

Romans 9:25-33 NASB

25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"

26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

28 for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly."

29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

Chapter nine of the Book of Romans is logically divided into four parts.

It is often difficult to divide great sections of Paul's thoughts into discrete parts. One thought may bleed over into the next. It is obvious that Paul's line of reasoning was not to be read once and that would be good enough. So it is for our study of Romans. There seems to be an overlap between his thoughts on God's plan and its destiny for the Israelite nation and a bigger understanding of the why of the rejection of that destiny. To facilitate the division of Chapter Nine we now move on to the fourth section:

1. Paul expresses his deep sorrow and love for his fellow Jews who have rejected the gospel of Christ (Romans 9:1-5).
2. Paul explains that not all who are descended from Israel are true Israel, but only those who are chosen by God according to his grace and purpose (Romans 9:6-17).
3. Paul defends God's right to show mercy to whom he wills and to harden whom he wills, and anticipates some objections that might arise from this doctrine (Romans 9:18-29).

4. Paul concludes that the reason why many Jews did not attain righteousness is that they pursued it by works of the law instead of by faith in Christ, while many Gentiles attained it by faith (Romans 9:25-33).

There is some overlap in the last two sections. He moves from a logical explanation of God's perfect sovereignty and man's free will to a related thought of the rationale of Israel in missing the promise.

Christian View of Rejection

Romans 9:25-33 is sad. The chosen people of God were selected for one reason: To bring a method of salvation to the world. To be the beginning of a worldwide turn to God. To reveal a loving God to needy people. Nevertheless, the Jews made a corporate decision to reject the person of the promise. And this rejection requires an understanding of the why. Why did they miss the day of appearing? Why did they not understand their purpose, their revealed plan?

The quick answer is that they did not pursue the right thing. They made a grand loophole to miss a straight path. Israel selected a substitute goal. In the process of waiting for the promise of God to come they chose a different path. They saw their lives as based upon doing things instead of living in faith.

When the faith of Christianity, seen as a sect of Judaism, started to move toward the Gentiles they were both disappointed and jealous. The Gentiles did not have the promises of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to follow. Instead of following the Jewish bent toward works for justification they chose faith.

It was not that God rejected the Jews, it was the Jews that rejected the path to God as being by faith and faith alone.

So why does God not accept works as the entrance price into Heaven?

In a self-assessment of my life, I think I have done a lot of good. I have been a preacher and teacher to thousands, I have given of my means both regularly and sacrificially. I have fed the poor. I have housed the homeless. I have with all that is within me to live peaceably with everyone. God should be happy to open the doors of heaven, to strike up the heavenly band and the accompanying choir upon my arrival. "Just Larry is here!" Let us celebrate the self-satisfied, self-focused, and self-centered as he stands proudly before the gates of heaven!

I am a good person, why would my path not lead me to God's Glory?

I will tell you why:

A number of times in my life, someone has taken the opportunity to offend me. I know where they are coming from, I have a long list of things I have done that have offended others. I am a little crude and rude sometimes. But I still hurt when someone insults me.

I have always tried to be nice and caring to all. But when someone is cruel to me, I don't understand. I try to forgive before they ask, but they never seem to get around to asking.

Oh, I hear small attempts of reconciliation, but just saying, “My bad” is not enough. When I am offended, I need more than that. They just don’t get it. They do not understand the pain they have caused. They don’t understand the disappointment I have. You just don’t get it. You don’t know the feelings of rejection I have when you disappoint me. I don’t need a list of things you have done right, I need you to simply apologize and ask for forgiveness.

You know what is worse? In response to hurting me, you go on to list all the things you have done for me. Of the time you brought pizza to Bible Study. The reading of scripture about forgiveness that you have accumulated. At the time you almost agreed with me. You seem to pile a list of doings, a list of works to make up for the insult.

