

Dr. Jason Staples: "All Israel Will Be Saved" | Romans 11 Teaching

Matthew Vander Els • 2026-01-10 • foundedintruth.com

Welcome to Dr. Jason Staples

Well, Shabbat shalom everybody again. Today we are honored to welcome Dr. Jason Staples. He's an assistant teaching professor in philosophy and religious studies at NC State University where he teaches biblical literature, early Judaism, and Christian origins, and has earned his PhD from UNC Chapel Hill. He's the author of two Cambridge University Press monographs: **Paul and Resurrection of Israel: Jews, Former Gentiles, Israelites**, and **The Idea of Israel in the Second Temple Judaism**, a new theory of people exile in Israelite identity. And his peer-reviewed research has appeared in top journals including the Journal of Biblical Literature, New Testament Studies, and Harvard Theological Review. Beyond the academy, Dr. Staples is unusually present in public scholarship and media with a steady stream of podcast conversations about Paul, Romans, and Israelite identity, plus his Substack presence as a writer and a podcaster. And if you follow sports, you may already know him as a longtime football analyst for insidecarolina.com and the host of the Unconquered podcast, which brings real onfield experience from years of coaching, including quarterback and wide receiver work. So without holding you in suspense any longer, please help me welcome Dr. Jason Staples.

****Dr. Staples:**** I thought the initial introduction was speaking of children. I was like, "Oh, I thought that was where I was going to come in." But then I was like, "Oh, I guess that's not about me." So probably should have been. Okay. So we're going to do a two-parter today. The first one we're going to look at a combination of [Deuteronomy 30](#) and [Romans 10](#). And then in the second one, we are going to talk about [Romans 11](#). So, before we even get to [Deuteronomy 30](#) though, I want to look very quickly at [Deuteronomy 29:4](#) in your English translations. And then that's [Deuteronomy 29:3](#) in the Hebrew Bible if you're reading in Hebrew. But let's go ahead and take a look at that. It says—give you just a moment to get there.

****Matthew:**** It's fine. No, no, you're fine.

****Dr. Staples:**** Just for the record, I didn't get the slides for this to put some of the things up until the singing had started. So yeah. So what it says is: "Yet to this day Adonai has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear." So this is the fundamental problem that Israel has in the wilderness the whole time, right? They don't have eyes to see. They don't have ears to hear. They don't have hearts to know. They don't have the organs of reception to ultimately receive the Lord and to love him and then to live. Because what is the promise? What is ultimately the one command that Israel is supposed to keep?

The Heart of the Matter

****Matthew:**** That's right. Right. This is the Shema, right? Love the Lord your God.

****Dr. Staples:**** And if they love the Lord, then they will be given life. They will actually have life because they will have the Lord's love. Well, the problem then is they don't have that. They don't have the heart to know, eyes to see, nor ears to hear. So what God promises then is he promises that he's going to rectify that lack. He's going to fix that problem at some point. And this is when this is what he turns to in [Deuteronomy 30](#). Where the rest of [Deuteronomy 29](#) after this, he hasn't given you all this—there's a whole list of additional curses to say all this is going to come upon you because you won't listen. You won't do the things that reflect the love of God. So if you don't do those things, this is going to be the consequence. So then we have the beginning of Deuteronomy chapter 30, which says: "When all these things have come upon you, and then you put them to mind, and you turn back to me in the places where I've scattered you. Then it says, 'Adonai your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your seed so that you will love Adonai your God with all your heart and soul so that you may live.'" Right? So that is [Deuteronomy 30:6](#). So this is a core promise of the Torah that is established from the very beginning. This is what is expected. They are not there in the wilderness. They have not received this in the wilderness. This will happen after all these things have taken place. Then you will take this to heart and know. So what we're going to do then is we're going to turn after this, we're going to turn to [Romans 9](#), to [Romans 9:29](#) and 30, and then we're going to take a look at that, and then we're going to work into [Romans 10](#). Now these are passages that are widely misunderstood. [Romans 10](#) is maybe among the most quoted passages in terms of snippets: "If you accept, if you acknowledge Jesus with your lips and believe in your heart that he has risen from the dead, or if you confess Jesus with your lips and believe in your heart that he has risen from the dead, then you will be saved." Right? This is as quoted as anything. We're going to talk about what the context of this is for Romans and connect this back to what's happening in Deuteronomy.

Israel and the Gentiles

So in 9:29 he's transitioning, and he's been talking about up to now. He talks about how Gentiles are actually coming into faith. They're receiving the spirit in a surprising manner, right? They are receiving the spirit that is promised to Israel. We'll talk about that briefly in a moment. So, and immediately preceding this, he said the whole potter and clay analogy: "What if God wants to do it this way so that he can show mercy to vessels of mercy, to those whom he has called, not only from Jews but also from Gentiles, from the nations." Okay. Now, he has to address a question, and this is what he gets to. He says, "So what should we say then? That Gentiles who were not pursuing justice or righteousness overtook justice, the justness which is from fidelity." Now, a brief thing I want to take a moment to explain the translation here. So, first of all, in the Torah there, we I'm sure here you've talked about the two tablets of the Torah. Yes. What do the two tablets represent? How do we sum up the ten commands?

****Matthew:**** Love God and love neighbor.

****Dr. Staples:**** The love of God is reflected by, in hellic Judaism, the word that we normally translate godliness or piety. It's the word for you get in Acts—you have God-fearers for example, the theosebeis. They are pious towards God. And then the opposite of this would be akeia, which by the way is one of the things that Paul says God's wrath is revealed against in [Romans 1:18](#). The wrath of God is revealed against all akeia, all impiety. This is the violations of the first set of commands, the commands to love God. And then the second tablet of the Torah is summarized by the word justice, or dike, or dikaiousune—normally dikaiousune. And justice, or what's often translated in English Bibles as righteousness, is the summary of the other commands. This is the horizontal commands, love of neighbor. So did the Gentiles then overtake justice, love of neighbor effectively? And sometimes justice actually ends up being sort of both, you know, because you don't have love of neighbor until you have love of God. But here, did they receive the justice which is from fidelity? Now this is the word that's usually translated faith, pistus. Now, I've translated this in Romans as fidelity, partly because in Latin when they would render pistus into Latin, they would render it with fidelitas, the word that's used for faithfulness or fidelity. And that's really what this tends to mean in Greek in that era as well. It can mean to believe something, but you believe something because that thing is trustworthy. And the idea here is that this is out of fidelity in a relational context. This is a matter of fulfilling your obligations in a relational context. If you have fidelity in a marriage relationship, that means that you are keeping the vows of the marriage relationship. You are faithful. So they have received the justice that's from fidelity. Now that's an interesting thing. From fidelity. What does that even mean?

Works and Fidelity

Well, there's a few places that we could talk about today regarding Paul's distinction about what comes from fidelity versus what comes from disobedience. But fidelity reflects that heart posture towards God of faithfulness. So, have they become faithful? Though Israel pursuing a Torah of righteousness or justness did not reach Torah. They didn't even—not only did they not reach righteousness or justness, but they didn't even reach Torah. Why not? Because they pursued not from fidelity but as though it were reached from works. And he distinguishes this. The idea here is that you work your way outward as opposed to inward out, right? So another way to think about this: How many people here have seen The Godfather? How many? Okay, a few of you. The first scene of The Godfather is really important to remember on how this works. Okay. In the first scene of The Godfather, he's sitting there behind his desk and a man comes in and asks him to do something for him. Basically, his daughter's been beaten up by others and he wants justice. He comes in and he says, "How much shall I pay you?" And in that moment, the Godfather is so disturbed by the suggestion that someone would come in and pay him to do this, he stands up and he says, "What have I done that you should show me such disrespect?"

But then he says, "If you'd come in friendship, the scum that did this to your daughter would be suffering this very day. But you didn't ask with respect. You didn't even think to call me Godfather. I understand you didn't want to be in my debt." This, by the way, is the economy that God operates in. He doesn't want your payment, right? And in Paul's context, what Paul argues over and over again is you cannot walk into God's office and slap your foreskin on his desk and say, "Okay, I've made my payment. Now you owe me." You can't do this. It doesn't come from works. This doesn't work.

What does God want? He says, "Well, I just want your respect. I want you to be in my debt." And the way this first scene of the Godfather resolves is the person says, "Be my friend, Godfather," and kisses his hand. He has now pledged allegiance. He's going to be faithful to his patron now. And he says, "Good. One day, and that day may never come, I'll call on you to do a service for me. But until that day, accept this justice as a gift."

Right? These are familiar terms, right? You have a gift. You have an obligation that's implied. You have a pledge of allegiance, a pledge of faith to him. This is what God expects. And so when Paul talks about faith, this is from fidelity—this is someone who is coming in and saying, "Okay, God, you have my whole heart. Whatever I do will be out of faithfulness to you." This is what matters. But if you don't have that heart, you don't have the fidelity necessary to work this way.

Whereas from works is slapping the foreskin on the table and saying, "Okay, I've made my down payment. Now let's put you to work, God." And God doesn't work on those terms, right? He wants your fidelity. He wants your commitment. He wants your complete faithfulness to what he demands, not your payment. You can't. He has all the resources. What are you going to give him? What are you going to give him that he didn't give to you in the first place? The only thing he wants is the fidelity.

