each other (Ex 25:17-18). The Lord communicated with the High Priest over this mercy seat. Scripture associates that communication with his glory. “*Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD’S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.*” (Ezek 10:18-19). This is mentioned again in Ezekiel 11:22. The book of Hebrews also refers to “*the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat*” (Heb 9:5).

The glory of God was not made known to any other nation. There were no favorable visible attestations of His presence to any other people. The glory belonged to Israel!

THE COVENANTS

When it comes to making covenants, Israel is unique. Prior to Abraham, the only recorded covenant God made with anyone was the one made with Noah. “*But with thee will I establish My covenant*” (Gen 6:18; 9:9,11). The “*token,*” or sign, of that covenant was the rainbow (Gen 9:12-17). The covenant, however, was not one of pervasive

with Jacob” (Ex 2:24). When the Gospel was first preached, it was associated with the covenant God made with Abraham (Acts 3:25).

The Law, together with its attending statutes, was called “*the book of the covenant*” (Ex 24:7). The blood sprinkled upon the people was called “*the blood of the covenant*” (Ex 24:8). God refers to the whole Law as a “*covenant*” made with Moses “*and Israel*” (Ex 34:27). The commandments were called “*the words of the covenant*” (Duet 29:1). The priesthood, belonging exclusively to Israel, was called “*the covenant of the priesthood*” (Neh 13:29).

The glory of God was not made known to any other nation. There were no favorable visible attestations of His presence to any other people. The glory belonged to Israel!

blessing. Rather, it was the withholding of a curse: “*neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth*” (Gen 9:11).

Abraham, the father of the Israelites, was the first to receive a covenant of blessing. “*In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land . . . And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly . . . As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations*” (Gen 15:18; 17:2,4). That covenant was specifically associated with Israel. When, for example, the time came for Israel to be delivered from Egypt, “*God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and*

The Lord made a covenant with David, establishing it forever. “*I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations*” (Psa 89:3-4; 2 Sam 7:16). The New Covenant itself is said to be “*with the house of Israel*” (Jer 31:33). Whatever covenant of blessing you speak about, it belonged to Israel. God made no covenant with the Gentiles, or Gentile nation--only with Israel. The “*covenants*” belong to Israel.

THE GIVING OF THE LAW

Here is one of the epochs of history—the giving of the Law. It has global implications, because it was given “*that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*” (Rom 3:19). In the Law, sin was precisely defined (Rom 3:20), and lawlessness was addressed (1 Tim 1:9). The revelation made known in the Law was given to Israel alone, but it applied to all the world.

Speaking of this unique revelation, Moses said, “*For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, **that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?***” (Deut 4:7-8).

Earlier in this book, the Jews were

said to have been given a fundamental advantage in receiving the law. *“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God”* (Rom 3:1-2).

Nehemiah also referred to this marvelous privilege, not taking it to be, in any sense, ordinary. *“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: and madest known unto them Thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses Thy servant”* (Neh 9:13-14).

The Psalmist also spoke of this honor, affirming no other nation was so blessed. *“He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. **He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them.** Praise ye the LORD”* (Psa 147:19-20).

This indispensable and holy Law, used of God to define and convict of sin, belonged exclusively to Israel. To them pertained *“the giving of the Law.”*

THE SERVICE OF GOD

“The service of God” has to do with the worship and service of God, particularly as it related to the Tabernacle and Temple procedures. The book of Hebrews refers to this as *“the Divine service”* (Heb 9:1-10). This had to do with approaching God, representing the people, and keeping the people conscious of the Living God. This whole procedure was to be kept with care, as declared through Moses. *“And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service”* (Ex 12:25).

Although this has been greatly obscured by the modern church, serving God is a most unique privilege. It is not to be taken for granted. For instance, in

summarizing the totality of life, Jesus said, *“Ye cannot **serve God and mammon**”* (Matt 6:24). Even those in Christ are admonished, *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may **serve God acceptably** with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb 12:28-29).

