

Romans 9:3-13 (NKJV)

3-5 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

1

6-7 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

2

10-12 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

3

What sets Israel apart from other nations?

Rom 9:4-5 Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

1) adoption

- *Adoption*, in a biblical sense, is the legal recognition of a mature son as firstborn, whether in a genetic sense, or not

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- The *firstborn* is the son that the father considers worthy of receiving a double inheritance, which comes with the responsibility of carrying on the father's business affairs and functioning as the high priest of the family
- Israel was first created by God as a nation through Jacob, then later designated as firstborn amongst the nations

Isa. 43:1 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

5

- *created* = Heb. *bara* = to call into existence that which had no existence (also used in v. 7)

Isa 43:7 Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.

- In the context this refers, specifically, to the Jewish people
- God is saying that He *created* Jacob – He *called Jacob into existence* and all the individual Jews thereafter

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- That's quite a statement, for it doesn't use the normal lingo of procreation from one generation to another
- Somehow, the Jewish people are not merely the products of reproduction, as the rest of mankind, they are God's unique people, called into existence by Him
- We don't understand what all of that means, but it certainly implies something very special

7

Arlen Chitwood, *God's Firstborn Sons*:
Because of creation, Jacob is seen as a son of God; and, through procreation, all of his descendants are seen in Scripture individually as sons of God, with the nation as a whole seen collectively or corporately as God's son. And, following the adoption, the nation would be viewed as God's firstborn son (Ex. 4:22, 23). [Exod. 4:22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD: 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.'"]

8

Arlen Chitwood, *God's Firstborn Sons (cont'd)*:
This entire thought of *creation and sonship, followed by adoption*, is what separates and sets apart both the Jewish people individually and the nation of Israel as a whole from all the Gentiles (individually, or nationally). Scripture makes a sharp distinction between *Israel* on the one hand and the *Gentile nations* on the other. The Jewish people comprise a separate and distinct nation which is not to be "reckoned among the nations" — the Gentile nations (cf. Num. 23:9; Deut. 7:6; Amos 3:1,2).

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What sets Israel apart from other nations?
2) the glory

- The Shekinah glory hovered on Mt. Sinai like a consuming fire
- Later, it became a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night that accompanied Israel on her journey through the wilderness
- God was signifying to His people that He was personally in their midst
- After the tabernacle was constructed, the glory of God filled the place

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Exod 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

- The glory was unique to Israel

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What sets Israel apart from other nations?
3) the covenants

- Abrahamic – God promises to make of Abraham a great nation, to bless all families of the earth through Him, and to give Canaan land to Abraham and his descendants
- Mosaic – God promises to make Israel a kingdom of priests to propagate His blessing and glory to all the nations, IF the nation will remain obedient to Him

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- **Davidic** – God promises to give David a descendant on the throne of Israel forever
- **New** – God promises a new era of forgiveness, with His word written on the heart
- All of the covenants are for Israel, including the NEW covenant

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Arlen Chitwood, *Salvation in the O.T.*

Covenants are made with Israel (Rom 9:4). No covenant has been made or ever will be made with the Church ... The Old Covenant (Mosaic, inseparably associated with the Abrahamic) was made with Israel; and the New Covenant, one day replacing the Old, will be made with Israel. *BOTH have to do with the theocracy, as do ALL covenants made or to be made with Israel (Davidic, Palestinian, New).*

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What sets Israel apart from other nations?

4) giving of the law

- This is referring to the Mosaic law given on Mt. Sinai, which was accompanied by angels (Acts 7:53, Gal. 3:19, and Heb. 2:2)
- Mt. Sinai was quite a spectacle, with thunder and lightning and smoke and the sound of a trumpet blast and a great quaking
- Needless to say, something important happened there, namely, God spoke to His people and gave the law

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What sets Israel apart from other nations?

5) the service of God

- Referring to the Levitical system of blood sacrifices and offerings on the altar, initially at the tabernacle and later at the temple

6) the promises

- God made numerous promises to Israel, mainly in the prophets, which were promises of Messiah's coming and His glorious kingdom

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What sets Israel apart from other nations?