And he says, "They pursued not with fidelity as though it were reached from works. They stumbled over the stone of stumblings as it is written, 'See, I am laying in Zion a stumbling stone, a rock for trapping, and whoever trusts upon it will not be put to shame.'" So that then brings us to the beginning of [Romans 10](#) where he says, "Brothers, my heart's desire and my prayer to God is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

What Paul Means by Zeal

Now, what does he mean when he says they have a zeal for God? There's a biblical passage that this is pulling from. This goes right back to the song of Moses. The word for zeal in Greek is also the same word for jealousy. So they have a jealousy for God, but not one based on knowledge. And this is where he's alluding to [Deuteronomy 32:21](#), which says, "They have made me jealous with what is not God. They have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous, or filled with zeal, with those who are not a people and I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." So he says, look, this has happened. They are jealous exactly as was promised, but not according to knowledge.

And then elsewhere he talks about the Corinthians at one point. He says, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy." See, there's jealousy according to knowledge that is godly and leads to fidelity, and then there's jealousy that desires to lock others out. Those are two different things. So they're getting the jealousy that is promised in the song of Moses. But the response can be one of two ways based on that jealousy: to turn back to God or not, right?

And he says, "Because not knowing the justness of God and seeking to establish their own justness, they did not submit themselves to the justness of God. Because Messiah is the telos, or the end of Torah, to produce justness in everyone who is faithful. For Moses writes of the justness which is from Torah, that the one who does these things will live by them. And the justness that is from fidelity says this: Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'—that is, to bring Messiah down. Nor, 'Who will descend into the abyss?'—that is, to

bring Messiah up from the dead. But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.' That is the word of fidelity which we proclaim. If you pledge agreement with your mouth, 'Lord Jesus,' and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Two Passages in Contrast

So that's clear as mud, right? What is going on here? What does he mean? First of all, is he paralleling—is he putting these two verses in contrast where he says, well, [Leviticus 18:5](#) says, "The one who does these things will live by them." And the justice from fidelity says something completely different. So we're no longer working according to that framework? This bit about "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"—that supersedes the one who does these things will live by him? That no longer applies? Is that what he's saying? Is he setting scripture against scripture here? Probably not, right?

For if you went back and asked Paul, "Are you saying that you're setting scripture against scripture?" In [Galatians 3](#), he quotes the same passage. And then the next thing he quotes after that is the just one will live by faith. He quotes [Habakkuk 2:4](#) there. Most interpreters these days have said the age of the law has passed, but now he's contradicting that with the quote from Habakkuk, so that no longer applies. And if you went to Paul in his own day and said, "So what you're saying is that what the Torah says no longer applies, right?"—he'd look at you like, "I'm not contradicting this with this. These two things reinforce, right?"

Wrestling with Paul's Reasoning

So that's what he does. Now, to me, this is some of the hardest stuff in the Pauline letters. And again, the traditional interpretation of this is very simple. The traditional interpretation is that Paul is explaining why Jews haven't accepted the gospel, and specifically that they're legalists. They tried to earn their salvation by keeping the Torah. And so they didn't understand that it's by grace and not works. And, you know, Jews are basically proto-Catholics who are really concerned about what they do, except for when they buy indulgences to make it so they don't need to do things. So, you know, we're all set, right?

Another more recent one is what you get in what's often called the new perspective on Paul, where the emphasis becomes the idea of seeking their own righteousness. It's said, "Oh, well, okay, by this it's talking about their own, as in the exclusion of Gentiles—because they're basically raging proto-racists, right?" And so the solution there is, "Well, we just need to be

inclusive. Paul is preaching a gospel of inclusiveness against these proto-racists." Sounds very much like what you would expect someone in the late 20th, early 21st century to come to: "All we need is more inclusion, guys. There's the gospel, just to be inclusive." But that's not what Paul actually says, right?

First of all, it's not—he's not saying that they're seeking their own nation or their own ethnic identity. He's not saying that. He's saying they're seeking their own justice or righteousness. That's a different thing. So I don't think either of those gets this right. And I also don't think that this passage is just about Paul's contemporary Jews and their response to the gospel. The whole of [Romans 9-11](#) is actually about more than just the question of why Jews in Paul's day or beyond have had the specific response to the gospel. It's about more than that. It's about the whole history of Israel and God's dealing with Israel as a whole.

Israel's Whole Story

And actually, if we look at [Romans 9](#), it progressively works from Abraham to exile, which is the story of the Bible. He just takes you on a quick tour from Abraham to Isaiah when Israel goes into exile. This is the same progression as the Torah itself: Patriarch, patriarch, patriarch, Moses, Pharaoh into the prophets, exile. So what we have to do is we have to understand how Paul is using and interpreting Torah.

So again, what we're not talking about is a contrast between [Leviticus 18:5](#) and [Deuteronomy 30](#) here, which are the things that he quotes there. Instead, what he's talking about is something different. And by the way, one of the harder things about this is: if we do want to take this as contradictory—the one who does these things will live by them—this is, okay, the person who does Torah is going to live by virtue of that. If you look at what's going on in the second verses, well, if we want to interpret that as contrastive, the problem is that when we go back to [Deuteronomy 30](#) and we find those passages, what's [Deuteronomy 30](#) about?

I see you nodding. I know you know this. It's about Torah. It says, well, you're going to do these things now. So he quotes something about doing Torah. And then he says, "And the righteousness that's by fidelity." And then he quotes a passage about doing, right? So how do we do that? How do we take this? Well, in order to put the pieces together, first of all, what we need to do is we need to go—and I don't have a slide for this, so we'll just have to look it up.

We'll have to go back to [Exodus 19](#). If you go to [Exodus 19:10](#), while you're going there, I'm going to set this up. [Exodus 19](#) is the marriage chapter. It's where the people have been brought to Sinai by Moses. Then God says to Moses, "Okay, here's the deal. I want you to go and make

this. I want you to propose marriage to the people and tell them if you will obey me, if you will pledge yourselves to me, then I will be your God and you will be my precious possession among all the nations." And so on. The people say, "All that Adonai has said we will do." Okay, good. All right. So here's the deal, and he gives the instructions to Moses in [Exodus 19:10](#) and following. Those instructions are fairly simple. He says, "All right, here's what's going to happen. Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow and have them wash their clothes. They're kind of stinky. We're not going to have a wedding without our clothes clean. Get them ready for the third day. On the third day, Adonai will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. But you will set boundaries for the people all around, saying, 'Do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it. Anyone who touches the mountain will be put to death.'"

He tells the people to be ready for the third day and all this. Now what's going to happen—in verse 13, I need to read this because this is actually really important. In verse 13: "No hand will touch the person who's touched the mountain, but instead he will be shot through with arrows or be stoned, whether animal or person, he will not live."

The Hebrew Says What

Now, when the ram's horn sounds a long blast, then they will what? Come up. What? Come up to the mountain. Is that what it says? Is that what all of our versions say? Who here has a Hebrew? It's not "come near." That's right. In Hebrew, it says when the ram's horn blasts, when it sounds a long blast, they are to come up onto the mountain. Now, it's not normally translated like that in English because that's not what happens. So translators fudge it and they go, "Well, I mean, obviously they were just told not to go up onto the mountain, and then when they don't go up on the mountain and they're not supposed to touch it, and then God later warns them and says don't touch it and all this." So, obviously that's not what this means. Even though that's exactly what it says. Did you look at it? It's unambiguous. It means go up onto.

Thunder and Lightning

Now what happens? On the third day there's thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who are in the camp were shaken in fear. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. This is where they're supposed to go up and do the wedding ceremony—you're introducing the bride and the groom—and he brings them out of the camp to meet God.

They stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. The mountain was all in smoke because Adonai descended on it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace. The entire mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew, it just kept blowing. What you have to imagine is the heavenly trumpeteer going, "They're not coming," right? And it continues to get louder and louder.

Moses Goes Up

Then Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. Then Adonai came down on Mount Sinai, up to the top of the mountain. Adonai called Moses to the top of the mountain. Moses went up. When Moses went up—by the way, that's the verb *Olah*, right? This is the same word used for the whole burnt offering. He actually sort of offers himself for the people in some sense by going up.

But who is supposed to go up? All of them. Only Moses went up. It's one of those situations where they're all there, and this is reminiscent of when Goliath is out there calling everybody out and they're all like, "You go up there, you take care."

They Said, "Moses, You Go Up"

Moses, by the way, summarizes this again in Deuteronomy chapter 5, where he says, "Yeah, I remember when we were at Mount Sinai before, and y'all were supposed to go up there, and instead you said, 'Moses, you go up in our place, because if we go up, we'll die.'"

And then you know what God said? He said, "Yeah, the people are right, because their hearts aren't right. If they did come up, they would die. So here's how we're going to do this." And here's the thing: What happens to Moses when Moses goes up?

Moses is effectively deified. He's made into—he becomes a god to the people, right? He passes through the fire and his old life dies and he becomes something different. He comes down and he glows like God, right? What would have happened to the people if they'd gone up? Their old lives would have had to die, and they would have come down like Moses—presumably, if they come down at all, right? Presumably they'd come down. But they didn't.

Now, what happens immediately after this? Nope. Before that we get the Ten Commandments. Why? What's the reason for the timing?