Under the law, and with Israel, the *“service of God”* was procedural. While it was not ideal, as compared with the superior New Covenant, it served to develop a consciousness of what was involved in approaching God. It was imperative, for example, to be washed (Ex 29:4; 30:20), and to come with atoning

In its essence, serving the Lord has to do with approaching Him, or drawing close to Him. No other people could come to God. No other people had a high priest who could stand in the presence of the Almighty for the people. No one else had a mediator like Moses, who could bring things from God to the people. Those privileges belonged exclusively to Israel.

blood (Heb 9:7). The approaching one must be appropriately clothed, approaching only in an acceptable time (Lev 16:4,34). A proper sacrifice must be made, and the right person must present it (Heb 8:3). Illumination and a sweet fragrance were also required (Ex 25:6; 30:7-8; 35:8).

All of these are gloriously fulfilled in Christ. They were, however, introduced through Israel, to whom belonged *“the service of God.”* In Christ, our service is now expanded and more precise, but it is still based upon the introductions made in Israel’s service to God. You will search in vain for any Gentile nation or group of people that are said to have *“served God.”* No other people were told how to serve the Lord, or what was required in approaching Him. That privilege belonged

to Israel alone.

Approaching the Lord

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THE PROMISES

The expression *“the promises”* refers specifically to the coming Messiah and the glorious Covenant He is now mediating. These promises are referred to as *“His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever”* (Lk 1:54-55). In his remarkable response to the birth of John the Baptist, Zechariah spoke of these promises. *“Blessed be the **Lord God of Israel**; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of **His servant David**; as He spake by the mouth of **His holy prophets**, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy **promised to our fathers**, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which **He***

***sware to our father Abraham**, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life”* (Lk 1:68-75).

Outside of Christ, all Gentiles are said to be *“strangers from the covenants of **promise**”* (Eph 2:12). By nature, they are excluded from them. Only in Christ can they become a partaker of the promises that belong to Israel.

While this does sound strange to those who have been cultured in the corrupted Gospel perpetrated by the Gentile church, it does not sound peculiar to those familiar with Scripture. For example, the church at Rome was told, *“For I tell you that Christ has become **a servant of the***

Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy . . . ^{NIV} (Rom 15:8). Again, Abraham is called *"he that had received the promises"* (Heb 11:17).

The Promises

The extent of the promises given to Israel are impressive. All of them were given to the Israelites, and none of them were give to the Gentiles, although the Gentiles were mentioned as eventually being included with the Jews (Isa 11:10; 42:1,6; 49:6,22; 60:3,5; 61:9; 62:2; 66:12,19; Mal 1:11). A sampling of promises relating to salvation will serve to illustrate the magnitude of them being given to the Israelites.

- A coming Messiah (Gen 49:10; Dan 9:25-26).
- A Man being given for a source of protection and sustenance (Isa 32:2).
- A New Covenant (Jer 31;31-33).
- A new heart (Ezek 36:26).
- A new spirit (Ezek 11:19).
- The removal of stony and obstinate hearts (Ezek 11:19; 36:26).
- God will put His Spirit within men, causing them to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments (Ezek 36:27).
- The people gathered to a single Person (Gen 49:10).
- A Prophet to whom the people would hearken (Deut 18:15).
- The salvation of all who call upon the name of the Lord (Joel 2:32).
- The people will be willing in the day of God's power (Psa 110:3).
- Liberty and release for the captives (Isa 61:1-3).
- A Shepherd who would lead and feed His people (Isa 40:11).
- A covenant in which everyone would know the Lord (Jer 31:34).
- A time when God would no longer remember the sins of His people (Jer 31:34).
- God would write His laws upon the hearts of men, and put them into their minds (Jer 31:33).
- A dramatic change would take place in the people, like the heart of the

rash understanding knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerer speaking plainly (Isa 32:4).

- The deaf hearing and the blind seeing (Isa 29:18).

Partaking of the Divine Nature through the Promises

The importance of *"the promises"* is confirmed by a single statement in Second Peter. *" . . . Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"* (1:4). The greatness of this affirmation comes home to our hearts when we recognize

All of the marvelous Messianic promises of God were made to the Israelites. Not a single one of them was made to the Gentiles, or even A Gentile. Truly, with unwavering consistency and stability, "the promises" belong to the Israelites.

those promises were all made to the Israelites!

