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# Romans

**...of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. Romans 9:5**

Paul continues his list of honors which have been bestowed upon the people of Israel which began in verse 4:

Of whom are the fathers - The fathers are also known as the "patriarchs," a term referring to the "first" fathers. They are the heads of the household of God's people who are looked upon as exemplars of faith in and fellowship with God. The patriarchs include Abraham (Hebrews 7:4), the great man of faith who was called and given the promises of God, the sign of circumcision, and who continues to be used as the epitome of faithfulness throughout the pages of the Bible. Isaac and Jacob are considered (though not explicitly termed) patriarchs also. The sons of Israel (Acts 7:8) are called patriarchs as well. And finally, in Acts 2:29, King David is called a patriarch.

From whom, according to the flesh, Christ came - The greatest honor of all for the people of Israel is that one which is noted here. They are the people, the chosen line, through whom came the Messiah, the Christ. His human lineage (according to the flesh) is traced through this group of people and it is they whose records detail His ancestry all the way back to the first man, Adam. In the end, everything is tied together in the "oracles of God" as Paul noted back in Romans 3:1, 2 -

"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."

The reason why this is so important to note, along with the other distinctions given by Paul in Romans 9:4 & 5 is that these oracles, meaning the Old Testament, are what tell of the coming Christ and the names of those included in His genealogy - even those not listed in the New Testament record. They also testify to the other distinctions (such as the covenant promises, etc). These were recorded, maintained, and handed down by (and through) the people of Israel. This honor, bestowed upon this group, is not to be thought minimal in any way. Without these records, the knowledge of Christ and His work wouldn't be properly understood.

The reason for this is that even in the Old Testament, it can be discerned that this coming One would be "over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen." In other words, the deity of Jesus Christ can be understood, clearly and plainly, even from the Old Testament. In addition to this, His manhood is seen as well. Therefore, it is implicit that what was coming as recorded by Israel was the incarnation - God stepping into His own creation and doing what was necessary to right the fault which occurred at the beginning.

Unfortunately for Israel, as Jesus noted in Luke 12:47-48, because these oracles testified to Him (John 5:39), Israel should have known better -

"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

Much, a great deal indeed, was given to Israel and they handled the responsibility negligently. Because of this, they went into exile for a second time. How this would affect the rest of the world, and how it will affect this special group of people in the future, will be discussed by Paul in detail in the verses and chapters ahead.

## The Jew

Scattered by God's avenging hand,  
Afflicted and forlorn,  
Sad wanderers from their pleasant land,  
Do Judah's children mourn;

And e'en in Christian countries, few  
Breathe thoughts of pity for the Jew.

Yet listen, Gentile, do you love  
The Bible's precious page?  
Then let your hearts with kindness move  
To Israel's' heritage:

Who traced those lines of love for you -  
Each sacred writer was a Jew.

And then as years and ages passed,  
And nations rose and fell,  
Though clouds and darkness oft were cast  
O'er captive Israel,  
The oracles of God for you  
Were kept in safety by the Jew.

And when the great Redeemer came  
For guilty man to bleed,  
He did not take an angel's name  
No - Born of Abraham's seed  
Jesus, who gave His life for you,  
The gentle savior was a Jew.

And though His own received Him not  
And turned in pride away,  
Whence is the Gentile's happier lot?  
Are you more just than they?  
No: God in pity turned to you -  
Have you no pity for the Jew?

Go, then, and bend your knee to pray  
For Israel's ancient race;  
Ask the dear Savior every day  
To call them by His grace;  
Go, for a debt of love is due  
From Christian Gentiles to the Jew.

Author unknown

Life application: All of Scripture points to Jesus - His incarnation, which is the uniting of God with humanity. Although this may be a hard concept for us as humans to grasp, it is the clear intent and truth found in Scripture. A denial of the deity of Jesus Christ is a denial of God's work on our behalf. One who denies Jesus Christ is Lord cannot be saved.