They are like wedding vows, but there's something more here. That's right. Had they gone up, they wouldn't have needed it. It would have been written on their hearts, and they would have

seen the pattern on the mountain that these commandments are an approximation of. They would have received the love in their hearts that is approximated in this brief set of commands in a different way.

Legislation Follows Injustice

And what we find is actually a principle throughout scripture. Here's a fun piece of trivia. What's the first thing after Nadav and Avihoo—the two sons of Aaron—they go in and they try to burn the wrong kind of incense? They bring outside incense, outside fire, and they burn it before the Lord, and fire comes out and consumes them in the holy place, which is real bad. You're not supposed to have death in there.

What is the next thing that we find after they drag them out and Aaron is told not to grieve? There's a specific command: priests are not allowed to be intoxicated. They are not to drink alcohol while on duty. Why do you think that was the next command? Right? Because, well, I guess you're going to need this command. [sighs] You can't get liquored up and then go do your priestly duties. All right.

When is the command for circumcision given? What immediately precedes it? Hagar. What happens with Hagar?

Well, it's more than just trying to move the promise forward. There's something being moved forward, right? He commits injustice with that very part of his body. Now he and his seed are going to bear a mark on that part of his body for the rest of time, saying, "From now on, you're going to understand this is not how my people behave."

There's a new command in response to something. So legislation is actually something that follows injustice. Disobedience or infidelity, you might say, precedes legislation. Legislation is there to what? Correct and instruct and sort of blunt the infidelity that's actually there.

This is why Paul in Galatians says the Torah is not from fidelity. He asks, "Why was the law given?" Well, it wasn't given from fidelity; the law was given because of transgression. It was given for transgression. If you don't have transgression, you have no need of law, right?

So, it's sort of like if you're driving a car that automatically goes the right speed, there's no need for speed limits. But I'm guessing most of the people here violated speed laws on the way here. The reason we have speed limits is because people drove unsafe speeds. Basically, the determination was to set speed limits lower than the speeds people actually drive safely, so that people, even when they break them, will only break them by a little bit. And if they do break

them, we'll have some enforcement mechanism to manage the problem. But if the heart changes, or if the cars won't go above the right speed, you don't need the law, right?

This is James Madison's quote: "If men were angels, there would be no need for law," right? So the problem is Israel. Now when they do this, only Moses goes up. So now Moses becomes the mediator between them and God, where in fact they were supposed to be the mediator between God and the nations, right? So the problem that has to be solved by the end of the Torah is that, and the promise is going to look a lot like Moses. But Moses doesn't even get all of it either, right? So that's how this is going to work.

Now we can step back and say again: Adonai has not given you a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear. Then you have the curses of what's going to happen as a result of disobedience, and when these things have happened.

So let's go ahead and get the next one. "Adonai your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your seed so that you will love Adonai your God with all your heart and all your soul so that you may live." In other words, God is going to change your heart so that you will actually live out and fulfill the Shema in full. You're going to do this. You're finally going to have the equipment necessary to do this. You will love Adonai your God because the love of God will be poured out in your heart as Paul says in another letter, right? "The love of God is poured out in your heart." And Adonai your God will prosper you in every work of your hand because—and this is the Hebrew word "ki." Now this can mean "when." This can mean "if." It can mean a lot of different things, but in this context it's "because." Adonai will rejoice over you again for good just as he rejoiced over your fathers because "ki" you will obey Adonai your God. You will obey him. You will keep his commands and his statutes which are written in the book of the instruction or Torah, because you will turn to Adonai your God with all your heart and soul because of this command I am commanding you today.

And then if you look in your Bibles in [Deuteronomy 30:1](#), what does it say? "Because this is not too hard for you." Now, how do we put that in the framework or in the context of what he has just told them a chapter earlier? What he just told them a chapter earlier is, guys, you don't have a heart to know, eyes to see, or ears to hear. You're going to do all of the things that I've just told you not to do, and you're going to go through all these things. And then we get to chapter 30, and he says God will circumcise your heart because the things that I'm asking you to do are not too hard for you. He just said they were too hard for them, didn't he? This is another place where we've got some fudging going on, because there's no finite verb here. It doesn't say "this is not too hard for you." A better way to render this is: because this will not be too hard for you once your heart is circumcised.

The Promise Within a Promise

See verses 11 through 13 or 14, which follow verses 1-10—this is the promise of rectification of the heart, the fixing of the fundamental problem. So these things will not be too difficult for you. "Nor will the command be too far away. It will not be in heaven, so that you will say, 'Who will ascend to heaven and get it for us and proclaim it to us so that we may do it?' Nor will it be beyond the sea, to say, 'Who will cross the sea for us and get it for us and proclaim it to us so that we may do it?'—because the word will be with you or will be very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, for you to follow it or to do it." And these will be perfectly grammatical in the way that this works in both Hebrew and by the way, the Greek translation, the early Greek translation of this.

So that changes this passage a good bit. Once God has circumcised your heart, this is going to be possible for you. These things will not be too difficult for you as they were before, because you didn't have the heart. But God's going to fix that problem. And once he does that, these things will not be too difficult for you, and you will keep them and you will love Adonai your God and you will live. So what we find is that this is subsequent to the promise of 30:1-10 and the completion of the promise. This is the situation after the people have received the promise of changed hearts and have been given the fidelity and desire and capacity to obey what they previously lacked.

So then when we understand how this works in terms of seeking their own justice and Christ as the end of the Torah and righteousness from Torah versus righteousness from fidelity, what we find makes a lot of sense. After exile, there was a lot of debate among Jews. And still, by the way, this is a live issue within some Jewish theological discourse. This is a question. There's debate about how God's promises of redemption would come about. What's going to basically be the turning point? What's going to initiate the promised restoration? Everybody knows the restoration's going to happen. How's God going to fulfill the promises that he puts in [Deuteronomy 30](#) and in [Leviticus 26](#) and elsewhere?

Jewish Debate on Redemption

How's this going to happen? And what we find is that many Jewish theologians in Paul's day, prior to Paul's day, and subsequent understood [Leviticus 18:5](#), [Deuteronomy 31](#), and many other passages in the Torah and in the prophets as saying that God would only restore Israel after Israel had first repented and began to keep the Torah properly. So essentially, when all

these things have come upon you and you turn your mind to me and you return to me, you repent properly and now you keep the Torah properly, then I will restore you.

So in that context, a great example is there's a passage in the Babylonian Talmud where I think it's a third-century rabbi who says: "If Israel would only keep the Sabbath correctly two weeks in a row, twice in a row, then the Messiah would come." All we need to do is observe Shabbat twice correctly and Messiah will come. One of his disciples one generation later is quoted in the immediately following lines of the Babylonian Talmud saying, "If Israel would only observe one Shabbat correctly, then Messiah will come."

If we read the Dead Sea Scrolls, when we get to there's a famous letter that the sectarians wrote to probably the king at the time, the Hasmonean king, saying, "These are some works of Torah that if you do, you will participate and you will live. You will participate in the restoration to come. You're going to do this, right?" Works of Torah, by the way, that's a really interesting phrase considering that's what Paul uses. And then it lists out a bunch of regulations that they think they or the others are doing wrong. Like if you do these things, then these works of Torah. And the idea is this is going to initiate the restoration that was promised.

So we've got the correct legal interpretation: if you repent and you do these things correctly, the Messiah is going to finally come, and we will all be set free, and all that God has promised is going to happen. So it starts with keeping the Torah correctly. You have to establish the righteousness of the people so that God will do his job.

Paul's Answer

Now this is precisely what Paul is criticizing in [Romans 10](#). What he's saying is you can't fix it that way. Israel doesn't have the hearts to know, eyes to see, or ears to hear. And there's no amount of being blind, deaf, and dumb and unable to love with your heart. There's no amount of effort or whatever, or correct interpretation, that is going to fix that problem. This is something that only God can fix.

So what Paul argues, and there are other Jews in his era and before and after who argue this side of it, is: no, it's not that we need to keep two Sabbaths correctly or that we need to do these works of Torah correctly in order for the redemption to begin. Instead, the redemption begins with God taking action. And when God takes action and changes our hearts, then we will repent and do those things correctly.

And so what Paul's arguing in [Romans 10](#) is: Look, you don't understand this. We can't go and bring Messiah down. Let's go back to the [Romans 10](#) slide, which says: "Do not say in your

heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"—that is, he's saying to bring Christ down. Well, why would ascending to heaven be in order to bring Christ down? That doesn't make any sense—but it does if you're thinking about needing to keep the Torah so that the Messiah will come. "Or who will descend into the abyss to bring Christ up?" And what he says is: No, no, no, no, no—you understand? Messiah has already come in order to do the very things that you would be trying to do: to ascend into heaven and to descend down instead.

And by the way, why is this there in [Deuteronomy 30](#)? When he says, "Who will ascend into heaven and who will descend?" And actually, in the Masoretic Hebrew, it says, "Who will descend into the sea." In later Aramaic Targum, it says, "Who will descend into the abyss." It actually is harmonizing with Jonah. Jonah's descent into the sea is the abyss. And so it harmonizes those two things. There's a lot of intertext here. And Paul actually seems to know—he's probably riffing on the Aramaic tradition that he probably knows of, connecting those passages. So that's why he quotes it the way he does.