All of the Promises Are Ours

All of the promises relating to the coming salvation belong to those who are in Christ Jesus. Thus it is written, *"For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us"* (2 Cor 1:21). These include the days of the Messiah in which *"the righteous will flourish"* (Psa 72:7). They include salvation and safety (Jer 23:6). The promise of *"the work of righteousness"* being peace, and *"quietness and assurance"* being *"the effect of righteousness"* are also *"YES"* in Christ Jesus (Isa 32:17).

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single one of them was made to the Gentiles, or even A Gentile. Truly, with unwavering consistency and stability, *"the promises"* belong to the Israelites.

Changing the View of Scripture

All of this significantly alters the way we view Scripture. Some, raised with a perverted concept of "new testament Christianity," actually neglect the promises made to Israel. They are largely ignorant of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Lk 24:44). They imagine those marvelous books were only for the Jews, and their teachers zealously fortify that misconception.

But if *"the promises"* were made to Israel, and in Christ we are *"grafted"* into their tree, who can justify remaining ignorant of what was promised to them? **The promises** belong to them! These are *"the promises"* relating to the Savior, redemption, a change of nature, and showers of blessing.

THE FATHERS

Spiritual Babylon (the false church) has corrupted the word *"fathers."* We hear of the "church fathers," or on an even lower level, "the fathers of our country." However, how does the Spirit speak of *"the fathers?"*

The Spirit uses the term *"fathers"* to refer to the progenitors of the Israelites: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 3:15-16; 4:5; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; Acts 3:13; 7:32). Joshua 14:1, 19:51, and 21:1 extend *"fathers"* to include the heads of the twelve tribes (the sons of Jacob). In the broadest sense of the word, *"fathers"* refers to the leaders among the Israelites (1 Kings 8:1; 1 Chron 9:9; 2 Chron 19:8; Heb 1:1).

The promise of a Savior, Paul affirmed, was *"made unto the fathers"* (Acts 13:22). Romans 15:8 declares Jesus became a servant to fulfill the promise made *"unto the fathers."* Acts 3:25 affirms there were undeniable advantages to being children of these fathers. *"You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your*

seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

The importance of "the fathers," particular as regards Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is confirmed by the following facts.

- ❑ The Gospels refer to "Abraham" thirty times.
- ❑ The Epistles refer to "Abraham" thirty-one times.
- ❑ The Gospels refer to "Isaac" eight times.
- ❑ The Epistles refer to "Isaac" eight times.
- ❑ The Gospels refer to "Jacob" thirteen times.
- ❑ The Epistles refer to "Jacob" five times.
- ❑ Jesus is called "the Son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1).
- ❑ In the "kingdom of heaven," the saved will sit down with "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob" (Matt 8:11).
- ❑ Jesus referred to a woman with faith as "a daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13:16).
- ❑ Jesus spoke of a poor beggar who was comforted in Abraham's bosom following his death (Luke 16:23).
- ❑ Jesus referred to Zacchaeus as "a son of Abraham" (Lk 19:9).
- ❑ Jesus said Abraham "rejoiced to see" His day (John 8:56).
- ❑ Abraham is proclaimed as the premier example of faith that justifies (Rom 4:1-16).
- ❑ The Gospel was preached "unto Abraham" (Gal 3:8).
- ❑ Those who are in Christ Jesus are called "Abraham's seed" (Gal 3:29).
- ❑ When Jesus came into the world, He took upon Himself the nature of "the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16).

Not A Diversion

While this may appear to be a diversion from the grand theme of Romans, it is not. What God has done in Christ Jesus is fulfill the promises made to "the fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, a familiarity with "the fathers" will only serve to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the "salvation which is in Christ Jesus with

eternal glory" (2 Tim 2:10). If God lavished the promises we now enjoy upon the Israelites, we do well to become acquainted with those utterances.

