

In our passage for today and next week, Paul clears up a number of doctrines that are hotly debated in the Christian world. There are numerous ideas within the church today of just what our relationship with Israel should be. Some say that believers in Jesus have replaced the Jews as the chosen people of God. Paul will tell us in the rest of the chapter just what our relationship is from God's perspective which is the only correct perspective.

Previously, Paul has explained that Jews are not simply the bloodline of Abraham. A Jew from God's perspective is one whose heart has been changed by God. In chapter two he wrote, *<sup>28</sup> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.* Romans 2:28-29 (ESV) Abraham is the father of the people of faith in the true God (Romans 4:16-17). However, that does not mean that God annulled His covenants and intentions for Abraham's physical descendants.

Paul described the children of faith as being both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:15). They are those who have called on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13), which is to trust in God's mercy and grace rather than their own goodness. Paul referred to the Jews that received the message of the Apostles regarding the life of Jesus as the remnant (Romans 11:5). It was foreshadowed throughout Israel's history. The majority rarely, if ever, truly put their faith in God. Israel has always had a remnant of true believers. Paul was glad to be an Apostle to the Gentiles, because those Gentiles he disciplined had an intimacy with God through Jesus that made his fellow Jews jealous and thereby drew them to accept Jesus as their Messiah (Romans 11:14).

In our passage today, Paul gives us an illustration to help Jew and Gentile understand their relationship. *<sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,* Paul uses the illustration of an olive tree to represent those Jews in the past that had placed their faith in God. It does not represent all the descendants of Abraham, but rather those who are his spiritual descendants, people who trust in God for their salvation.

In chapter three, Paul asked what advantage was it to be a physical descendant of Abraham. His number one reason was that they received the oracles of God (Romans 3:2). If those physical descendants trusted in some other god, they were broken off. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, many came to a choice of where they would place their faith, traditions built around the Word or the Living Word. At the same

**Commented [notes1]: Romans 4:16-17 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, <sup>17</sup> as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

**Commented [notes2]: Ephesians 2:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

**Commented [notes3]: Romans 10:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

**Commented [notes4]: Romans 11:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

**Commented [notes5]: Romans 11:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

**Commented [notes6]: Romans 3:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

time, many remained in the tree (Acts 2:41). They saw the nourishing root of Scripture was fulfilled in Christ and they received that richness and came to an even deeper walk with God. Gentiles were increasingly grafted into tree of the people of faith (Acts 10:45). This was not a new thing. We have numerous Old Testament examples of that. There was Rahab, Ruth, the widow of Zarephath, Naaman (Luke 4:26-27), and others. Certainly they represented but a few of those around the world that called on the name of the Lord and were grafted in, so to speak (Romans 10:12).

As the Apostle Paul and Peter began to minister to Gentiles, they saw great numbers grafted into the true Israel and receive the nourishment, or riches, that come from the Scriptures. I mentioned a few weeks ago that a part of this richness was their understanding of morality that was described in Scripture. They also brought the Gentile believers a better understanding of the nature of God as revealed in the Old Testament. The Scriptures helped them understand why the world is so messed up and also to understand God's covenants with man. Churches that focus only on the New Testament are missing that richness from the roots of the tree. If we miss the Jewish culture of the New Testament, we miss the bulk of what Jesus and the Apostles were writing about.

I've witnessed dear friends get caught up in the New Age idea that Jesus went to India and was enlightened and came back and taught Eastern mysticism, and if we just could read his words in Aramaic we would see how beautiful His words really are. That is ignorance of the world in which Jesus lived. He would have attended Torah school as a boy. He attended synagogue and went to the great Jewish feasts (Luke 4:16). He spoke Aramaic, yes, along with Greek and Hebrew, and He had no problem conveying His message to His disciples. In fact, many now believe that most rabbis taught in Hebrew. Jesus teaching is filled with references and quotes from the Old Testament. He spoke and acted in a clearly Hebrew manner. It was the richness of the trunk that filled His words inspired by the Holy Spirit. Those who would change the meaning do so out of ignorance and to their own detriment.

The Apostle Paul taught Timothy to look out for those dangerous teachings sneaking their way into the church. *<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,* 1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV) These deceitful spirits take advantage of the fact that people today are ignorant of the fundamental truths regarding man and God found in the Old Testament.

