

What About The Jews? (1)

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to begin this evening a short mini-series, you could say, upon the subject of the Jews. What about the Jews? Where do they fit in now that we have the Gospel?

Now that the Gospel is spread throughout the world, what about the Jews? The sacred people of God, chosen from so long ago, the descendants of Abraham.

Where do they fit in now to the scheme of salvation? Now, we may not have an inclusive answer by the time we are finished, but I want us to look in stages through the part of the New Testament about which this subject is discussed in most depth.

And that is chapters 9 to 11 of the letter to the Romans here. Chapters 9, 10 and 11. And we will look through these chapters, Lord willing, in the coming weeks and see what the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Ghost, has written down about his own fellow Israelites, his people of the Jews, in respect of God, in respect of the Messiah.

What is the purpose now of the people of Israel according to the flesh? What about the Jews? And we find them here at the beginning of chapter 9, echoing a sentiment which was first recorded as expressed by Moses long, long before.

[1 : 25] And when he says, The burden that he has for them is such that he almost wishes that if it were possible to take the curse upon himself so that they would understand and receive Christ, then he would long to do it.

One reason that he stops short of saying that, perhaps, is that he recognizes there is only one mediator between God and man, and that is the man Christ Jesus. Nobody else can stand in that place.

Moses, of course, made a similar plea. Exodus 32, we read in verses 31 and 32, Moses returned unto the Lord and said, In other words, you can't stand in the gap for somebody else.

You cannot take their place, Moses. You may point people to Christ. You may be something of a mediator between God and man, but you are not the mediator.

You can only point to the one who is, pointing forward to the fulfillment in Christ. But Moses has this similar sentiment. Such is his burden for the people of Israel, that if it were possible for him to take their punishment instead, and for them to go free and so to be made right in the eyes of God, he would do it.

[3 : 30] And Paul has got a similar sentiment here. I couldn't wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises, whose are the fathers and of whom concerning the flesh Christ came.

Now, in having this burden, not only is he echoing Moses, but there is also something of this in our Lord himself. If you remember in Luke 19, where we read in verse 41, when he was come near, he beheld the city, that is Jerusalem, and wept over it.

He wept over Jerusalem, saying, Now, Why doesn't Jesus just say, Well, Jerusalem, you had your chance, serves you right.

Why doesn't he feel like that? Why does he have this sentiment, which is, he says, he wept over the city? Because this city of Jerusalem represents, in terms of gathering together, the personification, the ultimate gathered expression of the people of Israel.

The temple is there. The sacrifices are there. It is the national, cultural, religious expression of this people who are dignified by, made unique by their relationship to the living God, Jehovah.

[5 : 30] A relationship which no other nation in the entire world has, or had, up to that point. And Jesus, naturally, as a Jew himself, feels this sense of national loss, this sense of national pain, that his own people are going down the tubes, going down to hell, because they are rejecting the only

means of their own salvation.

He feels it.

Culture and laws and relationship to the living God. That was the mission of Israel. This is their status before God.

And sometimes it became a cause of pride. Sometimes it became a cause of complacency. Well, God is in our midst, so we can't lose.

We can do whatever we like, and we're always going to win, because God's on our side. And God often chides with them, way back even in the wilderness. Moses writes, again, they describe their situation.

[7:02] Chapter 32 in Deuteronomy, in verse 6 says, Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? They corrupted themselves. Their spot is not the spot of his children.

They are perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee? Hath he has this sense again of having laid out a price for them, having bought them, redeemed them, being their father. And Jesus, remember, teaches his apostles, teaches his people.

When you pray, you say, our father. And Israel has this relationship to God. Right back at the beginning of Exodus, you know, when he says to Pharaoh, let my people go. Israel is my son, my firstborn.

Therefore, let my son go, that he may come and serve me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh says, I know not the Lord, and I won't let Israel go. But this is their relationship.

[8:03] They have a father to his children. And yet, it is slipping into their grasp. And Paul is yearning over them, longing to claw them back into this sacred relationship that had been all lost.

But the majority cannot see it. Who's other fathers? And of whom is concerning the flesh Christ came? Who is over all? God bless it forever. And then, just in case the Romans, remember, Rome is going to be a very mixed city.

Great, diverse city for people of all nations in the empire. We gather in Rome. Quite a melting pot. A sizable number of Jews. And a sizable number of Gentiles.

