

Romans 9:1-13 **Not all Israel are Israel**

Outline of the passage:

v 1-5 Paul's sorrow over the Jews – most have not received Christ as Messiah
This leads to a theological problem – “has the word of God failed?”

V6 Paul's answer: No
Justification: Not all Israel are Israel

V6-13 Explanation and Examples

Vv 6-8	Distinction between ethnic Israel and ‘true’, ‘spiritual’ Israel
Vv 6-9	Example #1: Isaac and Ishmael
Vv 10-13	Example #2: Jacob and Esau

Context:

In Romans 1-8 Paul has just been outlining his theology and the gospel: The fact that everyone – Jew and Gentile alike – has sinned and is alienated from God. All are in need of forgiveness, and the only thing that achieves that is the death of Christ.

Romans 3:21-24

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Paul is careful to emphasise that Jews were not saved by obedience to the law and uses Abraham as an example in Chapter 4, noting that it was his faith that pleased God, not just his obedience (Rom 4:3 “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”). This section climaxes in chapter 8 where Paul gives a triumphant vision of life in the spirit now, and the future glory and restoration of the whole world.

Chapter 9 then, seems like an abrupt change.

The gospel of salvation by grace through faith raises an important question about the place of the Jews and the relationship between the gospel and the Old Testament teaching about relationship with God. Paul argues that the gospel is the FULFILLMENT of the Old Testament, but it is difficult to see how this is the case because so many Jews have rejected Jesus. How then, can God's promises to them be fulfilled?

Summary of message:

Paul's answer is that the Old Testament system and the gospel ARE consistent because **belonging to God's true spiritual people has always been based on God's gracious and sovereign call and not on ethnic identity.**

Hence – ‘**not all Israel are Israel.**’ This means that not all who are a part of ethnic Israel (the Jews) are a part of God’s ‘true’ ‘spiritual’ people.
The Jews are God’s people in a corporate sense – they are his chosen nation through whom he would accomplish his plans – but this does not mean that every single Israelite is in a saving relationship with God.

The examples about Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau are meant to demonstrate this. Both are examples of two pairs of brothers – both “Israelites” by biology/genetics/nationality/race etc, but in each case only one of the pair was in fact part of God’s true people.

Bible Passages:

Isaac and Ishmael:

Genesis 12:1-3 – God calls Abram and gives him the promise

Genesis 16:1-4 – Abraham has a child with Hagar

Genesis 17:17-22 – Abraham pleads with God to accept Ishmael, but God re-states his original promise

Gen 21 – Sarah has a son, Isaac

Jacob and Esau:

Genesis 25:19-34

Other useful passages you could look at:

Romans 4 – where Paul talks about Abraham and faith vs. law

Matt 5:17ff – Jesus says: “I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it.”

Romans 11:11-24 – explains that Gentile believers are grafted in to true Israel

Bible Study:

Pray

That God will teach you from his word, and transform you through it!

Intro - Discuss:

What place do you think the Old Testament has in the Christian life?

How do you approach it?

What place does it have in your life?

What is your experience of reading/using/understanding it?

Observation (what does the text say?):

Read the passage aloud (Romans 9:1-13).

Working in small groups, ask people to try and *map out the argument of the passage.*
e.g Where are the different sections?

What is Paul doing in each section?
How does each relate to the argument as a whole?
How does the argument progress etc? (e.g. which bit is the point, are there examples, illustrations, is there an introduction, conclusion etc.)
People should feel free to draw flow charts, or mind maps, or whatever helps....

⇒ I have given you a basic outline above. It doesn't matter if not everyone sets everything out exactly the same way – so long as you think people are getting the basic gist of things!

Interpretation (what does the text mean?):

Some questions you could use for discussion:

What is Paul's main point?
What does this mean?

Why do you think Paul feels such strong emotions? (v 1-5)

Does this change your understanding of the Old Testament?
What significance does this have for our understanding of Christianity?
Can you give some examples of how OT stories/promises are fulfilled in Christ?

What does it mean to be grafted in to Israel?

Is Paul's argument convincing?
Does it leave any questions unanswered?

Plus any questions you think would be useful or relevant.....

⇒ To conclude your discussion you could try asking people to work in groups on a section of the passage to **PARAPHRASE it** – i.e. try and put it into their own words.

This is a really useful way to see if we have really understood what it means!

Application (How do we respond to what the text means?):

Is there a command to obey?
Is there a reason for thanksgiving, worship or praise?
What does this passage teach me about God?
What does this passage teach me about Jesus?
How does this passage fit with what I already know?
Is there a promise to claim?
Is there an example to follow?
Is there a sin to avoid or confess?
What does this passage teach me about myself?
What does this passage teach me about others?

Discuss whichever of the above you think applies.

Then, the important question is:

What will you do in response to this passage?

Possible points for application:

Confidence –

1. in God because he is trustworthy
2. to have a go reading the Old Testament because we know it is relevant and useful for us
3. to be excited about the OT promises and God's working because we know we are now part of Israel
4. confidence in God's promises of Romans 8

Also, the idea that you are not just a Christian because you belong to a Christian group of some sort – family, or school, or whatever.... Just as for Israel it is not genetics that matters, it is the same for us. You're not a Christian just because your parents or grandparents are!

What does that mean for us?

Prayer.

Conclude in prayer, asking God to transform you by his word and help you to apply it to your lives.

Plus all other things you want to pray about....

NB: Obviously there are hints in this passage about election/predestination. My suggestion is that if this comes up, tell people that we will talk about it next week and ask if they can wait till then!! That is the topic of next week's sermon on 9:14-29.