

IS GOD DONE WITH ISRAEL?

Romans 9:1-6a

In 1543, Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation, published a pamphlet titled, *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Early in his ministry, Luther was sympathetic to the Jews believing they would convert to Christianity. When they did not, he became deeply embittered. His contempt for the Jews became as severe as the Roman Catholic Church.

In his pamphlet, Luther advocated expulsion of Jews from Germany as well as the destruction of their synagogues and religious books. Here is an excerpt:

“First their synagogues should be set on fire and whatever is left be buried in the dirt so that no one may be able to see a stone or cinder from it ... Jewish prayer books should be destroyed ... then the Jewish people should be dealt with, their homes smashed and destroyed. Jews should be banned from the roads and markets, should be drafted into forced labor and made to earn their bread ‘by the sweat of their noses’...”

“They live by evil and plunder; they are wicked beasts that ought to be driven out like mad dogs.”

“In the last resort they should be kicked out ‘for all time’.

Four hundred years later, when the Nazis came to power in Germany, they used the writings of Luther and other Christian theologians to justify their anti-semitism. The infamous Nazi death camp, Dachau, greeted Jews arriving there with a sign that read, “You are here because you killed our God”.

Martin Luther was hardly the first anti-semitic church leader in Christendom. Sadly, anti-semitism in the Church began in the 2nd century AD. Most of the early Church Fathers were previously disciples of Plato, Socrates and other Greek philosophers. Ignatius, Origen, Justyn Martyr, Marcion and John Crystostom all began to teach what we today call Replacement Theology. Replacement Theology teaches that God rejected Israel because the Jews rejected Jesus. Replacement Theology further teaches that the Church is now spiritual Israel. There is no future for national, physical Israel. All the unfulfilled promises and prophecies regarding Israel are now being fulfilled in the Church in a spiritual way.

As a result, most of these Church Fathers were overtly anti-Semitic. Justyn Martyr stated in his letter to a Greek Jew named Trypho: “God gave the Jews the Torah as punishment for their exceptional wickedness and because of His special hatred of the Jewish people. We too would observe your Sabbath days and Festivals if we were not aware of the reason they were imposed upon you, namely because of your wickedness and hard hearts.”

Tragically, both the Roman Catholic Church and later the protestant Christian Church in Europe have been the cause of great suffering for Jews over the last 2000 years because of Replacement Theology. Replacement Theology is taught in the Roman Catholic Church and mainline Protestant denominations. It is associated with the false teachings of Covenant Theology, Strict and Hyper Calvinism and Amillennialism.

It is not a minor issue. Replacement Theology goes to the very character of God and to the way we interpret Scripture. Replacement Theology blasphemes God as a promise-breaker. Replacement Theology violates Scripture allegorizing away major passages that do not fit its error.

At the heart of this issue is the question: “Is God done with Israel?”

This is the question the Apostle Paul answers in Romans 9-11.

This question surfaces because in Paul’s day, the majority of Jews rejected Jesus as Messiah. Led by their spiritual leaders, the Jews rejected Jesus’ messianic claims and with the help of Rome, killed Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Rather than receiving the promised kingdom ruled by Messiah, the nation of Israel remained subjugated to Rome. By 70AD Israel ceased to exist as a nation.

Paul turns to this issue at this point in his letter because Israel’s state of unbelief could cause doubt in the trustworthiness of God. Romans 8:31-39 declares nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ

Jesus. God has promised and we, therefore, can be absolutely confident we will be glorified. We will receive our resurrection bodies and be conformed to the image of His Son.

But some might object; “God made promises to Israel concerning the Messiah that haven’t been fulfilled. If God hasn’t fulfilled His promises to Israel, how can we be confident He will fulfill His promises to us?”

These are the questions Paul answers in Romans 9-11.

As we study Romans 9:1-6, we first observe that the Apostle Paul expresses deep sorrow over national Israel’s rejection of Messiah.

PAUL’S HEART FOR HIS JEWISH BRETHREN (9:1-3)

Romans 9:1–3 (ESV)

1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— **2** that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3** For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

After his conversion, Paul was viewed as a traitor by his fellow Israelites. Soon after his conversion the Jews attempted to murder Paul in Damascus (Acts 9:19b-23). Jewish opposition to Paul’s ministry grew until it blew up in Jerusalem leading to Paul’s incarceration and trial in Rome (Acts 21:27ff.) While his own people rejected him, Paul still loves them deeply and yearns for the day when they will know God as he knows Him.