THE CHRIST

"... of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Here is the pinnacle of blessing, for which everything else was preparatory! This is the ultimate advantage, to be held in the highest regard.

through both Joseph and Mary (Matt 1:2-16). He uses the father who begat the children ("... begat") as the means of tracing the lineage.

- ❑ Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus backward from Jesus to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). He uses "the son of" of the means of tracing Christ's lineage.

Among other things, this confirms to us that Jesus was fully man, or fully human. While He was the "Son of God" as

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Concerning the Flesh

This is a consideration of Christ's fleshly lineage. It is true that "God sent His only begotten Son" into the world (1 John 4:9). Our text tells us HOW He came into the world.

Considerable is said of Christ's lineage. Theologically referred to as "the incarnation," this is a doctrine of great weight. There are fleshly relationships that are used to identify "the Christ." All of them involve a flesh and blood lineage.

- ❑ The "Seed" of woman (Gen 3:15).
- ❑ The "Seed" of Abraham (Gal 3:16,19).
- ❑ The "Son of David" (Matt 1:1; 12:23).
- ❑ The "Seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom 1:3).
- ❑ The "Son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1).
- ❑ The "Son of man" (Matt 8:28; 13:41).
- ❑ The "Last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45).
- ❑ The "Second man" (1 Cor 15:47).
- ❑ He was "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4).
- ❑ "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14).
- ❑ He was a Prophet raised up "from the midst" of Israel (Deut 18:15).
- ❑ He was the "Man," established for protection (Isa 32:2).
- ❑ Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus forward, from Abraham

well as "the Son of man," this did not diminish His manhood. This did not reduce His Deity, but it did involve the forfeiture of the prerogatives of Deity. He had to, so to speak, put the sword of Deity in its sheath, submitted to the restrictions associated with being human.

The Involvements of the Incarnation

This is the precise point that is made in the book of Philipians. There, a most remarkable view of Christ's entrance into the zone of defilement is given. "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men"^{NASB} (Phil 2:6-7).

Prior to coming into the world, the Savior was "in the form of God," or "was God" - an eternally existent one (John 1:1). The text says He did not "regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," or "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God."^{NKJV} A most profound truth is here declared. The picture is one of clinging to Deity ("a thing to be grasped"), or being deprived of the privileges of Deity ("did not consider it robbery"). The meaning is that Jesus had to lay something aside in order to come into the world. He had to become dependent upon

God, taking the role of a servant. He had to enter the world without the qualities of Omniscience (all knowing), Omnipotence (all powerful), and Omnipresence (everywhere simultaneously). None of these were active in that Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!

Yet, the salvation of fallen man was of such preference, that Jesus did not consider Himself to have been robbed, or deprived, by taking the *“form of a servant.”* He did not prefer to cling to His Deity, remaining in heaven, and refusing to *“come in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin”* (Rom 8:3). What marvelous grace!

The entrance of Christ into the world is not a casual subject in Scripture. It is one of great weight, designed to humble the hearts of men, and confirm the greatness of their salvation.

Tempted

Christ coming in the flesh involved Him being subject to temptation—real temptation. The Scriptures make a point of the fact that *“He was tempted in ALL POINTS like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15). Some have erroneously concluded that Jesus did NOT sin because He was Divine. But that is not the point of the Scripture. Rather, the point is that He WAS tempted because He was a man.

The temptation was actual and extensive. The Spirit says, *“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”* (Heb 2:18). His first temptation lasted for forty consecutive days and nights, without interruption: *“Being forty days tempted of the devil”* (Lk 4:2). At the conclusion of that period, the devil assaulted him with three epochal temptations – all in the areas of human vulnerability: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16; Lk 2:2-13). During that wilderness temptation, because of the strength of it, *“the angels ministered unto Him”* (Mark 1:13).

On the night of His betrayal, the temptation was so strong, Jesus was *“in agony.”* In His prayers, *“His sweat became like great drops of blood falling*

down to the ground” (Lk 22:44). Again, because of the strength of the temptation, *“an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him”* ^{NKJV} (Luke 22:43). The humanity of Christ was no small matter, and is never to be so regarded.

