

Not All Israel Is Israel

- :6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:
:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.
:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.
:9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.
:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;
:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)
:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.
:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

REVIEW

How could God allow that tragic earthquake to happen? How could a loving God let a mentally unstable person suffer the way he does? How could God send people to hell?

These questions are requests for a “theodicy.” A theodicy is a vindication of God, a justification of His dealings with man, a defense of His divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil.

Requests for explanations about the ways of God are to be expected. They indicate active minds. They can be reasonable, though there are boundaries in terms of acceptable attitudes and expectations.

Romans 9-11 forms a “theodicy.” The question: Given that the previous chapters are true, then what is going on with Israel? *This* is what blessed looks like? This is how God treats His chosen people? How can the promises of God be reconciled with the painful reality of what we all can observe?

Surveys indicate there may be only 20,000 Jews in Israel who are born-again believers in Jesus Christ. That figure would indicate that 99.7% of all Jews in the Promised Land have not received the Messiah. Indeed, surveys also indicate that 52% of all Jews do not even believe in God!

How does explain God's relationship with Israel? Here in general is how we shall see Paul answer:

1. The promises of God do not include every ethnic Israelite regardless of belief, but those who are delivered from their sins by personal faith in their Messiah.
2. The historical and severe chastisement of Israel is their fault due to stubborn and willful unbelief.
3. God's setting aside of Israel is temporary.

Now, as we proceed in this study, it would be wise to go over a few ground rules:

1. Understand that this is a tough section of Scripture. In the opinion of Princeton scholar Charles Erdman, these chapters may be “the most difficult to interpret of any which Paul ever penned.”
2. Don't confuse the nation with the individual.
3. Don't confuse Israel with the church.
4. The 3 chapters should be read as a unit to acquire a balanced theology. This is a trilogy of sorts. Chapter 9 is about Divine sovereignty; 10, human responsibility; 11, universal blessing.

Now, for our text. The first issue, as always, ultimately:

I. God's Word is true!

A. “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” (:6a)

1. Literally, “has fallen out” or “has fallen to the ground.” Picture 9/11 twin towers or Dagon.

B. See the seriousness of the charge!

1. Has the Word of God *failed*? Has God failed to keep His promise to the Jews?

2. No, friends, do not think it!

a. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num. 23:19)

b. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matt. 24:35)

II. It is *man* that is untrue!

A. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” (6b)

1. “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” (John 7:24)

2. We're talking about an obvious first principle we learn: **Not all [blank] are [blank].**

a. Not all ... cops are bad, preachers are fakes, blacks are athletes, whites are prejudiced, politicians are insincere, lawyers are _____, women are _____, men are _____, or bikers are _____. Not all church goers are Christians, and NOT ALL ISRAEL IS ISRAEL.

B. What pretense for someone to expect Divine favor because he *is* something physically!

1. Jesus rebukes this way of thinking in Matt. 3:9 – “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”

2. Compare John 8:38-39.

C. Paul illustrates this point with the Patriarchs (:7-9).

1. Not all Abraham's seed was blessed.

a. Not first-born Ishmael. He did not receive the Abrahamic blessing.

b. Not Abraham's 6 later-born sons through his wife Keturah: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

c. No, “but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” (:8)

d. So, “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” (:9)

2. Not all Isaac's seed was blessed.
 - a. “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” (:13)
3. So, to sum up the first point: God's blessings have historically fallen on a subset of people.
4. And here's the second point: God has a purpose behind the blessing.
 - a. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” (:11)
 - b. The purpose: To illustrate that God's blessings are based on grace, not merit.
 1. Seen here with Jacob receiving favor before having done good or evil.
 2. And obviously seen as well in the previous case, Isaac.
 - Abraham's first child was born through human devising and strength, while Isaac was born totally by the planning and power of God.
 3. And see, as well, how those not in the Abrahamic line of blessing turned out!
 - Ishmael: “He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” (Gen. 16:12)
 - Esau: sold his birthright for a bowl of stew; was at enmity with the emblem of grace (Jacob); married 2 Canaanite women; founder of Edom, notorious for no interest in spiritual things, enemy of Israel.

III. So let's sum up what we have learned so far in Romans 9.

- A. Paul is grieved over people separated from God and at enmity with him.
- B. But the people's dire condition is not due to a lack of privilege or opportunity.
- C. Their current dire condition is not contrary to what God promised.
 1. The promise was not for all of a certain blood line, but of a spiritual state.
 2. Those under chastisement suffered for their own stubborn unbelief.
 3. The separation is temporary, for many of this people shall return to God.
- D. So God's Word is true.
 1. God's blessing falls on a subset of people as He chooses.
 2. God has His purposes which we may not understand.

IV. Application to the Church

A. Recognize that God's blessings fall on a subset of people.

1. A subset of people are chosen.

a. "For many are called but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:14)

2. A subset of people do the will of God.

a. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21)

3. A subset of people excel in godliness.

a. "One man among a thousand have I found." (Ecc. 7:28)

B. Know that God has a purpose in His blessings.

1. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. 1:5-6)

C. Place yourself in the way of blessing.

1. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Ps. 1:1-2)

2. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. 5:3-11)

DISCUSSION

1. A theodicy is a explanation or justification of God's dealings with man. What do you think the world would like to see explained about God's dealings with man and what are the Bible's explanation?