**But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,...** Romans 9:6

One has to pay attention to what they are reading concerning Israel or suddenly a false impression of who "Israel" is comes into play. Israel is not the church and the church is not Israel. There is nothing in Paul's writings to indicate otherwise and everything to dispel such a notion.

However, far too often, people in the church look at verses such as Romans 9:6 and, tying them together with other verses, come to the conclusion that if there are those who are not Israel who are "of Israel," then the opposite must somehow be true; those who are of Israel now were not previously "of Israel." This is a faulty premise and isn't supportable at all.

Having said this, Paul will show how those who were not God's people (Israel) become God's people (by faith) and how those who were God's people (Israel) are not truly God's people (because they lack faith). Again, the categories are set

between Israel and non-Israel, and who are God's people and who are not God's people. Keep these categories straight and the error of thinking that the church becomes Israel won't be made.

With this understanding, Paul begins 9:6 with "But." This is showing a contrast of his thoughts on verses 1-5. He has been describing the honors and distinctions of being a son of Israel and now he shows the contrast, "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect." The word, which establishes and explains the duties of the people Israel, isn't to blame for any fault which arises in the people. It is the basis for who they are and explains how they were to conduct themselves because of their honored status.

As we proceed through his thoughts in the coming verses and chapters, he will quote this very word of God which details their responsibilities and which identifies those who are truly of Israel. This is why he mentions it now. Once this baseline for his thoughts (the Scriptures) is noted, he then makes his pronouncement (which will be supported by this baseline) - "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel..."

The seemingly contradictory statement will be fully explained by using the very Scriptures that the Israelites stand on as their evidence for being God's special people in the first place.

Life application: When we come to conclusions from concepts in the Bible, they must square with the various categories which the Bible sets down first. If we misunderstand these categories, then false assumptions will result. Sometimes it's not easy to define categories, particularly when we already have ideas about what we want to believe. Making charts as you read and study is often a good idea to help you align your thoughts with what the Bible intends.

**...nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." Romans 9:7**

In order to substantiate his statement, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel..." Paul returns to the fountain of Scripture to validate that this concept already has precedence. Abraham had a son through his maidservant Hagar named Ishmael. He was Abraham's firstborn, but God rejected Ishmael and his line for the honor of ushering in the Messiah. In fact, no descendant of Ishmael is recorded as being in this line for the rest of the Bible. Instead, God told Abraham that he would, in fact, have a son through his wife Sarah who had been barren for many decades. When the son came, he was named Isaac.

Some time after Isaac's birth, Sarah died and Abraham went on to have more children through his other wives and concubines. And yet, the reckoning of Abraham's seed was and would remain only through Isaac. The precedent was set in this example, that being a descendant of someone by blood doesn't necessarily mean that they will be included in the spiritual blessings which may accompany the bloodline.

This premise should be obvious because ultimately we all descend from one man, Adam. But to make the point of election clear, Paul is using those to whom the promises were given and then showing that not all of their descendants are included in those promises.

This same thing will happen again after Abraham and Paul will cite that example as well in order to continue to make his case concerning election. As a sure example that what he is saying is correct we see the same thing being relayed by Jesus in a verbal altercation with the Pharisees. He shows that one's bloodline is not the only factor that can be considered in our relationship with God -

"They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God.

Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.” Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” John 8:39-44

Life application: When witnessing to others about Jesus, asking "Are you a Christian?" isn't the best approach to determining the truth of the matter. In fact, it can set up a barrier which will then be hard to break down. The reason is that many people believe that they are Christians because they were born into a Christian home. However, being a saved Christian isn't congenital. Instead, every individual must choose to follow Christ.

**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.** Romans 9:8

This verse is speaking directly of the line of promise from Abraham. This line is through Isaac as opposed to all of the children of Abraham who physically descended from him. Because it is speaking in this fashion, the implication is that the same concept applies to later generations as well.