God sees it the same way. You and I are sinners. And God can not be made merciful by a list of things that would tip the heavenly scales. When we fail, when we fall short of God’s dreams for you and me, we can’t make up for them by doing a long list of religious acts. And if you try, YOU JUST DON’T GET IT.

What God wants is for you to simply apologize and ask for forgiveness.

The Jews simply did not get it. God did not need or want the blood of a thousand ox to be burned at an altar. God did not need people who dressed in a particular way. God did not need more laws and interpretations of laws. He wanted, He needed, He desired, He planned for, and fully expected his chosen people to simply live by faith. THEY JUST DID NOT GET IT.

What is a Jew?

More than 14 million people worldwide claim a Jewish heritage. However, when it comes to what today's Jews believe or practice, most people understand very few of its details. Long before Christianity and Islam, Judaism's journey began through the ancient narrative of Abram in which God promised Abram, ***"I will make of you a great nation"*** (Genesis 12:1-3). Later he became known as Abraham. Genesis records his calling to a new land where God would bless him and make his name great.

The Jewish story continues through Isaac and Jacob, Jacob's twelve sons who became the leaders of Israel's twelve tribes, Moses leading Israel from Egyptian bondage, generations of judges and kings, times of conquest from outside nations, and Jewish migration throughout several nations around the world. Judaism was the first great faith to believe in one God. Its fundamental beliefs are based on the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament), along with other Old Testament writings (the Tanakh, which includes the **Torah**, the **Nevi'im**, and the **Ketuvim**) and rabbinical interpretations of the Torah (such as those included in the **Talmud**).

"What is a Jew?" the answer can be much more complex. According to the Jewish perspective, we find that a Jew can be defined in five ways:

- Judaism primarily as a religion.
- Jews as an ethnic group.
- Jews are often viewed and discussed as a culture.
- Jews also compose a nation, Israel, which was officially reorganized in 1948.

- Some teachers speak of Jews as a family rather than any of the other four categories.

All five are used at various times, yet for our purposes, we speak of Judaism primarily as a religion. We will also emphasize distinctions in belief in our descriptions below.

Branches of Judaism

While there are many varieties of religious Judaism practiced, the major four branches found today include:

- **Orthodox:** Believes the Torah (books of Moses) was written by God and is to be followed today. They observe the Jewish law, known as halakha, with traditional and historic interpretation. Approximately 10% of American Jews claim to be Orthodox.
- **Reform:** Do not believe the Torah was written by Moses. Considered the liberals of Judaism, Reform Jews follow the principles of the Torah rather than specific commandments. 35% of American Jews are Reform.
- **Conservative:** A middle ground between Orthodox and Reform Judaism, it believes the Torah came from God but also contains human components. Conservative Jews tend to adhere to the structure of the law with alterations for modern application. 26% of American Jews consider themselves as Conservatives.
- **Messianic:** Messianic Jews are Jewish Christians. Reports vary as to how many identify with this description.

What does Judaism believe and practice?

Though there is much variety and debate among Jews, the list of 13 principles of faith by Maimonides (AD 1135—1204) is helpful. It includes:

1. God exists.
2. God is one and unique (the Jewish Shema from Deuteronomy 6:5, that the Lord is one).
3. God is incorporeal (does not have a body and is not affected by physical occurrences).
4. God is eternal.
5. Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other.
6. The words of the prophets are true.
7. Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
8. The Written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses.
9. There will be no other Torah.
10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
12. The Messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.

Judaism tends to focus more on actions than beliefs. For example, the emphasis in Orthodox Judaism is the practice of the 613 commandments of the Torah and their interpretation in later writings of the Rabbis. Many of today's books on Judaism focus on Jewish practices regarding

special days (especially the Sabbath, Judaism's holy day each Saturday), holidays, and ongoing practices of the faith.