But anyway, why would anybody need to go up or down for what Moses is talking about? Why does he say, "Who will go up for us or who will go down for us?" When you have questions like this, the first thing to ask, as often as not, is: How does this plug into the larger story? So what does he do? What is he saying? What has Moses just done for the people? They crossed through the Red Sea, and he took them through. He went down into the midst of the sea to the depths.

And then he just ascended into heaven going up the mountain to do what? To get the Torah. And he says, "In that day, once you've had your heart circumcised, you are not going to say who will go up into heaven to get it for us? Who will descend to get it for us?" Because it will be in your heart and in your mouth. Right? You won't need a figure like Moses to intercede for you because you're already going to have the thing that would be gotten for you.

God Makes His People Faithful

So what Paul argues is that rather than waiting for his people to repent and obey, God is making his people faithful and obedient by transforming the people to begin with by giving them the spirit of Christ. This is what [Romans 8](#) is about, right? Two chapters earlier. And he says, "Actually, the Torah bears witness to all of this." [Leviticus 18:5](#), "The one who does these things will live by them." What does that mean? Who's that talking about? What he argues—and it's clear in Galatians when he quotes this as well—Christ is the one, Messiah is the one to whom Torah promised life. Messiah is the one who did these things and thereby lives. And in fact, this

is why the resurrection is proof that Messiah is who he is. Because he did these things, he lives. The resurrection demonstrates who the Messiah is.

Messiah is the End of the Torah

Further than that, he says Messiah is the end of the Torah. It's a controversial thing to say, but what is the last sentence of the Torah? I mean, you've read this before. Messiah is the end. Christ is the end of the Torah. Has anybody gone to the end of the Torah to take a look? What's the last independent clause?

So the last sentence begins in [Deuteronomy 34:10](#): "Since that day, there has not risen in Israel a prophet like Moses." Huh? So prophet like Moses is supposed to rise. Interesting because in Hebrew this is right, which is you should be familiar with that from the Aramaic talita. Rise from what? By the way, in Greek Deuteronomy, this is anastasis or the verb form of anastasis, aneste, which is the word that is used for resurrection in the New Testament. So it's very easy to read this passage as since that day, a prophet like Moses has not arisen or has not resurrected. Well, what happens when somebody does resurrect? What conclusions should we draw from that?

The Prophet Like Moses

Well, if we go to [Deuteronomy 18](#)—if you go to [Deuteronomy 18:15-19](#)—this is Moses reflecting on the fact that he's been the mediator before the people, which he kind of laments going back to [Deuteronomy 5](#) when God says, "Oh, that my people had hearts to follow me." That's what Adonai says. Oh, that my people had hearts to follow me. And then by the end of chapter 30, I will give them that heart. Well, right smack between him in chapter 18, it says Adonai will what? Raise up. Same word, a prophet like me from among your brothers. When he does this, you must listen to him. Anyone who does not listen to that man will be cut off. Right? This, by the way, is quoted as proof of the resurrection by this guy resurrected—and it says in the Torah, when God raises up the prophet, you must listen to him. Why aren't you listening? Right?

So what Paul does here is he connects this and he says no prophet has risen. Well now one has—now the prophet that was promised has risen. Now what is the prophet like Moses going to do? What will make him like Moses? What did Moses do? He met with God and he delivered the Torah. So what should you expect Jesus to do then? Deliver the Torah. But what's the

difference in how Jesus is going to deliver it? What's the medium of deliverance? Not on letters written on stone, but on tablets of the human heart. Right?

Written on the Heart

That's what this is about. That's what this whole passage in [Romans 10](#) is about. It's like the prophet like Moses that's promised at the very end of the Torah, who brings the written Torah to its completed end, who fulfills the promises that the Torah is making—that all the things that the written Torah could not make you do because there's no amount of posting speed limit signs that's going to make some of you drive the right speed, that's going to make you drive the speed limit. You could put one up every 10 feet. And Leadfoot here is going to drive as fast. Not you. No. No. No. Of course not. He's going to drive as fast as feels safe to their own heart. Right. I'm going to drive.

And look, if you go to Atlanta, you have 55 speed limits on the belt line around Atlanta. It's a joke. It's Atlanta humor, right? Because if you drive 55, you're actually a speed bump, right? They're just not even advisory. That's just humor. It's not a suggestion. Nobody's suggesting that you drive that in Atlanta, right? It's just good old-fashioned southern humor. All right. Yep. 55. Right. We know you ain't going to do it.

So this is how this works. The only way that changes is the law written on the heart. By the way, when we get to the book of Acts, what's the first thing that happens after Jesus ascends? The spirit comes down on what day? Shavuot, which celebrates what? The giving of the Torah at Sinai. When the fire comes down at Sinai and the people are supposed to go up and they don't. So what's God's solution in Acts chapter 2? Okay, fine. Look, you're not going to come up to the mountain to get the fire. So I'm going to send the fire down, right? Problem solved.

Fire Sent Down at Pentecost

And who sends the fire? The prophet like Moses who has the authority to dispense the spirit in this manner. And this is why it matters that you believe in the resurrection, right? This is not just a matter of thinking, "Oh, I know the secret. I can stand before God and be like, Well, I believe that Jesus raised from the dead." Oh, well, son, you're right here. Let me show you. No, no, no, no. That's not what this is about.

This is saying if you understand that Jesus was raised from the dead and what that means in terms of who he is and what the promises are through the one that's supposed to be raised from the dead—now you actually can be saved. Now you have access. You can receive the spirit that

was promised. You pledge your allegiance to that one and this prophet like Moses is going to give you the obedience that was...

So Jesus is the one like Moses who descended and ascended as lawgiver, and he delivers the spiritual Torah which transforms the hearts to make us faithful and obedient to the will of God. Now this is the essence of Paul's gospel. This is the essence of the gospel in the New Testament, and it's the direct fulfillment of the Torah's promise to Israel. This is what Paul says those who receive the spirit are experiencing. This is what we witness to when we proclaim Yeshua as Lord. Right? When we confess the resurrection, we are proclaiming that there is one who has the authority to change us and we commit to obeying that one to change us.

A Chiasm Centered on Resurrection

So that's what this is all about. This is what [Romans 10](#) is about. I think there's one more slide, right? This, by the way, is how this works. This is how it's structured. The one who does these things will live by them. The justice from fidelity speaks and can't bring Messiah. Can't resurrect Messiah from the dead. The word is near you. But if you pledge with your mouth, Jesus is Lord. So here's the thing. What's the center of the chiasm here? The center of the X, the resurrection. What are the outside parts of the chiasm also the resurrection, right? The one who does these things will live, will be resurrected. By the way, this promise of life is understood as the resurrection in lots of early Jewish materials. And also this promise of someone being raised up in the future is the same promise that's made to David about his seed in [2 Samuel 21:14](#) or 7:14. "I will raise up a son after you who will sit on your throne and will rule and his throne will be forever."

This is why they're interpreting the seed of David as the prophet like Moses. Because that promise of being resurrected applies to one person, right? And so here the human who does these things will live by them. We can't resurrect Messiah from the dead by our own works—you know, tossing our foreskin on the table or whatever. If we pledge with our mouth Jesus is Lord and trust in our heart that God raised him from the dead—that he's the one who did these things and lives by them—then that's the avenue towards the salvation promised in [Deuteronomy 30](#). That's what this is all about.

What About Israel's Promise?

Now there's still a problem here we can address. What about the rest of the promise to Israel? What about Israel's restoration and exaltation? Like, what in the world does this have to do

with what we're seeing happen to men with foreskins? We're not seeing where the 12 tribes are, the restoration from foreign oppression and all of this. Like, that would be what we would expect as the next step. You have a return to the land. You have a whole host of other things that are there. What do we do with that?

Romans 11 and the Mystery of Gentile Participation

Because this works really well right up until you start asking those questions, right? Well, that's [Romans 11](#). That's what we'll talk about this afternoon. All right. So that's where we'll leave it off, and we'll talk about [Romans 11](#) in a couple hours. All right. Thank you. [applause]

All right, everybody. Back at it. Sorry, I had to take a moment to put the slideshow that I'm going to be using into position. And that was remarkably fast in terms of getting that turnaround in. All right. So we talked this morning about [Romans 10](#) and what Paul's doing there and the promises of Israel's restoration, specifically Israel's transformation. First, right? Israel receiving a new heart. Israel receiving a circumcised heart. Israel receiving the spirit from the Lord that was to enable them to do what they could not previously do, to enable them to have the faithfulness and the obedience that they did not show prior to that. But of course, that led us to the question that we're going to address now, which is those promises were made to Israel. And then when we get into Romans, Paul finds himself trying to explain how men with skins are still participating, because it wouldn't take much to explain. Okay. And here's why you're seeing lots of circumcised, otherwise Torah-following people suddenly receiving the spirit and having this natural obedience. Paul has to explain how this would apply to people from the nations who are not associated with that promise.

Because who's that promise made to in Deuteronomy? It's not made to the nations. "And then after all these things have happened to you in all the nations and you are scattered in all those nations, then I'm going to take Gentiles and I'm going to adopt them as my people"—and that shows what it says, right now, is that we're seeing something different. Why is it that we're seeing people who are not traditionally associated with Israel participating in the promises made to Israel? Right? That's the problem.

