

## Romans 9:4-5 (NKJV)

**4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;**

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

Last week we saw Paul's emotional turmoil over his countrymen. He truly had a burden for them.

We now move into Paul's description of his countrymen. The flavor of this passage is similar to attending a young man's funeral, a young man loaded with potential, exhibiting many gifts and abilities, a young man who had plans, but who died as a result of a foolish mistake.

Paul is going to talk about just who is countrymen **are**, what glorious privileges **they held**, what an exalted position they **were given**. Yet they are the people who rejected their Messiah. That is the emphasis of verses 4 and 5. Paul is not just upset that these were his extended kin. It isn't just that they shared genetics from being of the same parental source. They were more than blood.

Clearly in scripture we know that God saw fit to have us born into families. And scripture gives us a lot of **distinct responsibilities** toward our families. They are extremely important in scripture. And so we should be careful to carry out those God given responsibilities **to** our families. If we hope to be of service to God we cannot shirk the home front. But Paul's concern goes beyond mere family alliances and family trees. Paul's emphasis shows that he is concerned about that which **concerns God**. Everything he is about to emphasize shows a people who had a unique position with God. There was no other **people group** in the world's history that verses 4 and 5 could be said about.

Everything in this list is uniquely given **by God to the Israelites**.

Another thing we note is that Paul held the Old Testament history as being very relevant to the New Testament existence. He did not teach, as so many do, that the Old Testament no longer matters. It is no longer significant. It is clear that God gave us this history and we must understand it in the light of the New Testament. That is what Paul always does. Because we cannot understand the **New Testament** fully if we do not have a grasp on the **old**.

We begin with the phrase- **Who are Israelites**.

The word for "who" is actually a double Greek word used to give emphasis. It might be better translated, "Who are such quality or character as to be". So if we put it in the sentence it would finish- "Who are such quality or character as to be Israelites." Do you see the emphasis this gives to the passage already. These Israelites were very special. We see in his choice of wording the emphasis of the tremendous tragedy that these special people, these Israelites, rejected Christ.

Now, why does he use the word **Israelite** and not **Jew** or **Hebrew**. They all describe the same people. But the **emphasis** of each of those words is different. Most of the time the

word **Jew** is used to **distinguish** the people **culturally** and **racially** from **Gentiles**. The word **Hebrew** is normally used to distinguish them as the people who speak the **Hebrew** language. But the word **Israelite** is used very differently. Remember Israel.

**Genesis 32:24-28 (NKJV)**

**24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.**

**25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.**

**26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"**

**27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."**

**28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."**

So here we see that God renamed Jacob Israel. It is here that God proclaimed a unique relationship to Israel. Israel struggled with God and men and prevailed. From that time on his descendants were often called the Israelites. They are God's chosen people. God established a theocracy with them. That has never been true of any other people. And while their ancestor was renamed by God Israel, here, in verse 4, all of Israel's descendants are called Israel. He uses the term very widely.

We are going to see in this chapter that we have to pay very close attention to the contexts. It is more than just the words. The Israelites were God's chosen nation. But that does not mean that each individual citizen was chosen for salvation in the eternal sense. We will get to that shortly.

Paul chose the word **Israel** to describe his people group here, **probably to emphasize their unique relationship** to God as His people.

Amos said "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth." This was a special privileged relationship.

Now let's move on:

**to whom pertain the adoption**

Oh, adoption. We've seen that word before. We saw that those people that God foreknew and chose were adopted. We learned that it is God's purpose to include his adopted children with Him when He is glorified at the end of time. This is great right? So should we assume that this passage is talking about the same thing? This is a perfect illustration of the danger of studying words outside of their context. If we applied the word "adopted" like it is applied in Romans 8 we would have a terrible dilemma. We would have Paul saying that his brothers are damned and saved at the same time. No, we don't have to bear that burden of logic.

The word adoption still means the same thing, but it used in a different context. It is used in the context of a nation instead of as individuals. The **nation** of Israel was **adopted**.

Do you see the grace even here? Even the wording shows that it is not like God had any kind of moral debt to the Israelites to include them as His family. No, he adopted them.

And we learn elsewhere in scripture that it was not due to their loveliness. It was only due to His choice. **God** initiated a relationship with Abraham. Abraham did not initiate a relationship **with God**.

There is a common theme here. Anyone who has ever had a special relationship with God has had an adopted relationship. No one could ever claim a right to it. It has always been by grace that we are saved.