7) the fathers (patriarchs)

- God set apart great and godly men, and then trained them and chastened them as needed to bring them to maturity – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and others

8) the Messiah

- Born of a Jewish virgin woman, descendant of King David
- He is over all, *God blessed throughout the ages* – a testimony to the divinity of Christ

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Arlen Chitwood, *God's Firstborn Sons*

No Gentile nation can qualify to lay claim to anything in this list, for there is *no special creation* among any of the Gentile nations, allowing *sonship* and a *subsequent adoption* to exist. The only way that any Gentile nation can have any type [of] association with the things listed in this verse is seen in Gen. 9:25-27 ...

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Arlen Chitwood, *God's Firstborn Sons (cont'd)*

Of the three sons of Noah, *Shem* was the only one revealed to have a God (v. 26). And if either of the other two sons (Ham or Japheth), alienated from God in this respect, were to receive spiritual blessings, they would have had to “dwell in the tents of Shem” (v. 27). That is to say, they would have had to come to the one in possession of a God and spiritual blessings. They would have had to come to and ally themselves with Shem.

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Arlen Chitwood, *God's Firstborn Sons (cont'd)*

And that is exactly the position in which *Israel and the Gentile nations* have found themselves throughout millenniums of time, find themselves today, and will always find themselves. Of all the nations on earth, *Israel, the nation descending from Shem through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the only nation having a God*; and the God Whom Israel possesses has decreed that *all spiritual blessings are to flow through the nation which He has singled out as His firstborn son.*

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Arlen Chitwood, *God's Firstborn Sons (cont'd)*

Thus, for the Gentiles to be blessed — today, or at any time yet future — they would/will have to ... come to the one in possession of a God and in possession of spiritual blessings ... Israel.

- Given all of these wonderful benefits, we would expect Israel to have embraced the Messiah at His first coming
- But that did not happen due to misunderstanding who Jesus was

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- Paul, therefore, quashes what might have been in the minds of some in his day

Rom 9:6a But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.

- God's Word has not failed! The promises are just as sure as ever and will be fulfilled
- Israel's present rejection of Jesus as Messiah in no way derails what God has promised for Israel in the future
- Everything that has happened with Israel is in accordance with God's purposes

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Who are Israelites?

Rom 9:6b For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

- Paul restates what he had said earlier:

Rom 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

- So it's not merely about nationality

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Zane Hodges: For Paul, it is one thing to be an Israelite in the natural sense of that word, and another thing to be an Israelite spiritually.

Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God:*

Not all who are descendants of Jacob truly belong to Israel, and not all who are born of Abraham are truly Abraham's children. THESE WORDS HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED AS FOLLOWS: God never indicated that his promise would be for all Israel; his promise to Abraham applies only to that part of Israel which he chooses from among all the Israelites ...

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

Therefore, what we now see happening to Israel is in full agreement with Scripture ... So, why does the greatest part of Israel not share in God's salvation? God does not count them as true Israelites; true Israelites are only those who belong to that part of Israel that has been elected. They are those who accepted Messiah when he came, and possibly a few more in later times.

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

So this is a letdown! Paul and the other Jews had hoped that Jesus would save all Israel, but in retrospect it appears that God never intended to do so. Their expectations about God's promise to Israel were too high, and they will have to adapt them to reality, for the hope that all Israel would be saved is not grounded in Scripture ... **THIS IS THE EXPLANATION THAT HAS BECOME GENERALLY ACCEPTED IN THE CHURCH.**

26

- But this interpretation, which has led to replacement theology and antisemitism is completely **BOGUS!** How do we know that?
1. Paul has just given eight benefits that set Israel apart from the other nations, and he uses the *present* tense
- Thus, Israel is distinct from all other nations, in that Israel has been given the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the temple service, the promises, the patriarchs, and the Messiah Himself!

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- Paul assumes these things to be true even at the time of his writing, not merely true in Israel's past – for that matter, they are still true today!
2. A few chapters before this, Paul defends Israel's primacy even after the nation's rejection of Jesus as Messiah, and he asks:

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Rom 3:1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?