Concerning Abraham, who is being spoken of in verse 7, "those who are the children of flesh" are all born directly from him but who are not of the promise - Ishmael, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (and any others not recorded, but who physically descend from him). It then says, "these are not the children of God."

In this list, Isaac wasn't named even though he was born from Abraham. I've done this because Paul is making a point about those who are of the promise as

opposed to those who are not of the promise. The difference is found in his words "but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."

Taking all of Abraham's physical descendants and calling them "the children of God" would be a mistake. Other than Isaac, they are merely human beings born in the natural way and to whom no promise was made. However, Isaac came by promise as will be seen in verse 8:29.

As noted above, Paul is showing that the same concept certainly applies to later generations as well. Those who believe are of the same line of promise as Isaac. Those who don't believe are excluded from the line, even though they were physically born as descendants of Abraham.

To understand this fully, all we need to do is look at the world today. Many claim physical descent from Abraham. Arabs, for example trace their descent from Ishmael. However, they are not sons of God because of this descent. They are only sons of God if they are Arabs who believe in Christ. If they are Muslims then they are not sons of God.

The Jews who don't believe in Jesus cannot be sons of promise. This is because the promise given to and through Isaac was the promise of the Messiah. It was not a promise intended to stop with Isaac and it wasn't a promise that was intended to stop with Jacob. The branches continue to come out of the tree until Messiah is revealed. Those who have faith in this Branch are grafted into the tree and become children of God by faith. Those who don't are cast out as rejected branches.

Life application: The only bearing that physical descent has on God's redemptive program was in order for humanity to lead to the Messiah. This line continued on for thousands of years until it came to Mary, born of the line of David. However, the Bible records that even Mary had other sons and they are not all Messiahs. Only Jesus fulfills the plan and so even Mary's other sons had to call on Jesus as

Lord. As you can see, your physical descent into a Christian home is irrelevant. Only personal faith in Jesus counts toward your adoption as a child of God.

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

As a way of seeing what Paul is doing with his words over the past few verses, note how he ties them together into greater concepts -

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 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." (9:6-9)

As you can see, he is making a direct connection between the "word of God" and the "word of promise." The Greek word *logos* is used for both concepts. He is also tying the "children of God" in with the "children of promise." The foreknowledge of God is seen quite clearly here and the connection becomes a demonstrable truth as he reaches back into past recorded history to show it. And not only is it recorded history, but it is the recorded history which establishes the people of Israel and the covenant promises.

Understanding this allows us to see more clearly what he will tell us concerning our own election. Using the Scriptures (the word of God) as the basis for his statement, he begins with "For." This is stated in order to substantiate what he just claimed in the preceding verse - That "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."

So, "For this is the word of promise" is given to demonstrate this. If something came by a promise before it actually occurred, then it cannot be ascribed to what is usual. People have children all the time, but it occurs after the union of two people and when that union is at the right time and with all of the right conditions. It is not something that we can say will definitively happen; when it will happen; what sex the child will be; etc.

So when God said to Abraham, "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son" it is reflecting something outside of the normal. It is showing that the promise is tied into the word which has been spoken. If the word is true, then the promise is actually the word itself - they are one and the same. And thus it is because Genesis 17:19 records, "Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him."

Not only was a son promised, but his name was given - Isaac. In addition to this, the selection of the child was tied directly to the covenant which had already been announced to Abraham. And further, the timing of the event was also given as seen in Genesis 18:10 - "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son."

The promise is, in fact, the word. God's pronouncements issue from Who He is. This is the extraordinary marvel which is the word of God, the Holy Bible. If it is the word of God (and it has proven itself time and time again), then what it proclaims must come about.

Life application: People who claim they have a "word from the Lord" or a "vision from God" will be held accountable for what they speak. Too often, such terms are thrown out with no backing and which don't come true. Imagine the consequences of ascribing a word from God which isn't a word from God! Don't be swayed by those who throw out visions and fantasies from their heads. We are accountable for where we place our faith.