Satan’s Attempt to Thwart the Birth

From the very beginning, Satan knew God was going to send a Deliverer through human birth. In fact, he was the very first person to whom the promise was addressed. *“And the LORD God said unto the serpent . . . And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Gen 3:14-15). The Scriptures indicate Satan did not take this announcement casually, but engaged in every possible effort to thwart that birth.

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While some degree of conjecture is involved here, there is too much of a pattern for the facts to be mere coincidence.

- ❑ The first offspring of the women killed his brother, thereby incurring the curse of God (Gen 4:8-9).
- ❑ Before and after the promise of a “seed” was given to Abraham, his wife was “barren,” not able to have children (Gen 11:30; 18:11).
- ❑ Isaac, one of “the fathers,” also had a “barren” wife, Rebekah, through whom the Messiah would come (Gen 25:21).
- ❑ Jacob, one of “the fathers,” also had a “barren” wife, Rachel, through whom the Savior would come (Gen 29:31).
- ❑ Prior to the Exodus, Pharaoh decreed the death of male babies (Ex 1:22).
- ❑ When the Lord was born, Herod decreed that all infants two and under should be killed in Bethlehem

(Matt 2:16).

Only eternity will tell how many other initiatives were instigated by Satan to destroy the birth of Jesus! The coming of Jesus, *“according to the flesh,”* therefore, involved both the wisdom and power of God. God is greatly to be praised for such a magnificent display of Divine power.

Christ Came

In our text, the Spirit makes a specific point of the role of Israel in bringing forth the Messiah. This was a nation cultured to bring forth the Messiah. As a whole, the nation was a sort of spiritual womb, from which the Savior would make His entrance into the world. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the birth of Christ in this manner—as coming from a nation. *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . .”* (Isa 9:6). On the night of His birth, the angels announced to Jewish shepherds, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:11).

The apocalyptic Gospel in Revelation speaks of Satan’s efforts in these words: *“and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne”* (Rev 12:4-5). That “woman” was “Israel,” which includes all who are “Israelites” in their hearts (John 1:47; Rom 9:6).

Jesus did not come from a Gentile lineage! He was not born of Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, or Grecian nation. He came from a chosen nation, a selected and cultured people. He was born under the influence of the holy Law of God, and where the service of God was prominent. He was not born amidst idolatry, or among a people ignorant of God. As concerning the flesh, He came from Israel!

The seed of Abraham

Another point of this circumstance is made in the book of Hebrews. There, the humanity of Jesus is developed with characteristic exactness. *“For verily He*

took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16). The truth revealed in this text is very precise. More modern versions emphasize that Jesus became a man in order to "help" certain individuals. That is quite true. However, the emphasis of this passage is not what Jesus **came** to do, but what He **DID**. Because of the indispensable ministry He was going to fulfill, He "shared," or partook, in the "flesh and blood" they had (verse 14). He is also said to have been "made LIKE His brethren" (verse 17). The point is that He became LIKE the ones He was going to save, which is the ultimate criterion for His ministry of "help."

Note how the Spirit refers to the "flesh and blood" Jesus took upon Himself. He does **not** say "all men," or "the world," or "the likeness of sinful flesh," as in Romans 8:3. Instead, He says, "the seed of Abraham," or "the descendants of Abraham." ^{NRSV} And who are "the descendants of Abraham?" They are "the Israelites," to whom the coming of Christ "belonged," as stated in our text.

According to the flesh, Jesus was recognized as a Jew. The wise men from the East knew He was born "king of the Jews" (Matt 2:2). The woman at the well of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me" (John 4:9). When Pilate asked Jesus if He was "the King of the Jews," He replied, "Yes, it is as you say" NIV (Matt 27:11). The sign placed over Jesus as He hung upon the cross was "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matt 27:37). When the Jews themselves remonstrated at this, being convicted, they asked Pilate to revise the sign to read, "He said, I am King of the Jews" (John 19:21).

