

“To the Jew First, and Also to the Greek”
Romans 1:16
(Preached at Trinity, February 18, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at **Verses 16-17**. As I’ve stated, they are the most important verses in the entire letter. They provide the theme – How a man or woman might be made right before God.
2. Paul began by stating: **Verse 16** – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”
 - A. In **Verse 15** he had stated that he was a debtor to all men. There is an obligation upon every Christian to carry the Gospel to the lost.
 - B. In the second half of **Verse 16** Paul states why he was not ashamed of the Gospel – Because it is the power of God unto salvation.
Romans 1:16 – “For it is the power of God unto salvation”
3. At the end of **Verse 16** Paul directs our attention to those to whom the Gospel is directed.
Romans 1:16 – “To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
 - A. On one hand this states the universal nature of the Gospel. It is directed to all men both Jews and Greeks.
 1. Paul states that the Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . .”
 2. All are one in Christ.
Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
 - B. On the other hand, Paul is making a distinction here. He is making a statement of priority directed to the Jews – “To the Jew first . . .”
4. What does this mean? What is the significance of this statement? Why do the Jews have priority?
What is the place of Israel in God’s purposes today?
 - I. God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him
 - A. It was a Covenant of grace and mercy
 1. Abraham was a Gentile – he was no one of distinction. He grew up in a land of idolatry – his family were idolaters.
 2. God chose Abraham by grace and called him to leave his home and family and follow God.
Genesis 12:1 – “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:”

- B. God made some particular promises to Abraham
1. He promised a land
Genesis 15:7 – “And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.”
Genesis 15:18 – “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:”
 2. He promised a people – a great nation, descendants without number
Genesis 12:2 – “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”
Genesis 15:5 – “And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”
 3. Most important, God promised Abraham that in his seed all of the nations of the earth would be blessed.
Genesis 22:18 – “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”
- C. There are some very important things we must understand as we consider Biblical theology and God’s redemptive purpose
1. God has always had but one plan
 2. God has always been fulfilling His one covenant of redemption that He ordered between the Godhead in eternity past.
 - a. Redemptive history involves God fulfilling this one covenant
 - b. This is the nature of covenant theology
 3. God’s promises to Abraham find their fulfillment in Christ and His church
Galatians 3:16 – “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”
- II. From the beginning Israel had a great advantage in being the nation through whom God’s blessings would come.
- A. All of God’s Old Covenant promises came through Israel
1. Paul spoke of this advantage
Romans 3:1 – “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? ² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”
Hebrews 1:1 – “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,”
 2. The Old Covenant Kingdom was Israel
- B. The coming of Christ was fulfillment of the promises made to Israel
1. After 400 years of prophetic silence the angel of God speaks to Zechariah concerning John the Baptist
Luke 1:16 – “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.”

2. When speech returns to Zechariah he affirms God's covenant to Israel
Luke 1:68-73 – “Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, ⁶⁹ And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; ⁷⁰ As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: ⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; ⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; ⁷³ The oath which he sware to our father Abraham”
 3. Mary also affirmed Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel
Luke 1:54-55 – “He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
- B. Jesus also affirmed the role of Israel in the establishment of His kingdom
1. He chose 12 apostles after the 12 tribes of Israel
 2. Israel had a favored position in His ministry
 - a. He sent the twelve forth to witness specifically to Israel
Matthew 10:5-6 – ‘These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’
 - b. Jesus told the Canaanite woman that His focus was upon Israel
Matthew 15:24 – “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
- C. The followers of Christ saw His work as applying to Israel – even after the resurrection
1. Disciples on the road to Emmaus
Luke 24:21 – “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:”
 2. Even the Apostles after the resurrection saw Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel
Acts 1:6 – “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”
- D. Israel was given priority in the coming of Christ
1. He was promised to them
 2. This is what Paul means in this verse
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
 3. The coming of Christ did not assure that all in Israel would share in His blessings – Simeon remarked
Luke 2:34 – “And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;”

- E. The tragic reality of history is that Israel would not have her Messiah
1. In John's Gospel the chief priests made this clear
John 19:15 – “But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.”
 2. Because of her rebellion, the Kingdom was taken from her
Acts 13:46 – “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”