A Familiar Echo

So when we get to [Romans 11](#), that's where we find this bit where he starts to explain, and you can go to the first slide. He starts to explain: "I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. On the other hand, inasmuch as I am indeed an apostle or an emissary of Gentiles or nations—which

by the way, when he says he's apostle of nations, even though it's in the genitive, it should be 'of—he's echoing somebody there. Who's he echoing? We should know this. Jeremiah. In the call of Jeremiah, he's called what? "I have appointed you, Adonai says, from the womb to be a prophet to the nations," and then he's told to tear down, to just root out, to destroy, and then to build and to plant. That's important.

So when Paul calls himself apostle of the nations, you have a prophet to the nations. By the way, who did Jeremiah prophesy to? Pretty much entirely Judah. And also he prophesied to Israel. Like in Jeremiah chapter 3, he prophesies to Israel in exile, like toward the north. "Prophecy to the north, 'Return, faithless Israel, because Judah has made you look good by comparison.'" But he's prophet to the nations, yet he spends pretty much his entire career in Judah prophesying to and about Israel. Interesting.

Now there are oracles about the nations at the end of Jeremiah where he prophesies the downfall of Babylon and so on, you know, prophesies the hard things to come for Egypt. But it's interesting that his prophetic career to the nations actually involves Israel and Judah.

Now Paul calls himself here apostle of nations, or apostle of Gentiles. And then what does he do with that elsewhere? What does he call himself when he says to Corinth, "Here's how you should consider us. What are we?" He says, "We are ministers of a new covenant, written not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of the human heart." Well, where does he get that language of a new covenant or a renewed covenant? From Jeremiah. In Galatians, he calls himself one who was called from the womb. Who else does that language apply to in Scripture? Jeremiah. It's interesting, yeah. He keeps connecting himself back in various ways as the one who's announcing—because an apostle is someone sent as an emissary. He's sent out announcing what Jeremiah prophesied. Right? So that's important to get.

Making the Kinfolk Jealous

But he's an apostle of nations. He glorifies his service, hoping that somehow he would make his flesh jealous and somehow save some of them. Interesting that he doesn't say all of them here—save some of them.

Now what's interesting also is he wants to make them jealous. Didn't we just talk about that in our morning sermon? I guess this is a lecture, not a sermon. Not sure what the difference is. But he said they were jealous, but not according to knowledge. But he is explicit. He's saying, "I'm trying to make my fleshly kin jealous." Why? Well, this is part of what it says in the Song of Moses. "You made me jealous, so I'm going to make you jealous. You made me jealous by

serving other gods, so I'm going to make you jealous by other nations." As one biblical scholar has put it, Ross Wagner says, "One good sperm deserves another." Right? This is like a lover's quarrel. Like, "You went and you did this, so now I'm going to make you jealous." Right? But I want to make them jealous. Why? Well, he says, "Because if their casting away is the reconciliation of the world, what is their reception if not life from the dead?"

Now I submit to you that this is the primary thesis of [Romans 11](#). If their casting away is the reconciliation of the world, what is their reception if not life from the dead? And then he goes from there to this very strong statement—like the next thing he says is, "If the firstfruits are sacred so is the lump, and if the root is sacred so are the branches."

The Holy Makes the Common Holy

Because that follows. What's he mean here, by the way? "If the firstfruits are sacred so is the lump, and if the root is sacred so also are the branches." What in the world is he talking about with the lump and the firstfruits? Eventually that's the root sacred, and so are the branches. But the lump, the "lump in the dough thing," is a little funky.

The way that this has often been interpreted, by the way, is the idea that in the firstfruits offering, what you're supposed to do is you're supposed to take a handful of the meal or of the dough and you set that aside and that's holy for the priests, and you don't eat it. That's set aside as holy, and then this portion is for your own consumption. And he says, "If the firstfruits are sacred, then so is the lump. So then setting that aside makes the lump sacred." What's the problem with this reading? This is a pretty big demand because it requires that you know a little bit about purity and how the Torah is actually set up with this. This is hard, at least for people who've not been accustomed to this kind of thing.

The problem is if the bread, if the lump gets holy every time you remove a holy portion from it, then you're not allowed to eat the bread unless you're a priest. So if removing that portion as the holy portion makes the other portion holy, you can't eat that as a person. So that's definitely not what he means. It's also not how it works in the Torah. By removing the holy portion, the portion is holy. The other portion is common and you can use it for your own good. You can eat it as a regular Israelite family.

But there is a context in which the holy portion does make the rest of the lump holy. Anybody know what that is?

[Audience]: The wave offering...

So what you're talking about is the wave offering, you know—wave the sheaf in advance, and everything else becomes acceptable. It's a good idea, but that doesn't really fit the lump thing. It's a good context though. Right? And what happens to the measures?

[Audience]: It's all leavened.

Now in that case, actually, that's not a good thing for what it's worth.

[Audience]: When is leaven good in Scripture?

True. But as a general rule, leaven normally represents decay, infection, and so on. This is something like the parable—I think that parable should be interpreted more like the wheat and the tares, right? That you get this, like an infection that happens within, even within the kingdom potentially. It's one other reading. I'm open to not quite having that, but I think that's at least something that should be considered.

But in this case, that's the principle. The basic idea is if you have set aside something and it is designated as holy, and then something else comes into contact with that—let's say you've been mixing all this stuff out and then you take this portion over here and you say, "Okay, that's the portion reserved as the firstfruits for the priest. That's holy. We're doing this." And then you turn your back and your enterprising six-year-old comes over and is like, "I want to help," and then takes those two portions and mixes them together and goes, "See, look, I helped. I put it all together." What has just happened? The whole lump is now holy. The whole thing is now dedicated. And this is one example.

And the reason he appeals to this is this one example. Normally when purity comes into contact with impurity, what happens? The whole thing becomes impure, right? But in this case, what you have is contagious holiness. When you're dealing with two pure things, two things that are not impure, and the holy comes in contact with the common, the common is actually made holy.

It's actually separated out. Why use this metaphor? The key here, the reason he uses this metaphor is: don't you understand that if those who are unholy, they are not apart. And "holy" here means set apart. They're part of the people of God, right? Israel is a holy nation, right? They are set apart by God to be his special people. Those who are not in Israel are not holy. But if they come into contact with the holy in this way, if they're integrated in some fashion, what happens to them by contact? He argues they become holy by virtue of being integrated into the smaller portion that is holy.

So the function of Israel in this context as the holy first fruit is to essentially infect with holiness the rest of the dough in this way. And so everything that comes into contact, everything that's integrated, becomes holy. And this is why he appeals to this right after: If the first fruits are sacred, so is the lump. So what he's saying—he's starting to get into the how of the life from the dead. We'll revisit this in a few minutes in terms of the logic here, how he's envisioning how this is going to work. But I want you to understand that particular mechanism of infectious holiness. That's the important part, okay?

The Sacred Olive Tree

And then of course he goes into: if the root is sacred, then so also are the branches. The basic idea here—many of you may not know this—but the temple in Jerusalem, for example, owned a bunch of olive trees. Why would the temple own olive trees? They had to have oil. They had to have holy oil to burn and for the various offerings and everything else. And yes, people would come and they would freely give this, and it would be bought out of the temple tax as well. You could do that. But the better way, and the way that they tended to do this, is there were sacred precincts—these were holy trees that were dedicated to the Lord, Adonai's trees—and whatever came off those trees went to the sacred service in the temple. Nobody goes through that field and just picks some olives and takes them home. Those are holy olives, right?

So what he says is: if the root is holy, so are the branches. What makes the root holy, by the way? Actually, interestingly, olive trees are not normally grown from seed. I'll get to that. How are olive trees grown? From cuttings. You take a healthy older olive tree and you cut something off, then you take that cutting and you plant it somewhere, and then that becomes an olive tree.

The Ancient Lineage

Basically, every olive tree you're going to find in the Middle East is basically cuttings from trees that are thousands of years old. You know, there are trees in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean right now. You're looking at 5,000-year-old trees, 4,000-year-old trees. These are very old. The olive tree, by the way, is one where if you burn it to the ground, if you burn it to the roots, it rejuvenates. It comes back. It's really hard to cut it out, hard to get rid of. Yes, you can do it. You can dig it out. You can do some of those things.

But this was something you get Roman writers, for example, talking about—that an olive tree, when burned, rejuvenates and comes back to life. Why would you use that as an image? An olive tree. What did I just say? The thesis of the whole thing is life from the dead. So if the olive

tree is cut down, pruned back, burned, whatever, the life of the olive tree is still going to come back, right?

So he says the branches are there. Now, why? What makes the root holy? It is the source of life. But what matters is where the tree is planted. What's it planted in, right? It's a holy tree because it's on ground that's owned by God, right? If it's planted there, then the root itself—that's in what? In holy ground—makes the whole tree holy. And you can't have a holy tree with unholy branches. The tree in its totality is holy, right? So that's what he says.

Grafting: The Unnatural Reversal

So then he says, "But if some of the branches were broken off and you being from a wild olive tree were grafted in among them, becoming copartakers of the root of the fatness of the olive tree, don't boast against the branches, but if you do boast against them, it's not you who supports the root. The root supports you. You'll say branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in. Fine. But they were broken off for infidelity and you stand by fidelity. So do not be proud but be afraid because if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you."