The point in all of this is to confirm that the Spirit extended Himself, so to speak, to identify the Lord Jesus with the Jewish nation. Our text says He came from them "according to the flesh." Who is the person who would dare to despise the nation from whom the Savior came? It is no wonder that Paul had great

heaviness and continual sorrow of heart over them. Further, it should not surprise us when the Spirit affirms God is still working with them.

Who Is Over All

Because men have a tendency to think too lowly of Christ, the Spirit highly exalts Him. He will not allow us to consider Jesus only as a servant to fulfill our own desires, or a wise man to answer all of our problems. The role of Jesus chiefly relates

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The phrase "over all" is a large one, indeed! It includes "angels and authorities and powers" (1 Pet 3:22). It includes all things "visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (Col 1:16). There is not a created personality in heaven, earth, or hell who, knowingly confronted with Christ's presence, does not bow to Him. If they are not confronted with Him in this world, they will when He is revealed. At that time, in confirmation that He is truly "over all," "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and . . . every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

Until that ultimate day, Jesus **IS** over everything! He is "over all" that is for us, including holy angels and Divine resources. He can marshal the powers of heaven to protect and direct us. He can

bring the blessings of God from heaven to us. He is "over all."

Jesus is "over all" that is against us. The "devil and his angels" are subject to Him! Principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places are against us, yet are subject to Him (Eph 6:12)! He can stop temptation, make a way of escape out of it, and rebuke the powers of darkness. He is "over all." He is the kind of Savior we sorely need!

God Blessed Forever

The blessing of God is upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It is upon Him because He "always" did what pleased the Father (John 8:29). The Father saw the travail of Christ's soul, as He poured it out unto death, and was "satisfied" (Isa 53:11). Jesus, the One who came from Israel, so pleased the Father that He "has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" ^{NKJV} (Phil 2:9). He was "well pleased" with Jesus when He started His ministry (Matt 3:17). He was "well pleased" with the Son at the peak of His earthly ministry (Matt 17:5). It has "pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col 1:19).

There is nothing about Jesus that displeases God. He is "God blessed," and thus everyone who is "in Him" is blessed. The sure way to blessing is to have your life "hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Jesus is blessed by God "forever." His sacrifice will never lose its effectiveness. His intercession will never be ignored by the Father. His exaltation will never be rescinded! Blessed be the name of Jesus!

Amen

What a blessed word: "Amen!" It is a fitting conclusion to our text. "Amen" is a word of acquiesce, or hearty agreement, with what has been said. It is a word of finality that says "nothing more can be added to what has been said. Let it stand just as it has been declared."

This is a word of strong affirmation and agreement. Literally, it means "let it be so, truly." Used at the beginning of an

affirmation (usually translated “*verily*”), it is declaring, “What I am about to say is the absolute truth” (1 Kgs 1:36; Matt 5:18; 6:2; 8:10). Used at the conclusion of a statement, it means “this is indeed the truth.” When used as a response from those hearing the word, it means “I agree, that is the way it should be.”

When the twelve curses of the Law were read to the people, they were required to say “*Amen*” after each one (Deut 27:15-26). When the ark of the covenant was returned to its place of prominence in Israel, insightful rejoicing

and praise burst forth. At that time, it is written, “*And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD*” (1 Chron 16:36). Some Divine affirmations were do strong, holy men would respond, “*Amen, and Amen*” (Psa 41:13; 72:19; 89:52). While this was a forced response rather than one of insight. It reflects Divine desire.

The word “*Amen*” is transliteration. Rather than the word being translated, each letter is converted to its equivalent in another language. It is a word like “*Hallelujah*,” that has the same sound in all languages. Its use in our text is like

saying, “*Let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord*” (Psa 150:6). It is something that can be spoken by all who have been redeemed “*out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*” (Rev 5:9). A global salvation merits a global response! A universal Savior deserves universal praise! Whether we are Jew, Gentile, male, female, bond, or free – when we hear about Jesus being God blessed forever, we can shout “*AMEN!*” Here is an area where believers can unite with all their hearts, in saying “*Amen*” to the blessedness of Jesus, who came out of the nation of Israel!

