

## Romans

Romans Chapter Nine

Romans 9-10-11

February 20, 2011

This is lesson number 78 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

### “Principles of Bible Interpretation”

In our last study we began an introduction to Romans 9, 10, and 11 and pointed out that in order to come to the correct understanding of 11:26a

**“And so all Israel will be saved....”** That it is essential that you allow Paul to define “Israel” and not impose on the phrase a preconceived notion as to who is Israel.

Some have said, “Well Israel is Israel and that is all there is to it.”

“Never underestimate the power of a preconceived notion.”

Charles D. Alexander

We opened the subject of eschatology or the doctrine of last things.

After the lesson last week someone needed some help on the terms “pre”, “post” and “a” as in premillennial, etc. It is usually the case that when one person asks a question others have similar issues.

The prefixes “pre”, “post” and “a” are a relationship of time and refer to what happens before, after, or during the millennium, or the thousand year reign of Christ. When does the Lord Jesus return? What happens at the Second Coming of Christ?

And believe it or not the entire discussion of the “millennium” hinges on a single passage in Revelation 20. As I read Revelation 20:1-6, please be prepared to tell me what is literal and what is symbolic.

It is telling to me that those who hold to a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ can make one phrase, “a thousand years”, literal and by necessity allow almost everything else in this passage be symbolic.

## Romans

Rev 20:1-6

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup>He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup>and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

<sup>4</sup>And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I* saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The Greek word *chilioi* is translated “a thousand” in Revelation 20 but literally means “thousands” which is plural.

[NT:5507](#) χίλιοι **chilioi** (khil'-ee-oy); plural of uncertain affinity; a thousand:

**KJV** - thous

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

According to Strong's the Greek word is plural, i.e., “thousands” but those who insist that the reign of Christ is a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ make it singular! A lot of confusion might have been spared the church if the translators had correctly translated *chilioi* “thousands” instead of “a thousand”.

The prefixes “pre”, “post” and “a” refer to systems of eschatology and mean the return of Christ is before the millennium or “pre”; after the millennium or “post”; or no “a” millennium.

## Romans

There are four major views of eschatology:

**Dispensationalism:** The millennium is future. The current most popular view and to me the most extreme view of Premillennialism is Dispensationalism. This view of last things says that the nation of Israel {Israel after the flesh} is the focus of the Bible. The Bible begins and ends with ethnic Israel as a nation. The church is an afterthought, a “parenthesis”. Israel is national Israel and Israel will never be part of the church. There are two ways to be saved, be born a Jew, or to be a Christian. The church and Israel are two separate entities and the one is never a part of the other. The nation of Israel will be restored at the return of Christ and Christ will reign as King on the earth over a literal kingdom for a literal 1000 years. Many OT prophesies of a land are not completely fulfilled in the OT nor in the church in a heavenly Jerusalem, they are reserved for the millennium. The OT takes precedence over the NT. The church is “raptured” out of the world at the return of Christ to be forever separate from Israel. The temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem and animal sacrifices will once again be offered. Judaism is restored in all its former glory. To be fair Dispensationalism has been modified in recent years but the current popular version, viz. “Left Behind” is pretty close to what is described above.

**Historic Premillennialism:** The millennium is future. National Israel will be restored at the return of Christ and Christ will reign for a literal 1000 years on earth. Jews will be saved because they are Jews although it will be through the belief of the Gospel. The Jews thus saved become part of the church.

**Postmillennialism:** The millennium is future. There will be an approximate 1000 years of peace and a strong Christian influence in the world before the return of Christ at the end of time. The Jews have a special place in redemptive history because they are Jews.

**Dispensationalism** is the more extreme view of Premillennialism.

Historic Premillennialism and Postmillennialism are not as radically different as the two views that I am dealing with, viz. Dispensationalism and Amillennialism. I reject Premillennialism and Postmillennialism because these two views teach that God has a **special place for the Jews in the future** even though it will be through the Gospel that they will be saved.