2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?

4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.

- Israel's unbelief does not cancel out God's promises! God will fulfill His Word!

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3. In ch. 11, we find Paul's conclusion:

- Israel's unbelief is only for a period of time
Rom 11:25b Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

- Israel will be saved and forgiven by God
Rom 11:26-27 All Israel will be saved ... when I take away their sins.

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- God's calling of His people cannot be derailed
Rom 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
- Paul then shares the reason for Israel's present unbelief
Rom 11:32 For God has committed them all (both Jews and Gentiles) to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

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- Israel's temporary rejection of Messiah is so that God may have mercy on the Gentiles, but one day He will have mercy on His people once again, and they will be saved
- One of the arguments of replacement theology – that only part of Israel will be saved – is completely false and merely an unbiblical teaching of the Reformers

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- Paul now begins to develop his argument
Rom 9:7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." (God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 21:12)
8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.
9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

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- Paul says that not even all of Abraham's children are Israelites, children of promise
- The promise only applies to Isaac's lineage
- So that would obviously rule out Ishmael, who is the child of the flesh referred to in v. 8
- Abraham's consorting with Hagar wasn't a spiritual act; it was a fleshly one
- He took matters into his own hands and tried to "help" God fulfill the promise
- But the promised seed, the children of God, ultimately came through Sarah, not Hagar

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Zane Hodges:

It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God. To be truly children of Abraham, Paul implies, is to be the children of God ... By way of analogy, therefore, believing Israelites are children of God by faith in Christ, in contrast to unbelieving Israelites, who are not. Indeed, as mere physical descendants of Abraham, they are actually children of the flesh.

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- The capstone of this line of thinking is found in Gal. 3:
Gal 3:7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.
8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." (quoting Gen. 12:3)
9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

36

How did God call Israel?

Rom 9:10-12 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

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- Not only did God choose Isaac over Ishmael, He also chose Jacob over Esau
- God's choice had nothing to do with behavior, for He made His choice before Jacob and Esau were born –
- Paul makes that very clear in v. 11 – the purpose of God was "not of works but of Him who calls"
- It was God's unilateral and arbitrary decision, not based on anything inherent in one twin or the other

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- Furthermore, God chose the younger over the elder, as He also did with Isaac over Ishmael
- Why God chooses in this manner, we do not know, but it's none of our business – God can do as He sees fit – We can only rejoice:

Rom 11:33-34 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?

39

- The promised seed came through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- Even though Esau has the same two parents as Jacob, Esau is not the father of any Israelites, i.e., children of God/promise
- He became subservient to Jacob, who was God's choice as firstborn inheritor
- Jacob, through his twelve sons, is the father of all Jews, naturally-speaking – the promises of God flow through him and his descendants

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Zane Hodges:

Paul is simply reemphasizing that God sovereignly chose the vehicle through which His purpose for Israel was to be realized. Natural, physical descent is not the basis for God's sovereign choice. Ishmael and Esau were both the "seed" of Abraham, but neither was the divinely chosen seed from which the nation itself would come.

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Rom 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

- This is a quote from Mal. 1
- Throughout the centuries, Calvinists have used this verse as one of their hallmark passages to defend their doctrine of Unconditional Election, which is the "U" of Calvinism's T-U-L-I-P acrostic

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God*:

These words became one of the cornerstones of the doctrine of predestination ... Out of the many God chooses a certain number of people he wants to save, while he does not want to save the rest.

- However, that is a misuse of the text, for in the context, God's focus is NOT on *individuals* but on *nations*
- And He is NOT talking about matters of Heaven and Hell; He is talking about choosing a nation to fulfill His will on Earth

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**God does NOT elect some to salvation
and others to damnation!**

44

What is Israel's calling?

Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God*:

All who have been born as descendants of Jacob are intended by God to become true Israelites in the fullest sense of the word. Of this Jacob is the shining example. From his birth the promise was for Jacob. But he did not automatically become what God wanted him to be! Jacob is pictured for us as the man who wanted the blessing at the expense of his brother Esau. And that is not what God has in mind for Israel.