CONCLUSION

Thus, our consideration of the “*Israelites*” ends on a high and most lofty note—the consideration of the Savior, who came from them. When we think of the fleshly descendants of Abraham, we are thinking properly when we are brought to the consideration of Jesus. Any thoughts of Israel that detract from the enthroned Savior are out of order! That does NOT mean we condone all that they have done, for God Himself was provoked by their unbelief and wickedness (Deut 32:16; Psa 78:58-59). It DOES mean we will honor the choice of God, and the way in which He brought the Savior to us through the Israelites.

In confirmation that “*salvation is of the Jews*,” and that they were singularly blessed, several considerations are in order.

- The Law was given to the Jews.
- The lawgiver was a Jew (John 1:17).
- They are the only fleshly nation acknowledged by God.
- Their homeland, “the land of Israel,” is the only land in the world’s history that God acknowledged as “*His land*” (Joel 2:18).
- Their central city, Jerusalem, is the only city in the history of the world where God has placed His name (1 Kings 11:36).
- All of the Prophets were Jews.
- All of the high priests (with the

possible exception of Melchizedec) and priests were Jews.

- The lineage of Jesus is Jewish.
- The mother of Jesus was a Jew.
- The man God chose to raise Jesus was a Jew.
- The man chosen to be the forerunner of Jesus was a Jew.
- The first people to whom the birth of Jesus was announced were Jews.
- The man who dedicated the infant Jesus was a Jew.
- The twelve Apostles were Jews.
- The Apostle to the Gentiles was a Jew.

willing to go to any extent possible so they could be saved? It was not merely because he was related to them, but because they are a monument to the working of God. He chose them and blessed them. There remains a remnant among them because of these realities.

None of their sin is condoned by God, and it cannot be excused by us. We can surely learn from them the things to avoid, seeking zealously to evade the transgressions into which they fell (1 Cor 10:8-10). But we can also learn from their record about the faithfulness of God, the sureness of His blessing, and the relentlessness of His love.

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God be thanked for the Israelites, for their record, the great believers that were among them, and the glorious Savior who came from them! May our hearts yearn, and our prayers go up, for them. To a measurable degree, we have been blessed because of them. We are in their tree, and are partaking of the rich and nourishing resources of their “*root*.”

- The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the gates of the glorified church (Rev 21:12).

Is it not clear to your heart why Paul had “*great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart*” over them? Should it not be apparent to us why Paul was

Some years ago, a dear brother in Indiana made a comment about the role of Israel in our salvation. It was in the mid-sixties, and I shall never forget it. Several of the men were in a wilderness in a time of fasting and prayer. During that time, when we were sensitive, and our hearts

and minds were enlarged, this brother said, "I thank God that the Israelites endured the great difficulties related to their tree taking root. They endured the blast of the desert heat, and the rush of torrential floods in order that the tree might be solidly rooted. Now it holds us, who were wild olive branches by nature." That brother's name is Carl Waldrop, now residing in the state of Alabama. Here I pray tribute to his eagle eye of insight,

given to him during that memorable week-end.

The church does well to develop a wholesome and godly attitude toward the "Israelites." The due and proper consideration of them will help us to avoid sin, expand our view of the Kingdom, and enhance our understanding of the rich

promises of God. It behooves us to zealously avoid any hatred of this people, and to refuse to rail upon them. Jesus asked the Father to forgive them WHILE they were at the height of their rejection of them. Can we not seek their salvation, seek the peace of Jerusalem, and pray for the lifting of the veil from their eyes? Indeed we can! May we faithfully do so.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/9/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 6-13 of the ninth chapter. The theme will be, "**PROMISE WILL PREVAIL.**" In this passage Paul bears his heart concerning his kinsmen according to the flesh. He declares an attitude not expressed for any other body of unsaved people. In this, he partakes of the Spirit of Jesus Himself. He now shares the advantages given to these people by the Living God. As the text is unfolded, the Spirit will confirm these advantages have been for a determined purpose that will ultimately be fulfilled. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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