I'm going down this side trail to remind us how important it is to recognize the richness that comes to us from the Old Testament. While Scripture does declare the New Covenant replaces some of the old covenant practices, it does so in regard to the national laws of Israel and worship form. It does not negate the fact that those Scriptures are filled with pictures of the coming Messiah and the nature of man and God.

**Commented [notes7]: Acts 2:41 (ESV)**

<sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

**Commented [notes8]: Acts 10:45 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

**Commented [notes9]: Luke 4:26-27 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

<sup>27</sup> And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

**Commented [notes10]: Romans 10:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

**Commented [notes11]: Luke 4:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

Certainly it does not replace the prophets, for the New Testament authors constantly quoted from them to make their case (2Peter 1:19), which is what Paul has done throughout this letter and will emphasize in the next passage.

David Witt was telling me how the Genesis three text brought a woman to saving knowledge of what Jesus had done for her. He uses Genesis two and three for pre-marital counseling. It's the richness of the root.

*<sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.* Gentiles in the church today sometimes act as if the Jews don't have a special calling and place in God's plan. Some even teach that *all* the promises of God are now for the church. Whenever I hear that, I suggest they read the Minor Prophets or even the rest of this chapter. Thank God for the root that supports us. It is Jewish. It is rich, and we are recipients of that richness. The New Testament wouldn't make sense without it.

*<sup>19</sup> Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.* God did not break off the natural branches, referring to Jewish people, because Gentiles were so special. He breaks off those who fall into unbelief. You believe now and read the Scriptures and worship God. So did they at one time. Look out, lest you fall for one of these latter times doctrines of demons. They feed our pride. They seek out vain souls that don't realize everything they have and are comes from God and tempt them with power and pride (1Corinthians 4:7). God is no respecter of persons. In regards to salvation He sees every person the same (Galatians 3:28). Either you place your faith in Jesus as your Lord or you don't. And don't think just because you said the words, "Jesus come into my heart," you are secure (Matthew 7:22-23)! **Who is your Lord? That is what matters. Where is your trust placed?**

Recently some Christians were praying for someone out of compassion for their tormented soul. They asked if the person received Jesus. The person said they had done so numerous times. But what did that mean? While they prayed for the person, that person was channeling demons. That is going on right here in this town. If you are grafted in, you love the Word of God (Psalm 119:97) and the family of God (1John 3:14). If you are in Christ you love to worship with the family of God. Saying a set of words means nothing if you aren't surrendering your life to God and accepting what He has to say about your condition.

*<sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.* God is love (1John 4:8). God is wrath (Romans 1:18). How can that be? If God did not abhor evil, He would not truly be love. You can't love good and evil

**Commented [notes12]: 2 Peter 1:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

**Commented [notes13]: 1 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

**Commented [notes14]: Galatians 3:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Commented [notes15]: Matthew 7:22-23 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."

**Commented [notes16]: Psalm 119:97 (ESV)**

<sup>97</sup> Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

**Commented [notes17]: 1 John 3:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

**Commented [notes18]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**Commented [notes19]: Romans 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

(Psalm 97:10). God loves truth first and foremost. He is just. He will not tolerate evil, though He has graciously provided atonement for evil for those who repent and come to Him for that grace (Hebrews 2:17). However, if someone rejects that grace and embraces evil, God will not override His just nature. He provided a way, but many reject it. He will do all He can justly do (John 3:18-19).

Some ask, "Can God can do anything?" No! He can't violate His perfect nature. He can't embrace evil because He is good. He can't lie because He is truth. He can't bring those who reject Him into His kingdom. He *can* offer a way and give us the message which provides faith (Romans 10:17), but He has given us the free will to do as we choose. Love must be a free choice. God is severe toward those who reject His goodness. He is kind to those who accept it. But you can choose to again reject that kindness. What does the verse say will happen then? You too will be cut off.

*<sup>23</sup> And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.* The Jew who was lopped off for the grafting in of the Gentile believer can be grafted back in. We are seeing it in increasing numbers today.