Despite the heavy emphasis on actions, it is important to note that Judaism consists of more than rules and regulations. According to the practices of Judaism, the attitudes of their religion can best be

explained through the word halakha, a Hebrew verb meaning "to go, walk, or travel." The goal of observing Jewish law is to increase spirituality, not simply to increase obedience. Through the practice of Jewish law, a person grows closer to God and with other people and provides a more meaningful way of life.

Christianity began as a sect within Judaism. Jesus and many of the first Christians were Jews. The early Jewish Christians continued to practice many of the Jewish traditions along with their Christian beliefs. However, disputes between Jewish religious leaders and Christians about whether Jesus is the Messiah and the implications of that belief, as well as political changes, eventually resulted in Christianity being viewed as a separate religion.

The two most striking differences in belief include views of Jesus and of Scripture. Overall, Jews believe in a Messiah, or at least a Messianic Age, who has yet to come. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah the Jews have long sought. Second, Jews accept only the Old Testament writings (which they call the Hebrew Bible) as their inspired texts. Christians accept the 66 books of the Bible, Old and New Testament, as the Word of God.

Two Prophets

The Prophet Hosea

Hosea was one of the twelve angry men who were called the Minor Prophets.

The nation of Israel was slowly returning from Exile in Babylon. And Hosea asked the question of why. His story started with a personal account of a marriage that did not go well. God asked him to marry a harlot who does not mend her ways and returns to the street. God said don't give up on her and bring her home. It is a story of an adulterous wife yet the husband stayed true. Hosea went on to explain the reasons for Israel's captivity in a foreign land. An adulterous nation yet a faithful God.

HOSEA				
PERSONAL The Agony of an Unfaithful Mate		NATIONAL The Tragedy of an Unfaithful People		
Marriage		Series of sermons declaring the sin of the people and the character of God		
Children		Model of the message as Hosea remains true to his wife in spite of her infidelity		
Separation		CHAPTERS 1-3		
Reunion		CHAPTERS 4-14		
Adulterous wife yet faithful husband		Adulterous nation yet faithful God		
God: "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry." (1:2)	God: "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress." (3:1)	Nation is guilty.	Nation needs judgment.	Nation has hope.
Theme		God is holy.	God is just.	God is love.
God's faithful love toward His unfaithful people				
Key Verses 2:19-20; 3:1; 11:1-12				
Christ in Hosea Christ's being "called out" from hiding in Egypt as a child is pictured in Hosea's record of Israel's exodus from Egypt (1:1; see also Matthew 2:15). In Hosea's redemption of Gomer from the slave market, Christ is pictured as the loving, faithful Redeemer of sinful humanity.				

In describing the Adulterous nation he is quoted by Paul, "I will call those who were not My people, "My people," And her who was not believed, 'beloved.'" Paul quoted this to remind the Jews in Rome that it is a reality that Israel could have something so dear as a promise to change the world and yet miss it by disobedience.

You are not My people: These passages from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 show the mercy of God. God told the prophet Hosea to name one of his children Lo-Ammi, meaning "Not My People." Yet God also promised that this judgment would not last forever. One day Israel will be restored and once again be called sons of the living God.

25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"

26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

The Prophet Isaiah

ISAIAH

Isaiah was both a priest and prophet during the time directly preceding and during the Assyrian exile of The Northern Kingdom of Israel. His writing was primarily about the judgment of God and the ultimate deliverance of God.

	The Judgment of God	The Deliverance of God		
		THE SUPREMACY OF THE LORD	THE SERVANT OF THE LORD Servant Songs: 42:1-9 49:1-13 50:4-11 52:13-53:12	THE FUTURE PLAN OF THE LORD
	CHAPTERS 1-39	CHAPTERS 40-48	CHAPTERS 49-53	CHAPTERS 54-66
Emphasis	The law and judgment for disobedience	God's grace and deliverance Comfort . . . Promise . . . Hope . . .		
"Bible within Bible"	Old Testament	New Testament		
Theme	The justice and mercy of God			
Key Verses	2:3-5; 6:1-3; 53:1-12			
Christ in Isaiah	His first and second advents are prophesied throughout the book (child of a virgin in 7:14, the shoot from the stem of Jesse in chapter 11, the Suffering Servant in chapter 53).			