But those Gentiles who were believers would naturally have been exposed to the Old Testament scriptures. Because that's the only scriptures anybody had. At that point, some of Paul's letters, yes, would be extant.

Some of the gospel accounts might be circulating. But by and large, it was the Old Testament scriptures, which were the only scriptures anybody had. You know, sometimes, I remember a few years ago, a friend of my father said, oh, well, I like to think of myself as a New Testament Christian.

[9:14] I thought, great. Somebody had apostolic purity, simplicity, selling off your land to give it to the poor and the needy. And so I thought, brilliant. And I said, all right.

And then he went on to explain. He said, yeah, I'm a lot more comfortable with the New Testament. I don't really like the Old Testament at all. And that's what he meant by a New Testament Christian. So one of the things I gently and, you know, affectionately said to him was, well, you've got to remember that the Old Testament was Jesus' Bible.

That's all that he had, scripture-wise. If it was good enough for Jesus, maybe it should be good enough for us, too. Not that we don't need the New Testament, but we shouldn't downgrade the Old.

This is what the church was built on, the Old Testament scripture. The fathers, the covenants, the law, the prophets, the writings, the Psalms.

This was Jesus' own Bible. And this was the bedrock of the New Testament church. Because Paul may be thinking, well, I'm supposing people then turn around and say, yeah, well, God's word didn't come to pass then, did it?

[10:20] It wasn't any use. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children.

But in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Now the point he's making here is that God's promise to Abraham was that his seed would be as the stars of heaven for a multitude.

The sand on the seashore. Now that was a promise about his descendants. It wasn't talking about covenant life. It was simply to say to this faithful old man, look, the one thing I have withheld from you up to now is children.

You're a rich man. You've had everything you could possibly want in this world. You're a beautiful wife. Even into old age, people are still crazy about them. They want to abduct her and take it into their harem and so on.

You've got camels and flocks and herds and man servants and maidservants. You've got everything but you don't have children. But the day will come when your descendants will be as numerous as the stars of heaven.

[11 : 24] Now that wasn't a promise about it. And they'll all be saved. It was simply that his descendants would multiply and multiply exponentially. And when you think about it, then it begins pretty early on.

Because apart from Ishmael, of course, who is Hagar's son with Abraham, after Sarah's death, he then marries Ketcherah. And he has, I think, six or so sons with her and all their descendants and so on would multiply.

And then there's the descendants of Esau, Isaac's elder twin, as well as Jacob's own family and the twelve tribes and so on. So the number that are of the covenant line is comparatively few.

But the number of descendants of Abraham is actually huge. And it's multiplying all the time. God is keeping his promise to Abraham even though most of these people will not be saved. Even though most of these people will not be believers and of the covenant line.

God keeps his promise to Abraham. This is the word of promise when he says that Not all they who are of Abraham are of Israel, which are of Israel.

[12 : 32] Neither are they the seed of Abraham as they are the old children. But in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Although there's lots of them, the covenant is being preserved with only a remnant.

They which are the children of the flesh. In one thing, those who are the children of the spirit. Those who are the children of the promise. Now we can again replicate this in terms of any church or nation.

Even at the height of its Christian heritage. When Scotland was a covenanted nation. Amongst that covenanted nation would be all manner of different degrees of zeal.

And of faithfulness. And a born again love for the Lord. And some people would just be going with the flow. And others would be genuinely born again lovers of Christ. And it's the same in any branch of the church.

In any outward denomination. You'll have some to whom. That's just the badge they were brought up in. That's the church where they'll be buried. But they never go near it anyway. And so on. And their belonging. Or their adherence.

[13 : 34] Or their allegiance to it is one thing. But within that number there will be some for whom Christ is their all in all. Who are truly born again by his spirit.

These will be part of that remnant. And it's the same in any branch of the church. It's the same in any country. And it's the same in Israel according to the flesh. And Paul is anxious to point out and say.

Look it's not that God's word has failed. It hasn't. All the way down through the history of Israel. There was like a thread running through the vast numbers of these people descended from Abraham.

A thread of those who were true believers. A thread of those within whom the covenant promise was retained. And it says you know through Sarah.

And then through Rebekah. And then through Jacob and his descendants. And the elders shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved. But Esau have I hated. Again you've got to take that in a context.