III. The Old Covenant was a conditional covenant

- A. It demanded the obedience of Israel
Deuteronomy 11:26-28 – “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; ²⁷ A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: ²⁸ And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.”
1. Under the Old Covenant God did not send the powerful influence of His Spirit wherein they might obey. Israel did not obey God and the kingdom was ultimately taken from them
 2. At the Exile, the descendants of Abraham became “Not MY People.”
Hosea 1:8-9 – “Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. ⁹Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*.”
Loruhamah - לֹא רַחֲמָה "no mercy"
Loammi - לֹא-עַמִּי - "not my people"
 - a. Because of their failure to repent, Israel was thrown back into the Gentile world.
 - b. The ten northern tribes were absorbed and lost their identity.
 - c. Clearly, being a physical descendant of Abraham carried no guarantee that a person would remain among God's covenant people without consideration of his faith and faithfulness to God.
- B. The taking of the Kingdom from Israel is clearly taught in the Gospels
Jesus foretold the taking of the Kingdom from Israel
1. Jesus warned the Pharisees that they would be excluded in His kingdom
Luke 13:28-29 – “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.”
 2. Jesus taught this in the Parable of the Vineyard in Matthew 21
Matthew 21:43 – “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

3. Jesus also taught this in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet
The wedding was prepared and the guests were bidden to come but they made light of it and would not and so others were invited
Matthew 22:7-9 – “But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.”
4. In **Matthew 23** Jesus declared the end of the House of Israel
Matthew 23:38 – “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

IV. Israel, however, was not cast off altogether in the sense that no Jew today can be saved.
Romans 11:1 – “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”

- A. The Jews are bidden by the Gospel to repent and believe in Christ
 1. Paul will explain this further in **Chapter 11**
 2. Paul makes it clear that the branches that had been broken off might be grafted in again removing any cause of boasting among the Gentiles.
Romans 11:20-21 – “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: ²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.”
Romans 11:23 – “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.”
 3. Any Jew being “grafted back in” will occur the same way as any other believer – according to God’s election of individuals and faith
Romans 11:5 – “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
- B. The gifts and calling of God is without repentance. Yet, according to the New Covenant God has made the Jew and Gentile one.
Romans 11:29 – ‘For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.’
 1. God has promised that there will always be a remnant of believing Jews which extends to our present day.
Romans 11:5 – “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”
 2. At the same time, God has made the Jew and Gentile one, removing forever the wall of division.
Ephesians 2:14 – “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;”
 3. All of God’s redemptive promises are now shared by Jew and Gentile alike.

Conclusion:

1. There is much confusion today concerning the relationship between Israel and the church, particularly among the Dispensationalists.
If you don't have a proper understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Church you can't properly understand the Bible
2. God has fulfilled His promises to Israel through the church. The church hasn't replaced Israel. The church *IS* Israel.
Romans 2:28-29 – “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.”
 - a. In Hosea God promised to renew His covenant with Israel
Hosea 2:14 – “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.”
Hosea 2:19-20 – “And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. ²⁰ I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.”
 - b. Through faith, Abraham is equally the father of both Jew and uncircumcised Gentile
 - c. The deciding factor is not being the blood heir of Abraham, but of being a new creature in Christ.
Galatians 6:15-16 – “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”
Galatians 3:29 – “And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
3. In essence, the church and Israel are one
 - a. In **Jeremiah 31** God promised the New Covenant with Israel – this is fulfilled in the church – Repeated in **Hebrews 10:15-17**
 - b. God has always had but one spiritual people, represented by a remnant in every generation – This people is called Israel, the body of Christ
4. The only promises to Israel today are those being accomplished in the church through Christ – His Kingdom is forever
 - A. Jesus is ruling over His Kingdom through the church.
F. F. Bruce – “The hope of an earthly and national kingdom was recast after Pentecost as the proclamation of the spiritual kingdom of God, to be entered through repentance and faith in Christ”
 - B. Most Christians do not fully appreciate the privilege of their citizenship in our Lord's Kingdom.
 1. We are the recipients of His promises.
 2. His Divine power has been unleashed upon the world through His Holy Spirit residing in us
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
5. Do you glory in these things? Do they bring you great joy? Do they give you great boldness? We are citizens of His great kingdom.