Now keep in mind here what he's doing—he says there's an olive tree, and he's already established that this is an olive tree with roots in holy ground. This is a holy olive tree, okay? Holy olive tree. Some branches are removed from that olive tree and cast aside because of infidelity. And infidelity means they don't bear fruit. They're not bearing good fruit. So, and this, by the way, is a common practice in viticulture. What you do is you prune back the branches that aren't productive, or that are growing in a way that's going to lead to a less productive tree.

My wife and I actually learned about this not long ago—just how severe it is. We've got a fig tree that we planted a few years ago, and it hadn't really done much in terms of figs until about three years ago. And then we decided, all right, let's try to prune this thing back. And she did some reading about how we need to prune it this way so it's going to grow here to get light this way. But then we hacked that tree half to death. We eliminated about half the tree in terms of biomass. We were kind of amazed at the end—it was like, wow. And it looked kind of sad. It's like this tree does not look happy, and it is not nearly as pretty a tree as it was. [snorts]

And that summer we had hundreds of figs. We'd had only four before that. And then this last year we did it again and we had figs all summer. Our girls like to go out and pick them off and just stick them in their mouth and eat them. So that's how this works.

But the other thing that you can do, especially with an unhealthy tree, an older tree that has a number of branches that are not bearing fruit—one technique is that you take that tree and cut off the unfruitful branches, and then you go to another tree that has branches that might be healthier in a variety of ways, and you take one of those branches and cut it off. Then you trim off the edge of it to make it pointed. You dig it into the main area of the tree where you want that branch to go and you bind it there. And you make sure that those two things are joined. And over time, what happens is the tree grows over that joint and then that branch becomes a part of the tree, right?

And then the hope is that by this transplant you're going to get more fruit from that new branch than you would have previously. What kind of fruit are you going to get? What kind of branch is that going to work out to be? Once it's integrated into that tree, it's that tree's branch. Now, in this case, interestingly, we're not looking at grafting apple branches into olive trees. We're looking at grafting olive branches into olive trees, right? But these are outside. These are olive branches that are from outside. They're not from the sacred precinct. These are wild.

This, by the way, is unusual. You don't normally go get uncultivated wild olive branches and bring them into a cultivated plant because you don't actually expect uncultivated olive branches to do very well. Normally what you would do is you would take cultivated olive cuttings and put them into wild trees in order to make the wild trees stronger and help them bear better fruit. But in this case he's saying it's going the opposite direction—that's how God's doing it.

Infectious Holiness Through Grafting

But the purpose of it, the function of it, is to make the tree healthier, to bring about the fruit that the tree was planted to produce in the first place. And what he says is when you get the branches that are in the tree, then those branches become holy. Once again, we have infectious holiness. You integrate the one thing into the other. And by virtue of it being planted in something that's planted in holy ground, whatever fruit that produces is going to be holy fruit, and it is to be regarded as a holy branch, right? You all following? Okay.

So then he says, "But some branches are broken off." They were broken off for unfaithfulness. Do not be proud but be afraid because if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. See then the kindness and the severity of God—severity toward those who fell, but toward you kindness, if you remain in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And those ones also, if they do not remain in unfaithfulness, will be grafted in, because God is able to graft them in again. Because if you were cut off from the wild olive tree to which you belonged by nature and

contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted into their own tree?

This is something I've wondered about a good bit.

The Deliverer Will Come from Zion

We'll talk about this as well. Remember, these are wild olive branches. Where did they come from? How did they become wild olive branches in the first place? Where did those wild olive trees come from that are outside the sacred ground? Right? You should be asking those kinds of questions. All right. And then he continues: "But I don't want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, of this mystery, lest you become high-minded or arrogant yourselves, that a partial insensibility has come upon Israel until the fullness of the nations has entered. And thus all Israel will be saved, just as it is written, the deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove impiety from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins. With respect to the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but with respect to election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the callings of God are never removed, never taken back. For just as you were once obedient to God, but have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so also these disobeyed now, so that because of the mercy shown to them, to you, they may also be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience to show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God."

So this is where he goes from [Romans 10](#). So what we're going to do is explain how, again, what we talked about this morning is transformed hearts, but those promises were made to Israel, not other nations. So now we've got to explain why. First of all, those promises do not stop at transformed hearts. God also promises to restore all 12 tribes of Israel from exile and exalt them above the nations. We have to then ask, why isn't this happening? Why don't we see this happening? And what's the deal with why the Gentiles are receiving the Spirit? Has God been unfaithful to his promises? Has he suddenly abandoned his people in favor of others? And if so, that would call into question whether God's reliable about anything he's doing now as well.

So this is what he does. This is how he starts it. He starts by explaining that he wants to make his people jealous. Now, for what it's worth, this is a really, really complex passage, as we talked about this morning, to the place where Origen, one of the smartest of the early church fathers, probably the most educated church father of the late 2nd and early 3rd century, one of the greatest interpreters among the early fathers, said: who the "all Israel" are, who will be saved, and what "the fullness of the nations" will be, only God knows, and only along with his only

begotten and perhaps any who are his friends. So if you think this passage is difficult, you're in good company. The goal of what we're doing now, the hope of this talk, is that by the end here, you also will join the ranks of "any who are his friends," according to Origen's thesis.

Ground Zero for the Argument

Let's move on. In order to understand this passage, one of the keys is to put it in proper context. And as we talked about this morning, Paul's not just talking about contemporary Jewish unbelief, right? In [Romans 9-11](#), that's not the focus. Instead, he's discussing something a lot bigger. He's discussing the entire redemptive arc of God's relationship with Israel. In [Romans 9](#), he goes from Abraham to exile, just like the Torah. Go ahead and switch slides. He goes from Abraham to exile — this is what we talked about this morning. Next one. I meant to have that one up just a moment ago, but here we go. So we're down here at the bottom, from Abraham to exile, just like the Torah, and the end of Deuteronomy is ground zero for what he's arguing throughout Romans. And to understand [Romans 11](#), we have to go back to that, and we have to also understand the biblical narrative of Israel.

So, next slide. In the biblical narrative of Israel, basically what we have is a 12-tribe people that receives the Torah and its promises. They unite under David. They become two kingdoms, and David receives a promise of a perpetual house, ruled over by his son who will be risen up to rule, and his kingdom will be forever. It's divided into two kingdoms. You have the 10 northern tribes that seceded, and you have the southern kingdom under David's descendants. And interestingly, the northern tribes retain the name of Israel, while the southern kingdom goes by Judah. And that southern kingdom — again, named after the primary ruling tribe — also included parts of Benjamin, also Simeon, which seems to have been assimilated into Judah pretty early. But I do wonder about someone like Simon Peter, for example — Shem and Peter. I wonder whether some of the people named Simon, for example, are named so because of some tradition in their family that they're from the tribe of Simeon perhaps. We don't know, but it's as good a guess as any, right? And then the priestly tribe of Levi and Judah.

What "Israel" Can Mean

So then when we talk about Israel in the biblical narrative — you can go ahead to the next one — this word can refer to a bunch of different things. It could refer to the whole group of the 12 tribes, including both the northern and southern kingdoms. It could refer to the 10 tribes not associated with Judah, excluding Judah. So when you have "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah," the house of Israel is referring to the not-Judah part of Israel, right? One way, by the

way, to explicitly denote that you're using the term Israel to refer to the whole people is to put the word "all" with it. "All Israel" refers to the 12 tribes. This clarifies that we're talking about Judah and the rest of Israel too. And the people of Judah came to be called Jews. Jew comes from the word Yehudim, Ioudaioi — this is where this comes from. Whereas those from Israelite tribes who were not from Judah were not Jews. They were non-Jewish Israelites. People like the Samaritans, for example, right? It says in John, the Samaritan woman tells Jesus, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?" And then you've got the editorial comment, "because Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans," right? If I said, "Florida State fans do not share meals with Miami fans" — if I said this, this would imply that Florida State fans are not Miami fans, right? This is how this works. So Samaritans are not Jews, but Samaritans very strongly claim to be Israelites. There's an inscription we have from the island of Delos that refers to "this is the synagogue of the Israelites who have their place of worship at Mount Gerizim." Who are these Israelites? They're not Jews. And notice they don't say "we are the Jews" who have that — we have other inscriptions that say "we are Jews." This is a way of distinguishing those.

Fools on Joseph's Land

So Samaritans are one example of non-Jewish people claiming to be Israelites, because you have Jews, for example, who look at the Samaritans and say, "You're not real Israelites." No, no, no, no, no, no, no. [laughter] "You're claiming that, but you're actually impostors. You're actually a bunch of people the Assyrians brought in from Cutha and from Sepharvaim and all of these places, and they moved you all in here, and a few of you married some of the people who were here who, sure, you've got a few drops of Israelite blood or whatever, but it's adulterated, and you're all a bunch of posers, and when God comes, he's going to judge you and get you out of the land, and he's going to bring the real Israelites back." And if you want a good example of that, go to the Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4Q372, fragment 1, where it talks about the fools who are currently on Joseph's land while Joseph languishes in exile awaiting restoration. It's referring to the Samaritans, and the rest of the real Joseph tribes that are out there somewhere, expecting restoration.