[14 : 36] It's a quotation from Malachi. Chapter 1 verses 2 and 3. Where it says you know. Was not Esau Jacob's brother said the Lord. Yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau.

And laid his mountains in his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. God doesn't hate in that sense. It's in the sense of loved less. He loved Esau less than he loved Jacob.

Because Jacob was his chosen one. Not for any virtue of his part. You know when we looked at Jacob. And when we were working through Genesis. As we see just what a rascal. Just what a chancer he was.

And God has come up with some course. But you know God didn't choose him for any righteousness on his part. So when it says Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated. It means loved less.

Remember that this is the same terms in which. You know saying hated. In which Leah is described. You know when God saw that Leah was hated. He opened her womb. And then she had six sons and so on.

[15 : 35] And then other children through the handmaids. And then dying at the end of course. Now we can't pretend that Jacob hated this woman with whom he had so many children. This woman that he spent you know all his married life with.

As well as Rachel of course. But Leah was his first wife. Leah's the one who produced all the sons and heirs and so on. Leah would be considered the valuable wife in that culture.

And yet it says Leah was hated. Obviously it means loved less than Rachel. But the Lord blessed her and made it up to her of course.

In other ways. The elders shall serve the younger. All of this quotation. Verses you know seven onwards. He's referring to Genesis. He's referring to Old Testament scripture.

He's referring to situations that his heroes will be familiar with. When he talks about Abraham and Isaac and Rebekah and Sarah. He's not having to explain who these people are.

[16 : 31] He's taking it that they know. That they are themselves speaking of Old Testament scriptures. And remember that he's doing all this. And later on in the chapter it's even more that he quotes.

He's doing all this without a concordance. Or without an app. That you just press a button and look. Oh there's the right text comes up and so on. This is all from memory. This is all quotations from memories of the Hebrew scrolls.

Which he will have read and read and read and read. And imbibed and memorized. Whole chunks of it. This is how deep Paul.

And a lot of other people in those days too. Were steeped in the scriptures. It really does put us to shame. What shall we say then? Verse 40. Is there unrighteousness with God?

God forbid. For he saith to Moses. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth.

[17 : 31] Nor of him that runneth. But of God that showeth mercy. Remember where it said in Ecclesiastes. A return in song. And some races not to the swift. Nor the battle to the strong. Nor yet bread to the wise.

And wisdom to men of understanding. That time and chance happeneth to them all. In other words. God's providence unfolds as it will. And it's not the strong that always win the race.

Or the swift that win the race. Or the strong that win the battle. God has mercy upon whom he would have mercy. It's not of him that willeth. Or of him that runneth. But of God that showeth mercy. And he doesn't make mistakes.

He chooses whom he will. But not for anything on their heart. Not because they are virtuous or good. But just out of love. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.

And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. If we're to say in this first section then. Well does that mean God has cast off the Jews?

[18 : 31] And how can we conclude that? Because this is a Jew that's writing it. And Hebrew of the Hebrews as he describes himself. You know elsewhere. Jeremiah says in chapter 33 verse 23.

Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken say? The two families which the Lord hath chosen. That's Ephraim and Judah.

He hath even cast them off. Thus they have despised my people. That they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the Lord. If my covenant be not with day and night.

And if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob. And David my servant. So that I will not take any of his seed.

To be rules over the seed of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. But I will cause their captivity to return. And have mercy on them. What God says there through Jeremiah. Is that his business with the Jewish people.

[19 : 31] The people of Israel. Will last as long as day and night. His covenant with day and night endure. Now you might say. Ah yes. But that's all fulfilled now in the Messiah.

He talks about not being finished with the descendants of Jacob. He's talking about not dispensing with this nation altogether. There's more to come in the other chapters about that.

But all the way through. We see that God is dealing with his people according to the flesh. In the same way as he always dealt with them. Which is that of their number.

Of the overwhelming multitude. That's one thing. Within that number. That it would always be a thread of faithfulness. A covenant line. And those adhering to it.

Who would stay and remain faithful to the Lord. And that was the case out of the Old Testament. And it is the case also under the New. Isaiah 10 verse 22.