This is what I have observed though I'm sure there are many exceptions. Reformed Judaism, with its wishy-washy acceptance of everything, illustrates the difference between the Christian who loves the Word of God and lives in it and watered down Judaism. Jews by birth who have no living relationship with God see the passion and love of the Word the true Christian has and they are drawn to the Messiah. God grafts them back in because they believe in His provision of the Messiah Jesus and trust Him. The same is true of those "in name only" Christians. The passion and spiritual life of a true believer can cause them to hunger for that relationship.

*<sup>24</sup> For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.* The Messianic Jews, those who believe in Jesus as Messiah, are often even more zealous than Gentile Christians. This is what God intended for the Jews from the beginning. All the richness from the root comes alive for them. They start to see how it all comes together in Jesus and they become ardent disciples. I believe the 144,000 of the tribulation are Messianic Jews that become evangelists with a special anointing (Revelation 7:4).

*<sup>25</sup> Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* In case we Gentile believers get an uppity attitude toward the Jews who are in unbelief, Paul reminds us that our time will come to an end. This hardening of the heart of the Jewish people will someday be over. Jesus called the time we are currently in the Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). Unbelievers have access to the Temple Mount. Jews rarely

**Commented [notes20]: Psalm 97:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

**Commented [notes21]: Hebrews 2:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

**Commented [notes22]: John 3:18-19 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

<sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

**Commented [notes23]: Romans 10:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**Commented [notes24]: Revelation 7:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

**Commented [notes25]: Luke 21:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

step foot on it. Converts around the world are mostly Gentiles. But one day, the last Gentile will come into the Kingdom and the hardening of Israel will be over.

This is how the prophet Zechariah describes that coming day. <sup>10</sup> *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.* Zechariah 12:10 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> *"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."* Zechariah 13:1 (ESV)

Being grafted into the tree of Israel means we are one with Jewish people of faith. It doesn't mean we have the literal DNA of Israel. Believe it or not, that false teaching is circulating. It doesn't mean the promises to the physical descendants of Israel belong to us. **Being grafted in makes us truly Jewish in a spiritual sense. The richness of the root is ours.** We have the same God, YHWH. We can sing the same songs the Messianic believers sing with the same intensity and conviction. In the flesh I am a Gentile... I think. Many of us don't know exactly unless we can trace our ancestry back far enough. But I am certainly a fulfilled Jew in the Spirit. Their Messiah is my Messiah. Their Savior is my Savior and yours if you are in Jesus.

I believe the Times of the Gentiles are drawing to a close. Perhaps in our life time we will see the last remaining language groups receive the Gospel in their language (Matthew 24:14). Everyone will have a clear choice. The tribulation will come upon the earth (Matthew 24:21). The Messianic Jews will be a powerful witness to the nations. The two sackcloth prophets will proclaim the truth in the streets of Jerusalem, miraculously protected by God until their time to die (Revelation 11:3). They will be raised from the dead (Revelation 11:7). Jesus will return with the armies of heaven, which includes all who have placed their faith in Him (Revelation 19:14). The world's armies will have gathered at the Valley of Megiddo to resist Jesus, and Jesus will be victorious by the utterance of His word (Revelation 19:15). He will reign on the earth for a thousand years as the Throne of David is re-established (Revelation 20:4; Isaiah 9:7). He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and we will be with Him forever (1Thessalonians 4:17). Hallelujah!

#### Questions

- 1 Who is a Jew?
- 2 Describe the olive tree illustration.
- 3 What is the nourishing root?
- 4 What is Paul's warnings in 1Timothy 4:1?
- 5 Why do we need the Old Testament?
- 6 Why are branches broken off?
- 7 What are signs of true salvation?
- 8 Can God do anything?

#### Commented [notes26]: Matthew 24:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

#### Commented [notes27]: Matthew 24:21 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

#### Commented [notes28]: Revelation 11:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

#### Commented [notes29]: Revelation 11:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,

#### Commented [notes30]: Revelation 19:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

#### Commented [notes31]: Revelation 19:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

#### Commented [notes32]: Revelation 20:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

#### Commented [notes33]: Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

#### Commented [notes34]: 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

- 9 In what time do we live?
- 10 When will Israel be saved?
- 11 Are you a Jew?