So the way this works is: you have non-Jewish Israelites like the Samaritans. You also have the northern kingdom of Israel, which was destroyed by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC. We just talked about the Samaritans as some consequence of that. And then you have large portions of those northern tribes — some of whom came south and seem to have assimilated among Judah, many others were scattered by the Assyrians, many taken into exile, many fled to Egypt,

others fled to other portions of the world, some went to Greece. You have an early Israelite diaspora as a result of that. Now, unlike the Jewish diaspora, we don't have any indication that, say, the tribe of Reuben retained its distinctive ethnic identity among the various nations where it was taken. Same with Gad or Dan — where are the people of these nations? Now, you do have, recently, the Beta Israel, who've applied — they're in Africa, in Ethiopia, and they've applied for recognition as able to immigrate to Israel, and some of them have actually been received, but even there that's complicated, right? We don't know. And beyond that, like, where do we see the tribe of Naphtali? When did we last hear from the tribe of Naphtali? Right.

Yeah, Tobit. And what is the book of Tobit about? It's about someone who actually turns out to be faithful to God. And then at the end of Tobit, they go east, further east. They're in Assyria. And then they go further east out into the kind of unknown area where God's going to preserve that family until the time of restoration.

So what this serves as in the book of Tobit is an explanation to the reader: okay, so you might not see the Naphtalites around somewhere, but they're out there somewhere. God is preserving his people out there somewhere, so that when the restoration happens they'll be able to be included. Because the problem is if they're not, then the promises that God has made are not fulfilled and can't be fulfilled.

If Naphtali doesn't return, God has been unfaithful to his people and to his promises. It's not enough for Jews to be brought in and to be exalted above the nations and for there to be Jewish independence and Jews returning to the land and a new temple. All of that—if it's just Jews—it's not the fulfillment of the promise because you have to have Reuben, you have to have Gad, you have to have Asher, you have to have Naphtali, you have to have all of these different figures.

The Book of Tobit and God's Promise to Israel

So Tobit says, "Don't worry. God has sovereignly provided to have them out there somewhere. We just don't know where they are right now." But that's the story. And he's made sure that their bloodlines are still okay. Right.

How many of you do not know the story of Tobit? In the story of Tobit, you have a Naphtalite family where the danger is you have a son who's trying to get married to a woman from Naphtali. The problem is that every time she gets married, a demon comes and kills her husband. And so there's never any children that get produced because this is working its way out.

Eventually, God has to step in through the intervention of the angel Raphael, and this demon, Asmodeus, is cast out. And there's this whole thing with Tobit's eyes having to be healed and Tobiah's eyes having to be healed, and all that takes place. And then at the end you finally have the nuptials, and you know that they're going to have good Naphtalite offspring, which is going to guarantee that the Naphtalites are going to be a part of the final restoration. And the book ends with the patriarch of the family giving this great blessing about how one day there's going to be a return. And actually there's going to be a return of some parts of Israel that are going to go back, and there's going to be a kind of podunk temple for a while. But that's not going to be the real thing. Then later on, God's going to get the whole people together, and then there's going to be the real restoration. So it's pointing to—you know, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all that—that's fine, that's nice, but the real restoration is sometime in the future. It's going to involve all of us.

And the book ends with this declaration of what's going to happen in the end. So you need to have all Israel for this to work, for God's promises to work. And that includes those large portions taken into exile. It doesn't have to be every Israelite. Doesn't have to be every descendant from those tribes, but you have to have some—you have to have those tribes included. Otherwise, God has not been faithful to his promises.

The South's Partial Return

So the southern kingdom of Judah remains about 200 years after the mid-8th century BCE, and then Jerusalem gets destroyed. The upper classes get deported to Babylon. You all know this story, right? And then some Jews return to Judah and they rebuild the temple and so on. And you have now the province of Judea, or Yehood, in Persia, and then eventually Judea in the Roman Empire—composed of these various Jews, many of whom were descendants of those who had returned from exile, and some who had been in the land all along.

Right. Now here's the thing. When they came back—Ezra, Nehemiah, and all that—what was the name of the province that they founded? Was it Israel? It was Yehud. It was Judah. Why? Because they knew full well that this was not the fulfillment of God's promises. And at best, it was what we see now in the modern nation state of Israel.

The Orthodox—who actually are not opposed to the state of Israel, because there are Orthodox who are—particularly those living in the modern nation state of Israel, they refer to what's happening. They call the modern nation state of Israel "the first flowering of the redemption" because they know that the full redemption of Israel has to involve all of Israel. It has to involve

the Messiah, and the Messiah will know who are his people and who are not, and all that's going to be taken care of.

What's happening in the modern nation state isn't the fulfillment of the promises, but we are preparing the way. They say right now we're just sort of laying the groundwork and the foundation for the Messiah to return. But the promises are independent of what's happening in the modern nation state of Israel, right? Jews understand that the modern nation state of Israel is not the fulfillment of God's promises. It's a necessary safety measure. It's a necessary way to maintain the security of the people. It's the first flowering, and the best we can do to prepare the way for the Messiah. That's how this works.

"You Are Not My People"—Hosea and the Northern Exile

In the same way, it was the same with Ezra and Nehemiah. And what is the first thing that Ezra and Nehemiah did when they got back? Or rather, what is the first thing that the returnees did? In Ezra and Nehemiah, what is the first thing that they did when they got back and they were able to get the temple underway and construction started?

The wall came 100 years later. Before that, they offered 12 sin offerings. The elders of the Jews—notice the terminology—the elders of the Jews offered 12 sin offerings, one for each of the tribes of Israel. When they dedicated Solomon's temple, did they do that? They offered peace offerings and fellowship offerings and all of this, but in Ezra Nehemiah, the elders of the Jews offer on behalf of the rest of Israel that's not there. Right?

So this is what we see. They understand that there's something more in terms of the fulfillment of the promises than what we see in Ezra and Nehemiah. And by the end of the book, we see that whatever efforts they've made are not exactly going well, right? I mean, the book ends with Nehemiah like, "Lord, remember me. I tried. I did my best. Remember me, oh my God, for my good. At least I tried."

So what happened then to the exiled northern Israelites? Well, some, like I said, integrated, assimilated among Judah. What about those who were in the Assyrian exiles? Well, this is where we go to Hosea.

What does Hosea tell the northern kingdom when he begins to prophesy against them? He says, "You are not my people—Lo-Ammi. You are not..." And to get the full force of this, he names the thirdborn child of his wife who in the narrative it's pretty clear is not actually the result of him and his wife. He names that child "Not-Mine." That had to be a tough school experience, right?

But he says, "Not-Mine." And he says, "And just like that, you all are not my people, says Adonai. And I am not your God. And I am going to scatter you among the nations. I am going to scatter you among the nations because you are not my people."

Now what does that mean, right? Who's not my people, and who's my people? Not my people means you are not actually in the covenant anymore. You are the equivalent of all the other peoples. So I'm going to scatter you among all those other peoples.

The Pattern of Diaspora

And what's going to happen to you when you're there? I mean, this is what happens with virtually every diaspora of people over time, right? You have the first generation moving into—think about the United States, right? First generation Italians, they move into the Italian borough in New York. They participate in their Italian parish of the Catholic Church. They marry fellow Italian immigrants and so on, and they send their kids to school in New York where their kids meet non-Italians.

And then some of those children go on and marry outside of the Italian community. So the second generation's a little different. The third generation, they've moved into the suburbs in Kentucky to open a nice Italian restaurant with a half-Italian marriage. And they send their kids to standard school. By now they're Southern Baptists.

And those kids marry people who came in the 1960s. You know, we're looking at the 1970s, 1980s. They're marrying first-generation Americans, Cuban descendants who came in the 60s. So now they're a quarter Italian, and they're starting to wonder whether they should really claim their Italian-American heritage. Or are they just Americans?

By the third or fourth generation, there's no real recollection of anything about Italy other than the fact that our family likes to watch *The Godfather* and some of the mafia movies because apparently that's us.

Heritage and Assimilation

I don't know about that because now we're living in Wyoming and we're honestly just rednecks, but apparently there's some Italian back there somewhere. 23 and me says so. Just ask our senators how that works.

This is how this works: it only takes three or four generations to get essentially full assimilation where there's no recollection of your heritage. You get eight, nine generations in. This is the

way it works. And this, by the way, was Assyria's method in terms of what they did. Their whole method for repopulating their empire was to take rebellious people and split them up and put them into different parts of their empire in sufficiently small numbers that essentially they would assimilate. Because if you did so within two generations, you would have nice taxpaying and serving in the military rather than rebellious people from their own neck of the woods. This is what happened to the majority of those exiles from Israel.

The Promise to the Nations

Now what's interesting is Paul actually quotes the promise of Hosea to the very same people. He says, "You are not my people and I am not your God. But one day I will say to those who are not my people, my people and I will be your God once again." And Paul quotes that. So who does Paul quote that about? Who does he apply the quotation of Hosea to? It's [Romans 9:26](#). Actually, let me back up—it's 9:25 where Isaiah cries out concerning Israel. So verse 23 is the end of the potter and the clay, right? And then we get to 24 and so on to vessels of mercy whom he has called not only from Jews but also from Gentiles. As it is written, what does he say? "Those who are not my people will be called my people." Is he applying that to Gentiles? He says this is the proof text for why Gentiles are coming in. But do you think Paul is unaware of the context in which this prophecy is being...