[20 : 31] For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea. Yet a remnant of them shall return. The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

We'll come to that also later on. In the chapter. And some of the other things that Paul quotes. In chapter 1 verse 9 of Isaiah. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant. We should have been as Sodom. And we should have been like unto Gomorrah. And that's what we've got in the Old Testament. He's talking about keeping a remnant. If we think in terms of the New Testament church.

And we think of oh well that's when they cast off. All the old you know. All the old sacrifices. All the old dispensation. And now it's the New Testament. And it's open up to the Gentiles. Remember that all of the first Christians were Jews.

All of the apostles were Jews. 99% of the New Testament is written by Jews. That the only books that aren't are the Acts of the Apostles.

[21 : 37] And the Gospel according to St. Luke. Luke almost certainly is a Gentile. All the others are Jews. And Jesus himself says. I am not sent it unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

It is only after his resurrection and ascension. That his disciples are taught to go and be his witnesses. In Jerusalem or Judea and Sermia. And to the ends of the earth. And the Gospel spreads out.

And as late as Acts 15. The early church. The whole church at that stage. Is still debating. Whether or not when Gentiles come to believe.

They should be made to become Jews first. They should be circumcised. They should be brought within the nation. And the fellowship of Israel. So you see. The fact of the Gospel being. Becoming open. Completely open to the Gentiles. As Gentiles. Is still an open question. Quite late. Into the New Testament. And again.

[22 : 36] We're back to this idea. God has not cast off his people. But rather. That amongst all. The multitudes. Of Israelites. According to the flesh. There's a thread.

There's a remnant. Who are faithful to him. There always was. In the early days. Before the flood. And the descendants of Adam.

There's Noah. And his family. There's his father. There's his grandfather. Methuselah. They all die. In the year of the flood. Noah is preserved.

Noah and his family. And that's the little thread. Of faithfulness. These eight souls. That are preserved. In the ark. Where all the rest of the world perishes. All the descendants.

All the ancestors. Before that. Going back to Adam. The implication is. There's a line. Enoch. And his descendants. And Seth. And his line. Going down.

[23 : 30] And that the rest. Go their own way. They abandon the living God. But there's a line. There's a thread. That keeps running. Through humanity. And so it is still.

Amongst the people of the Jews. At this stage. And when Paul is writing. What are we to make. In this present day. When the vast majority. Of the church.

Is Gentile. Well. We'll just mention. In passing. And we'll come back to it. In due course. In subsequent weeks. That it is a matter of fact. That nowadays.

In the present day. There are in fact. More. Jewish believers. Hebrew Christians. We might call them. Believing that Jesus of Nazareth. Is the Messiah. Than there have ever been before.

There's still only a tiny remnant. Amongst all the multitudes. Of Jewish people. Throughout the world. But then if you look at all the multitudes. Of Gentile people. Throughout the world. The number of true believers. Is only a tiny thread.

[24 : 27] We're only a tiny minority. In our own country. Christians. As opposed to non-Christians. You can't say. Oh well. The defining identity. Of Scottish people.

Is Scottish Presbyterianism. How many. Bible believing. Born again. Scottish Presbyterian Christians. Do you think there are. In this entire nation.

It would be frightening. To find out. How few. We were. So the nation. Of Israel. The people of Israel. The people of the Jews.

At this stage. When Paul is writing. The point he is making. Is not. As though. The word of God. Hath taken. None. Effect. Verse six.

It is not. To be understood. That God's promises. Didn't come to pass. God's word. Wasn't fulfilled. But rather. There continues.

[25 : 20] To be a faithful thread. There continues. To be. A remnant. Ongoing. Down the ages. Through the years. Faithful to God.

Faithful to his Messiah. Always. In the midst. Of his people. According to the flesh. The Lord. Will have. His people. According to the spirit. The people of the Jews.

Still have. A purpose. To fulfill. The people of Israel. Are not. Thrown over. And abandoned. By God. They no longer.

Hold. The unique. Position. That they once. Did. Because the gospel. Has spread. So much further. Than just that one nation. But nor are they.

Completely dispensed. With. That. That. So far. Appears to be. The teaching. Of scripture. We will go through. Lord willing. These chapters.

[26 : 15] Nine. To eleven. In the weeks that follow. And continue to see. What God reveals. And writes. About his own. People of Israel. According to the flesh.

And to what extent. They are to become his people. According to the spirit. The church. But.