**Amillennialism:** The millennium is now. Instead of the term Amillennialism I prefer **realized millennialism** or **inaugurated millennialism**. We are now in the millennial {plural} reign of Christ with the tares growing among the wheat!

The “a” in a-millennial would mean **no** millennium, which is a misnomer. Those who hold to Amillennialism believe that the “millennium” is the perfect period of time between the first advent {incarnation} of Christ and His second coming. Christ the King reigns now in this present age.

Dispensationalism derives seven ages or periods of time in the Bible. However, there are only two ages in the Bible, this present age and the age to come [These are biblical terms]. There are two “Israel’s” in Scripture. There is national Israel, which has been rejected by God, and the

## Romans

“Israel of God” which is the church. The focus of the Bible is on the church as they are redeemed in Christ as **individuals**. God saves sinners through the means of the gospel in all of human history. Before the institution of the local church there were individuals from every race and tribe who were called by God. There is nothing to follow the church when Christ returns. God’s elect will be with Him in glory for eternity. Unbelievers are forever in hell. The NT interprets the OT.

Some, who hold to Amillennialism, e.g., Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, believe that vast numbers of Jews will be saved through the Gospel at the end of the present age. I have no problem with vast numbers of Jews, or anyone else, being saved as **individuals** but I do have a problem with the idea that Jews will be saved because of their birth certificate.

**The conclusion: The Lord Jesus Christ** in Matthew 21:43, says:

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

And the “kingdom of God is at hand”, not yet future. The Jews forfeited any and all claims to the kingdom because of unbelief. The “nation” that bears the fruit of the kingdom of God is the church, the Israel of God.

When John the Baptist, referring to Jesus of Nazareth, proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” he was not only pointing to Messiah but he was announcing the end of Judaism and the Old covenant.

### **Principles of Bible Interpretation:**

**The First Principle of interpretation is the focus of the Bible:** Either the focus of the entire Bible is on a race of people called Israel {the Jews} or the focus of the Bible is on the church.

Is the Bible mainly about the Jews or is the Bible mainly about the church? Of course the Bible is about both the Jews and the church but I mean its end objective, its focus!

Was the OT about the Jews and the NT about the church and will the Jews once more be prominent in the grand scheme of things?

Or is the Bible about the church of the redeemed of God in both the OT and the NT?

You must understand that these two views on the focus of the Bible are so radically different that there is no room for compromise.

## Romans

One view is right and the other view is wrong. They may both be wrong, but they cannot both be right!

The view that says the focus of the Bible is on the Jews claims that their view is the **most literal** interpretation of the Bible.

The view that says the focus of the Bible is on the church claims to be **more spiritual** in their interpretation.

However, it is not correct to assign ‘most literal’ or ‘more spiritual’ to either method because both methods take what they consider to be literal as literal and spiritualize the text when it suits their method of interpretation.

The more literal interpretation of the Bible is called **Dispensationalism** and is embodied in the hugely popular “Left Behind” series of books. In the 1970s it was “The Late Great Planet Earth” that was all the rage.

The view that says the focus of the Bible is on the church and is more spiritual is called **Amillennialism**.

There are not very many books written about the more spiritual view of interpretation. This view is not sensational.

How many books could you sell if all you had to say was that there is the present age and the age to come?

There is no ‘secret rapture’ with Christians flying on airplanes suddenly disappearing; there is only one general resurrection of the dead, the saved and the lost at the same resurrection of the dead. And there is no third temple in Jerusalem with renewed animal sacrifices.

Simply put there is this present age and the age to come, and that’s it.

There is much more involved in the intricacies of Dispensationalism besides what I will point out but these points are **essential** to this method of interpretation.

If Dispensationalism yields on any one of **these points** its entire system of interpretation will crumble.

## Romans

And so the First Principle is on how you view the focus of the Bible, Jews or the church is the essential point.