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

Israel has not been called to have the blessing for itself, but to be a blessing from God for all nations. For Jacob this means: to be first of all a blessing to his brother Esau. That he becomes in the night of his wrestling with God. In that night Jacob must fight for the blessing: "I will not let you go, unless you bless me!" There God gives him the name Israel, and there he receives the blessing: "And there he blessed him" ... (Gen. 32:22-32).

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

Now the past evil has been taken care of and the way is open for an encounter with his brother. In that night God makes him a different person. He has become Israel: a blessing for his brother Esau. We read about this in the story of his encounter with his brother that follows. He accompanies the gift, which he had sent to Esau, with the words: "Take, I pray thee, my blessing, that is brought to thee" ... (Gen. 33:11).

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

We have been conditioned to see Esau as the brother whom God had written off. But in fact the story teaches us that he is the brother who receives the blessing when Jacob has truly become Israel. And so, the people of Esau – Edom – is not written off; it is "written in!" After Jacob and Esau together buried their father – the problem between them had been solved for good! ...

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

The story teaches us what it means to be Israel. Jacob was born to be Israel, to be a blessing to his brother Esau, a blessing to all nations. But he does not become that until his struggle with God ... All Israel must become God's people. For to them "belongs the adoption" (Rom. 9:4) ... This implies that this continues to be God's intention for the Jewish people. It will yet be.

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What keeps Israel from fulfilling its calling?

- Two obstacles to Israel's salvation, keeping the nation from fulfilling its adoption as God's firstborn son amongst the nations:
 1. Israel's trust in *lineage*
 - The attitude of the Pharisees: "We have Abraham as our father"
 - As Paul has pointed out, lineage from Abraham is not what counts, for both Ishmael and Esau were Abraham's lineage, but the promise did not come through them

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- Even if the Pharisees were to amend their condescending attitude to: "We have *Jacob* as our father," we must ask:
- "Which Jacob?" Jacob who snatched the blessing at Esau's expense? Or Jacob who wrestled with God, received the blessing, and willingly bestowed it on his brother?
- Not to mention, Paul has made quite clear that merely being an Israelite by nationality is not the same as being an Israelite spiritually, in God's eyes

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Gal 3:7 Know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

- Thus, part of Israel's problem is trusting in lineage, which has blinded the nation from seeing its need
- A second obstacle:
 2. Israel's trust in the *law*
 - By depending on the Mosaic law's rituals to make them spiritual, the Jews are being self-righteous

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- Paul has spent several chapters on this problem, repeatedly emphasizing that what Israel needs is the righteous provision of Jesus living within through His Holy Spirit
- For those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God, the *huios*, the firstborn inheritors
- But seeing they have rejected Messiah, they do not have this provision to live righteously and, therefore, can only live in a fleshly manner

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- Ironically, these are the same two problems of multitudes of 21st century Christians
- They trust their lineage in that they trust their relationship as God's children to ensure a good report card at the Judgment Seat of Christ, regardless of behavior
- The attitude is: "We're Christians! We have all the blessings of salvation mentioned in the NT"
- But they fail to realize that many of those blessings are conditioned on righteous living and suffering with Christ

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- **Multitudes of Christians also have the problem of trusting in the law, so to speak – not the Mosaic law, per se, but a law of their own devising –**
- **Be it a list, or set of rules or standards imposed by their church or denomination, expecting that keeping those things will make them spiritual**
- **Thus, the church's 21st century spiritual problems are really just modified forms of Israel's 1st century spiritual problems**

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Zane Hodges:

The true force of Rom 9:7-13 is that there is clear Scriptural precedent for God's present dealings with His chosen nation. Israel has never received God's gracious mercy on the basis of mere physical descent from the patriarchs, nor has God's mercy been based on their works. This Scriptural precedent is fundamental to Paul's conviction that God's word has not failed (9:6).

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- **One day, when Israel finally realizes who Jesus is, they will have a complete reversal of attitude about their trust in their lineage and their trust in the law**
- **When that happens, the nation will weep in repentance and truly become God's emissary and royal priesthood to the nations**
- **What a day that will be!**

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