Now to show you that there is a difference in an adoption of a nation as a privileged people and the adoption of individuals as people who are saved for eternity, let's take a quick look at some scriptures.

**Exodus 4:22-23 (NKJV)**

**22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn." ' ' "**

**Then Deuteronomy 14:1-2 (NKJV)**

**1 "You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead.**

**2 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.**

Notice how God calls the nation a child and children. They were chosen as a nation to be God's people.

Now let's look at **Matthew 8:11-12 (NKJV)**

**11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.**

**12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

We see here sons of the kingdom, clearly Jewish people, who are utterly lost. We also see that some clearly lived forever. Here we see Abraham Isaac and Jacob. So there is a distinction between **children of Israel** living in a **nation chosen by God** and those who **God had chosen to live with Him forever- children of promise**. We have to keep this distinction in mind as we finish Romans so we don't make big mistakes doctrinally. Paul is going to argue that all Jews are in a sense "adopted" as Israelites by virtue of their **nationality**, they are not all **individually adopted into the kingdom of God**. It is the difference between being **chosen nationally** or **chosen individually**. The Jews had great difficulty in their history making that distinction. Paul and Christ had no trouble making that distinction. But the distinction always angered his Jewish unbelieving audience.

So for Paul's statement in verse 4, **to whom pertain the adoption**

Paul is talking about their adoption as a nation.

Now keep in mind again, this never happened to any other nation. God singled out Abraham Isaac and Jacob for this distinct privilege.

## **the glory,**

The Israelites have seen the glory of God revealed in ways that no other nation has ever seen. Remember the fiery pillar that led the Israelites through the wilderness? No other nation ever saw God's glory in such a way. How about the burning bush, or the filling of the temple? There are a lot of examples in the Old Testament where God showed His glory to his people in ways that no one else in history ever saw.

## **the covenants,**

### **Ephesians 2:11-12 (NKJV)**

**11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--  
12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

We see that as Gentiles we were excluded from the covenants given to the people of Israel. We were strangers from the covenants. We had no word from God, no promise from God, and no hope for being right with God. But the people of Israel were **children of the covenants**. They had promises that God had made to their ancestors.

Now it is important to understand something about covenants. When men make covenants with each other they are making a bargain. Each signifies what he will contribute and what he will get. And that is all well and good. Back in ancient times a covenant would be established by cutting an animal in half and then each party would walk a figure 8 around both portions and that would seal the deal.

When God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 we find that God told Abraham to bring a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove and a pigeon. He was to cut them in half. After he did that he waited and eventually "it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces."

We are told this so that we will understand that this is not a deal we make with God. It is a promise from God that is binding upon both Him and us. **But it is all one sided**. We aren't given the opportunity to put in any terms. The terms are spelled out by God. It is more like a **pronouncement** than a **bargaining process**. We listen and God speaks. And He tells us what He is going to do and what we are going to do.

That is the kind of covenant that the children of Israel received. There is really only one covenant but each time it is stated more terms are revealed. Let's take a look at the references this morning.

### **With Noah Genesis 6:18 (NKJV)**

**18 But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark--you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.**

Then later in **Gen 9:8-16** God speaks to Noah after the flood and tells him that never again will he send a flood to wipe out the earth. And the sign of that covenant is the rainbow.

**Genesis 15:18** Here God makes a covenant with **Abraham** and tells him that God is going to give Abraham the land of Israel. This is also the scripture where God walks between the pieces of animal to confirm His covenant.

**Genesis 17:4-22 (NKJV)** Here the Lord, probably Christ visited Abraham and told him the following:

**4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.**

**5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.**

**6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.**

**7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.**

**8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."**

**9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.**

Then this is where Abraham is told to circumcise all males.

**15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.**

**16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."**

Abraham had some trouble with that and God said-

**19 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.**

**20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.**

**21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year."**

**22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.**

So the covenant is broadened and more specifics are given.

**Genesis 22:15-19 (NKJV)**

**15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,**

**16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son--**

**17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.**

**18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."**

**19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.**

**Exodus 2:23-25 (NKJV)**

**23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.**

**24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.**

**25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.**

Here Moses is told to remind the Israelites of God's covenant

**Exodus 6:2-8 (NKJV)**

**2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD.**

**3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them.**

**4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.**

**5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.**

**6 Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.**

**7 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.**

**8 And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'** "

Next we see a message that God gave Nathan for David. It gives even more detail to what God was going to do and how He was going to accomplish it.