27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

28 for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly."

29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

Paul again quotes Isaiah to point out that one of the results of ignorance of the promise made to Abraham would result in judgment.

- a. The remnant will be saved: The passage quoted from Isaiah 10:22-23 speaks first to God's work in saving a remnant from the coming Assyrian destruction. The suffering of God's people at the hands of the Assyrians and others would make them feel as if they

would certainly be destroyed. God assures them that this is not the case. He will always preserve His remnant.

- b. God has always dealt with a remnant. “It was stupid to think that, since the whole nation had not entered the blessing, the promise of God had failed. The promise had not been made to the whole nation and had never been intended to apply to the whole nation.”
- c. We would have become like Sodom: Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in judgment. This quotation from Isaiah 1:9 shows that as bad as Judah’s state was because of their sin, it could have been worse. It was only by the mercy of God that they survived at all. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, with not even a small remnant to carry on. Even during judgment, God showed His mercy to Judah.
- d. The merciful promise is clear: “But if only a remnant will survive, at least a remnant will survive, and constitute the hope of restoration.” (Bruce)

In the context of Paul’s argument here in the ninth chapter, Paul was giving understanding to the Jewish believers. These believers were standing on their heritage for their specialness. Paul was saying that history is not very perfect.

But this context only raises even bigger questions:

- 1. If you depend on the ethnic relationships, is Israel’s present state a good example of God saving the most preferred nation?
- 2. Why Israel is in its present condition from man’s perspective?
- 3. The most important question would be “Why did they miss the Messiah?”

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

- a. Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness: By all appearances, the Gentiles found righteousness even though it did not seem that they really looked for it.
- b. But Israel... has not attained to the law of righteousness: By all appearances, Israel seemed to work for the righteousness of God with everything it had but did not find it.
- c. Attained to righteousness... not attained: What was the difference? Why did the unlikely Gentiles find righteousness, when the likely Jews did not? Because the Gentiles pursued the righteousness of faith, and the Jews pursued the law of righteousness. The Gentiles who were saved came to God through faith, receiving His righteousness. The Jews who seemed to be cast off from God tried to justify themselves before God by performing works according to the law of righteousness.

Reasons (Romans 9:32-33)

Paul emphasizes the reason why Israel seems cast off from God’s goodness and righteousness: Because they did not seek it by faith.

Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written:

“Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,

And whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.”

- a. Because they did not seek it by faith: We might expect Paul to answer the question “Why?” again from God’s perspective, and simply throw the matter back on God’s sovereign choice. Instead, he places the responsibility with Israel: Because they did not seek it by faith... they stumbled at that stumbling stone.
- b. Paul has already shown in Romans that the only possible way to be saved is through faith, not the works of the law; and that this salvation comes only through the work of a crucified Savior — which was a stumbling block to Israel (1 Corinthians 1:22-23).
- c. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone: Paul shows that Israel is responsible for their present condition. Has he contradicted everything he has previously said, which emphasized God’s sovereign plan? Of course not, he simply presents the problem from the other side of the coin — the side of human responsibility, instead of the side of God’s sovereign choice

The Jews Reject Jesus

The Old Testament presented many predictions of the coming of the Messiah. The Jews were waiting for the fulfillment of these prophecies for more than a thousand years. And yet when He came, they knew Him not. Jesus came “as a root out of a dry ground;” He had “no form nor comeliness;” and they saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (Isaiah 53:2; John 1:11).

The Jews fixed their expectations upon worldly greatness. Ever since they entered the land of Canaan, they left the commandments of God, and adopted the ways of the heathen. Every reformation was followed by deeper apostasy.