**A Second Principle:** Dispensationalism says that the NT **does not** interpret the OT and that all of the OT prophecies concerning the Jews must be literally fulfilled in a future time called the ‘millennium’ or a literal 1000-year reign of Christ on this earth.

**A Third Principle:** Dispensationalism does not allow that the church is found in the OT. By the ‘church’ I mean those who believe the same Gospel that we preach today and I do not mean the visible church organization as it was instituted on the Day of Pentecost.

Dispensationalism makes a fixed and eternal separation between Israel and the Church. This separation between Israel and the Church, according to Dispensationalism will be forever.

There are those who teach that the church is not to be found anywhere in the OT. They claim that there is no spiritual application to the church in the OT. They teach that the institution of the church is the “mystery” that is written about in the NT.

They teach that Jesus Christ offered the Jews a kingdom but when the Jews rejected Him, **then** God brought in the church.

They further teach that the church will be taken out of the world in a secret “rapture” and then God will set up an earthly kingdom and that Christ will reign for a literal 1000 years from a physical throne in Jerusalem.

This teaching says that the church and Israel are separate entities and that they never come together either on earth or in heaven.

A well-known, now departed, Bible teacher wrote: “To take the promises God gave to Abraham and apply them to the Church is nothing short of spiritual robbery. To spiritualize Israel and teach that the Church has taken the place of God’s chosen people is to wrongly divide the Word of Truth.”

Daniel, by Oliver Greene, page 343.

## Romans

And what does it matter? It matters because this view of the Church **destroys** the very makeup of the church: “...**a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb....**”

**A Fourth Principle:** Dispensationalism recognizes two methods of salvation, one for the Jews and one for the Church. Dispensationalism claims that salvation is by grace but it insists that God will save the Jews because they are Jews.

E.g., Roman Catholicism says they believe in salvation by grace. But grace, according to R.C. teaching is only to be obtained through the sacraments of the church. So they can call it ‘grace’ but it amount to something that you must do in order to be saved.

What I believe and what I must preach is the view that the Bible is primarily about what Christ has done for the church.

**The focus of the entire Bible is on the church.**

Because the focus of the Bible is on the church we see that there are **two Israel’s** in the Bible.

**One Israel** is the nation that was instituted when God delivered the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt and through Moses gave them the law and obedience to that law set them apart from all the other peoples on the earth.

**The other Israel** is the church. In Galatians the church is called the “Israel of God” and the “seed of Abraham according to the promise”.

The view that I teach says that the **NT must interpret the OT.**

This view says that all of the promises that God made to national Israel have been fulfilled or forfeited because of unbelief.

There is no future national Israel.

The modern country in the Middle East that is called Israel is not the Israel of God’s prophecy in the OT. Israel as a nation disappeared when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.

## Romans

Amillennialism says that the church **is** to be found in the OT and says that the Gospel was presented in seminal form to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15.

The Gospel is to be found in all of the types of the OT sacrifices.

The church and national Israel are described in Galatians 4:21-31.

Gal 4:21-31

<sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. <sup>23</sup> But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, <sup>24</sup> which things are symbolic. For these are the\* two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — <sup>25</sup> for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — <sup>26</sup> but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. <sup>27</sup> For it is written:

*"Rejoice, O barren,  
You who do not bear!  
Break forth and shout,  
You who are not in labor!  
For the desolate has many more children  
Than she who has a husband."*

<sup>28</sup> Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup> But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now. <sup>30</sup> Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? *"Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."* <sup>31</sup> So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

What sense can be made of this passage if the allegory does not mean that the 'Jerusalem above' is the offspring of the true son and is the church?

That is the doctrine of the church in the OT, is it not?

God has only one method of saving sinners. In the OT Abraham was justified by faith alone in God and Abraham believed that God would provide a sufficient Substitute for sin.