In verses four and five, Paul affirms Israel’s unique relationship to God. He lists eight privileges exclusively granted them by God.

PRIVILEGES AND PROMISES GIVEN ISRAEL (9:4-5)

Romans 9:4–5 (ESV)

4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. **5** To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

To be an *Israelite* was considered an honor by the Jews. An *Israelite* is a physical descendant of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob. To this people group God gave eight privileges:

The Adoption

The adoption refers to Israel’s national adoption as the national son of God. Listen to God’s instructions to Moses:

Exodus 4:21–23 (ESV)

21 And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. **22** Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my **firstborn son**, **23** and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”

Just as believers are individually children of God by adoption, Israel as a nation is the national son of God.

The Glory

The glory refers to the Shechinah Glory. The Shechinah Glory is the visible manifestation of God’s presence.

Exodus 40:34–38 (ESV)

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. **35** And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. **36** Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would

set out. **37** But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. **38** For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

The third privilege are the *covenants*.

The Covenants

The covenants refer to the four unconditional covenants God made with Israel. The four unconditional covenants are: the *Abrahamic Covenant*, the *Land Covenant*, the *Davidic Covenant*, and the *New Covenant*. These covenants along with the conditional *Mosaic Covenant* are the key to understanding and rightly interpreting Scripture. Covenant and Replacement theologians virtually ignore these covenants. Instead they contrive and interpret Scripture according to a "covenant of grace" that does not exist and is completely unknown in Scripture.

The Eight Covenants of the Bible study by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum is, without exaggeration, one of the most important and essential studies you will ever study. It clarifies God's program for Israel and for the Church and it will clear up a lot of confusion about the Ten Commandments. Please take a copy today or get it online at <http://www.arielm.org/dcs/pdf/mbs021m.pdf>

The next privilege Paul recounts is *the giving of the law*.

The Giving of the Law

The giving of the law refers to the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses contained 613 commands that revealed God's righteousness. The Law of Moses was contained in the one conditional covenant God made with Israel, the *Mosaic Covenant*.

The fifth privilege is *the worship*.

The Worship

The worship refers to the worship practices associated with the Tabernacle and Temple. It also includes the worship calendar and celebrations such as Passover and the seven Feasts of the Lord. *The worship* also included the priesthood and the various animal sacrifices and offerings.

The sixth privilege is *the promises*.

The Promises

The promises refer to the promises related to the Messiah. They include the promises of His first coming, His second coming and the establishment of His kingdom here on earth. God promises that one day the nation of Israel, as a nation, will come to faith in the Messiah. Jesus will settle Israel safe in the promised land and will reign over Israel and the world in righteousness.

The seventh privilege is *the patriarchs*.

The Patriarchs

The patriarchs refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jewish nation of Israel came into being through *the patriarchs*. As was said previously, a Jew is a person descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

The eighth privilege is *the Christ*.

The Christ

The Christ refers to the Messiah. The promised Messiah is a Jew ethnically. Notice also that Messiah is *God over all*. So the Messiah is fully human, a Jew and He is fully divine, He is God. The Messiah is Jesus Who proved Himself fully human of Jewish descent and fully divine.

By recounting these eight privileges, Paul emphasizes the unique and privileged relationship Israel has with God. But these eight privileges also emphasize that the nation of Israel should have recognized and accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

How tragic that at the time Paul writes this letter his people, the Jews, remain under God's wrath and will soon suffer divine discipline at the hands of the Romans.

Does this mean God is done with Israel? Did God reject Israel because Israel rejected Jesus?

GOD KEEPS HIS WORD (9:6a)

Romans 9:6 (ESV)

But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

This is the key verse of this section. Paul declares emphatically God's promises to the nation of Israel have not failed; they have not *faded away* because of Israel's unbelief. In the rest of chapter nine, Paul explains Israel's present condition from God's side of the coin. In chapter ten he explains Israel's present condition from Israel's side of the coin. In chapter eleven Paul explains the reason for God's plan and the fulfillment of His promises to Israel.

God is not done with Israel; He will fulfill His covenant promises to the Jews!

Contrary to Replacement Theologians who blaspheme God as a promise-breaker, we can be 100% confident God will keep His promises to us because He is keeping His promises to Israel.

God is the ultimate Promise-Keeper!