If they had obeyed the Lord, God would have made them “high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor.” “All people of the earth,” said Moses, “shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.” “The nations which shall hear all these statutes” shall say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deuteronomy 26:19; 28:10; 4:6). But because of their unfaithfulness, God’s purpose could be carried out only through continued difficulty and disgrace.

Consequently, the nation of Israel was taken captive to Babylon. For centuries they were persecuted until they realized that their prosperity depended upon their obedience to the law of God. But their obedience was not prompted by love. They offered outward service to God as the means of reaching national greatness. They did not become the light of the world, but instead they closed themselves away in order to escape the temptation of idolatry. They separated themselves from all other nations.

After the return from Babylon, much devotion was given to religious instruction. But these actions became corrupted. And the nation was conquered by the Romans for their

disobedience to God. But the Jews, in their obscurity and oppression longed for the coming of the One who would conquer their enemies and restore the kingdom to Israel.

They ignored those scriptures that pointed to the humiliation of Christ's first advent, and looked at those that spoke of the glory of His second coming. Pride masked their vision. They interpreted prophecy in accordance with their selfish worldly desires. And they hoped that the Messiah would come as a conqueror, to break the oppressor's power, and exalt Israel to a worldwide state. Thus, the Jews' hearts were blinded and they rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

Jewish thought today

The Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah for several reasons.

- Firstly, Jesus did not fulfill the messianic prophecies that establish the criteria for the coming of the Messiah.
- Secondly, Jesus did not embody the personal qualifications of the Messiah.
- Thirdly, biblical verses "referring" to Jesus are mistranslations.
- Fourthly, Jews do not accept Jesus as a divine being, an intermediary between humans and God, a messiah, or holy. Finally, it was impossible for them to conceive that God came down as a man and dwelt among them. It was inconceivable that God should have a physical form, and complete heresy for any man to claim He was God
- Jesus' teachings were also at odds with the Jews' idea of their Messiah. The Jews of Jesus' time had studied the Old Testament Scriptures and knew whom the Messiah was supposed to be: a political leader who expelled their enemies from their territory, re-established the Jewish nation and brought peace and prosperity back to God's chosen people. However, Jesus' purpose on earth was to bring personal peace between people and God. Even more shocking, that peace was to be offered to the Gentiles just as freely as to the Jews.
- The teachings of Jesus were a large pill to swallow for devout Jews. For example, he taught that he could forgive sins. Jews believe that the forgiveness of sins is a much more involved process than one man's word. They also believe that if sins are forgiven so easily, it will only lead to more sin 1.

In summary, Judaism rejected Jesus as the Messiah because he did not fulfill their expectations of what a Messiah should be like and his teachings were at odds with their beliefs.

Discussion questions for further study:

What does Paul's anguish for his fellow Israelites reveal about his heart and his passion for the gospel? How can we cultivate a similar burden for the lost?

What are some of the privileges and blessings that God gave to Israel as His chosen people? How did they respond to these gifts? How do we respond to God's gifts in our lives?

How does Paul explain the apparent failure of God's promises to Israel? What is the difference between being a physical descendant of Abraham and being a child of God?

How does God's sovereign choice of Isaac and Jacob demonstrate His grace and mercy? How does it challenge our human notions of fairness and justice?

How do you understand God's statement, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated"? What does it mean for God to love or hate someone? How does it relate to His purpose and plan?

How does Paul defend God's right to show mercy or harden hearts as He wills? What examples does he use to illustrate God's sovereignty over His creation?

How do you reconcile God's sovereignty and human responsibility? How do you respond to the objection, "Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?"

What analogy does Paul use to describe God's authority over the clay (humanity)? What implications does this have for our attitude and actions?

What is the reason that God endures with much patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? What is His ultimate goal for the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory?

How does Paul show that God's salvation plan includes both Jews and Gentiles? How does he quote from the prophets Hosea and Isaiah to support his argument?