## Romans

Every person that God saved in the OT looked **forward** to Christ who is the Lamb of God. In the NT era everyone who is saved looks **back** to what Christ has done as the Substitute for sin.

In both the OT and NT there is only one method of salvation.

The Church is the final object of the love of God in Christ and there is nothing to follow the church. When Christ returns that is the end of this 'present age' and the 'age to come' continues forever.

That is quite an **excursus** but I believe we must lay such a foundation of Bible Interpretation in order to correctly deal with Romans 9, 10, and 11.

My plan now is to point out some verses in chapters 9, 10, and 11 and give you what I believe are some of the main points of each chapter.

### **Chapter 9:**

The reason that you can believe the Gospel and trust the Word of God is because God is absolutely sovereign. What does 'sovereign' mean?

The sovereignty of God means that God is the first cause behind everything that has ever happened or that ever will happen. Even the tragic events of abortion and cancer and terrorists attacks are under the control of a loving God. Did Job suffer? Was Job being punished for specific sins? Did Job understand what was happening in his life and why? Did God love Job?

Rom 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

“According to His purpose!”

Verse 9:6 begins to answer the question about what God will do or has done with the Jews. There are two “Israels!”

## Romans

Paul develops the doctrines of election and predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God in His sovereign choice of **individual** Jews and **individual** Gentiles.

It was never the purpose of God to save all the Jews! God would have to recover the vast majority of Jews already in hell if the salvation of all the Jews was His purpose.

### Chapter 10:

So that we do not become fatalists or hyper-Calvinists and fall into the error that God will save a person apart from faith in Jesus Christ Paul gives us another lesson in justification by faith alone.

Read 10:11-17

### Chapter 11:

This chapter **is** about national Israel and its relationship to the Gentiles.

Notice that in the beginning of each chapter [chapter divisions were introduced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century] Paul identifies himself with the Jews:

9:3 'my kinsmen according to the flesh';

10:1 'Brethren';

11:1 'For I also am an Israelite'.

Notice also how the Apostle continues to connect the OT to the NT. He closes each chapter with quotes from the OT Scriptures that enforces his argument and proves that what he is preaching is not a NT innovation that departs from the Word of God, i.e., the OT Scriptures.

He talks about how the natural branches {Jews} are broken off and how wild branches {Gentiles} are grafted into the root. Notice that there is only **one olive tree**, not a Jewish olive tree, and a Gentile olive tree.

Rom 11:26

## Romans

And so all Israel will be saved,....

We will have much more to say about it but here is my simple and not at all sensational interpretation of 11:26a.

In all of human history there have been people who were not Jews who were saved by grace. There were people saved before there was a Jewish nation such as Adam and Eve, Abel, Noah, Job, Abraham and Sarah, and many other people who believed in the true God.

After the establishment of the Jewish nation there were still people who were saved who were not Jews. And that continues in this present age.

The total number of the non-Jews make up ‘the fullness of the Gentiles.’

After the establishment of the Jewish nation there were individual Jews within Israel {9:6} who believed God and they are called the ‘remnant’ {11:5}.

The phrase ‘And so all Israel will be saved’ does not refer to a sequence in time. It does not mean that **after** the ‘fullness of the Gentiles’ **THEN** ‘all Israel’ i.e., all the Jews, will be saved.

What it means is that **‘in this manner’** all Israel will be saved.

When the sum total of individual Gentiles are saved and the total of the remnant of individual Jews are saved, **‘in this manner’** all Israel will be saved....”

The Israel of God is the church that is made up of Jews and Gentiles brought into **one body** in Jesus Christ. And that is the mystery {11:25}!

The **mystery** is that the church is made up of Gentiles and Jews! The middle wall of partition has been removed and it will never again separate Jews and Gentiles. That is the mystery that has now been revealed. The mystery is not that there would be the church but the make up of the church with believing Gentiles and believing Jews who are equal in Christ Jesus!

**Next time we will actually deal with the text!**