**2 Samuel 7:12-17 (NKJV)**

**12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.**

**13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**

**14 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.**

**15 But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.**

**16 And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' "**

**17 According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.**

So we see here the wonderful covenants that God made with His people. He told them what was to come. And all of it pointed to the coming of Christ, the one who's throne would be established forever. He told Abraham in his seed all nations would be blessed. The covenant was more than a real estate deal. It dealt with the eternal throne of God and the rightful heir, Jesus Christ. It dealt with ultimate salvation, not as a nation politically but as individuals spiritually. That is where the Old Testament left off. Now let's jump over to the New Testament.

**Luke 1:30-33 (NKJV)**

**30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.**

**31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.**

**32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.**

**33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."**

Wow. What a shock that had to be to Mary. Mary would have known the covenants. Mary would have known they were due for a Messiah. And the reference to the throne of His father David would have been unmistakable. This was covenant language. This was God doing the miraculous and she was right in the middle of it.

Then look at what Zachariah said.

**Luke 1:67-79 (NKJV)**

**67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:**

**68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,**

**69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David,**

**70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began,**

**71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us,**

**72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant,**

**73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:**

74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,  
75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.  
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,  
77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,  
78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;  
79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

Does this drive home to us the impact that Paul was feeling at the Jewish rejection of the Messiah? It was the **people of Israel** who received these covenants. They learned these in school like we learned the pledge of allegiance. I guess for Ferndale school I'll have to compare it to something else. It would be like knowing your math facts. And for you home schoolers, you'll just have to remember something you went over and over on. It is like that.

Here were the people of Israel who **knew** their Messiah was coming. They knew he was promised. They knew **all the promises** to Abraham and their forefathers. They **knew** it. But when Christ appeared, even though His coming was announced in covenant language, they didn't want Him. They rejected Him. How tragic.

And part of what set them up to reject the savior **then**, is what sets up people to reject Him **today**. The Jews of Christ's day, in large, wanted a political savior to save them from unjust power of Rome. They wanted their earthly lives **enriched**. They wanted to be free to enjoy their **earthly pursuits**. They wanted to **be free** to run their lives the way they wanted to run them. They figured that since they were God's chosen **race** that they were God's chosen **individuals**.

But they didn't understand the thing they **really needed** to be saved from. They didn't get that they were sinners. They didn't get that they had a problem for which they had no solution. They didn't get the degree to which **God hates sin** and will punish it with His wrath. They were full of pride and self esteem. And they missed the whole point that they needed **a Savior**. They needed saved from the sinner that they are. That is all of us. We need forgiveness. Without it we are doomed. We needed someone to pay the legal price for our sin. We needed to be reborn from above so that we have power to live a new life, free from the power of sin to control us.

When the people of Israel realized that **this** is what Christ **came for**, they lost interest. And the more Christ told them of their need for that kind of salvation, the more they wanted to kill Him. How about you? If you have never expressed faith in Christ, do you know that you need Him? Do you recognize that you are guilty of sin that condemns you. Do you realize that you cannot do anything to get you out of that state? That is precisely

why Christ came. And if you will call out to Him for the salvation He provides, He will give it to you. The death He died can be counted against the sin you committed. You can receive new life at His hands. Is that the answer you want? Call out to Him. He will not cast out any who come to Him for this salvation.

And how about us who know Christ? Do we realize that **we have even a greater salvation than the nation of Israel knew?** With that being true, do we not have every reason to live faithfully?

I was thinking about this this week. When we see a person who gives up years of his life in study so that he can become a doctor. And then this person begins a practice and makes hundreds of thousands of dollars, do we not admire that he worked so hard to get what he was after? Or when we see someone who scrimps and saves so that he can retire at age 55, even if a person like me might have to battle with envying that person, do we not admire his effort at preparing for a future he desires? Well how about us? Our eternal destiny is a certainty. Yet what we do now lays up for ourselves **treasures in heaven**. Do we really believe that? Do we really believe that God will turn over our investment a thousand fold in heaven? If we really believed that, what would our lives look like? Really? Would it not make sense to exhaust ourselves for the reward which is to come? Would it not make sense to sacrifice **now** for that which is to come later? I think that faith drives that kind of life. Those who were most zealous for God in this life are those who expectantly looked forward to God **fulfilling His promises in the next**. With the salvation that we have been assured of, does it not free us to live a little recklessly in this life? Those that Paul mourned for missed this completely. Will we get it? We need to ask ourselves- what does God want us doing **now** in light of the great salvation He has provided for us in a short while.

We will take up with the rest of this passage next week.