Yeah. He knows full well that Hosea is prophesying this to the northern Israelites. And now he says this has been prophesied all along that you're not only going to have Jews, but you're also going to have—and you would expect him to say the rest of Israel, the people from Ephraim or whatever—as it is written, not my people. But he then says also from Gentiles as it is written. And the reason for that is: what does "not my people" mean if not Gentiles, right? He makes that leap. He's like, "Oh, and why would that be?" Well, if they're assimilating among the various nations where they are, by the time we're getting to Paul, they've long ceased to be distinctively ethnically Israel. Their children are Greeks, Romans, Syrians, wherever they are—great great great great great grandchildren. They're wherever they are. But what they are not is identifiably Israelite.

The Question of God's Faithfulness

But here's the question: Does that mean that God's promises can't be fulfilled? Because we've known all along, if God doesn't include the rest of Israel, God's promises haven't been fulfilled and he's not been faithful. This is the problem that Paul's trying to deal with in [Romans 9](#). It's

not about whether certain Jews believe or not. The question is, if God doesn't bring the rest of Israel, can we trust this God? Is his word not powerful enough to bring those people in?

The real question then comes back to this: why we wind up with the question of "not my people." Not my people get scattered and they get thrown out among the nations. But who are those people? What kind of people were they? Wholly set apart Israelites. And now they are cast out among the nations and they come into contact with all these nations. What should we expect to happen by the laws of holiness?

Infectious Holiness

Infectious holiness. Now, what's interesting is that what Paul does here is really clever because he essentially presents this as the inversion of what the gods of the nations are trying to do by consuming Israel. The gods of the nations take their stand against Adonai and his Christ. Right? This is Psalm two, right? The nations take their stand against the God of Israel and his Christ. But what's going to happen? They will be shattered as with a rod of iron. What happens is in [Psalm 82](#), the unjust gods of the nations, they come in and they exceed their mandate. They exceed their boundaries. And what do they do? What do we know that they do? They consume Israel and they digest Israel. And in so doing, they've defeated the God of Israel, right?

The Enemy's Own Defeat

Here's the trick. This is one of those things—it's like a movie where you've got the situation where you have to bait the enemy into doing exactly what the enemy wants to do, right? Because then once that happens, the whole thing gets transformed. This is like the enemy consumes something. We'll make up a movie on the spot, right? You have some sort of zombie infection where what you have to do is get the zombie to eat this one thing, and then in taking that in, the zombie is resurrected and comes back to life as something other than a zombie.

Right. Yeah, okay, that's a good example. Hercules. The Disney one, right? What they tried to do. So what does he have to do in that?

Right. And this, by the way, is a riff off of very old stuff. This is the Bahal myth. This is what happens in all sorts of ancient Near Eastern mythology where you have the notion of a god that allows himself to be consumed or enters into death in order to burst out. Well, this is what Paul argues.

The Microcosm of Resurrection

We see it in the death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah. What we don't realize is that the death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah is a microcosm of what God has been doing with the whole people of Israel all along. That the whole people of Israel joins Messiah in death and in that death among the nations resurrects and then brings life to the whole world. Right? That's ultimately what the gospel is. It's not just the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's the death and resurrection of the whole people, and that resurrection brings the whole world to life.

And so what happens is the gods of the nations consume Adonai's people. But Adonai's people being inside the gods of the nations means that the people of the gods of the nations are now actually Adonai's. The gods by consuming the people of God have dispossessed themselves. Right. So death is the actual means of conquest. The God of Israel submits to death and submits his people to death in order to defeat death. And death itself is the means of conquest.

Grafted Into Holiness

And so this is what he says is happening. So on the one hand they go out and their contact with the various nations means that the promises of God now apply not only to Jews but also to wherever that contact with the holy seed came. Now the promise applies to them because they've come into contact with the separated peace.

This also applies on the other side of this, though—in that when these people are then brought in from the nations, to whom are they joined? They're joined to Christ himself, who is the root. And Christ is the ultimate—he is the holy one, right? And so now they are actually unholy by being Gentiles in one sense, but they've come into contact in a way that the promises now apply to them. And now they are grafted in and they become holy by contact once again. And this is how this whole process works.

I saw your hand go up a moment ago. Yep. Yep. They wouldn't have crucified him if they had known that his death was in fact his victory. But God's way of fighting the battle is to take the primary weapon of the enemy and weaponize it against the enemy. Right? The one who lives by the sword will die by the sword. And so what God does is he doesn't fight in that way. The God of Israel turns that around.

How Integration Works

So what do we see when Gideon and his army take the Moabites? They fight and kill each other themselves, right? This is how this works. Ultimately the branches become part of the tree. The branches become dependent on the nourishing root. And what we have is outsiders who are

integrated together into the people ultimately of the Messiah. But the Messiah is from Judah, right? This is why Jesus says in John, salvation is from the Jews. Straightforward about that. And Paul says the same thing in another language at the beginning of Romans: to the Jew first and then to the Greek, right? Because the Greeks are being integrated into the same people, again coming into contact with the holy. This is how this works.

We go a little bit further. If we go to our text... yes?

Correct. They're not living as Israelites. They are not Israelites anymore.

The Death of a People

They've died as a people, which is exactly what the Torah says is going to happen to you, right? You are going to do all of these things that I told you not to do, and then you are going to be exiled. And then the part that everybody forgets is you're going to die. And this is not just you as an individual. You as a people will die. And the death of a people is what we call genocide. They're no longer recognizably a separate people. They no longer are a separate people. There's nobody left. But the trick of this is that the remnant of them is still there. It's just alloyed.

So the promises of God extend beyond the grave, though. Right. The promises of God are not just to those who are living in a particular way, who are still even alive. The promises of God extend to Israel beyond the grave. And they're so powerful that they actually bring in the rest of the nations with Israel.

That's [Ezekiel 37](#), right? Which is the cover of my second book for a reason, right? It's probably my favorite piece of art. It's that dora painting or that door woodcut of the valley of dry bones.

Israel's Partial Blindness

So what we see is Israel, then Paul finishes this and says, "Here's how this is working with the tree." And he says, "Now I don't want you to misunderstand this." He said, "Israel has experienced a partial insensibility. They become partially unable to see here, right? We talked about that in the beginning, right? Until the fullness of the nations comes in. And thus, or and so, or you might say—and in this way all Israel will be saved as it is written."

That seems pretty baffling, right? So he says the way all Israel will be saved is by the fullness of the nations coming in. That seems contradictory on the surface. But if we go to [Genesis 48](#), and I'm sure that in this group, many of you know this passage, right?

The Blessing of Ephraim

This is the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, right? What happens in the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh? Joseph brings his sons and he positions the firstborn on the right side of his father and the second born on the left side. And Jacob being Jacob goes. And Joseph is like, "Dad, no." And Jacob stops him and says, "I know, my son. I know." He says, "No, not so. This is the firstborn. I know my son. I know. He too will be a great people and his seed will be blessed.

But his younger brother will be greater than he because his seed will become—and what does it say in your versions in [Genesis 48:19](#)? His seed will become most of your versions are going to say something like a multitude of nations or something like that, right? A cacophonous nation or a populous nation. Cacophonous actually would be a good translation of some of the older ancient versions that are trying to connect this with [Genesis 17](#).

But a populous nation, right? Is there a footnote in there? A lot of times in those Bibles, they'll say something like a populous nation or a multitude of nations or whatever, and then there'll be like a little "a" or whatever, and then it takes you down to the bottom and then it'll say Hebrew or literally—what does yours say when it does that?

Fullness, Not Multitude

So it does have that footnote. Fullness of nations? Really? Anybody else? Multitude. Anybody else have the footnote? What? Yeah, fullness. How many people here have a little bit of Hebrew? That's what means what? Full, not multitude. It is fullness—means like the full effect, like the fullness of something, fatness in some sense, but the fullness of. And then if we have in the construct state the fullness of the nations, right, this is what this says. Now it's not normally translated that way because it's confusing as I'll get out what this means—what in the world do most of the old manuscripts of the Greek? So we're talking about two millennia of translation here. What has been done is generally it gets conflated, it gets harmonized with the promise to Abraham in [Genesis 17](#) that your seed will become a multitude of nations, which is what Abraham has promised. And it's connected, and that is—that the narrative of Genesis is actually the narrative of a specific promise of God to a specific family that then passes down through a specific line.

The Patriarchal Promise

So Abraham has promised: you will become the father of nations. All the nations of the world will be blessed in you and in your seed—by the way, in your seed. Right? Then he's told you will

be a father of many nations. Right? So he gets this blessing about his relationship with the nations and him bringing blessing to the nations, right? Then he passes, he goes to pass that blessing down, and he wants to pass it down to Ishmael. "Oh that Ishmael would be blessed before you." And what does God say? What does Adonai say? He will be blessed, but it's through Isaac that your seed will be reckoned. And that's what Paul points to at the very beginning of [Romans 9](#), right? He also points to that in [Romans 4](#), [Romans 5](#), right? Through Isaac, your seed will be reckoned. Why? Why can't it be both?

Then Isaac wants to pass the blessing along to Esau, right? Rebecca and Jacob have other plans. And they go in and they deceive him. And he blesses Jacob and he passes along the same blessing. We by the way see Isaac mention this blessing of the nations over him. Then what do we see with Isaac or with Jacob and Esau? Isn't that—have you ever wondered by the way?

I, when I was younger, actually until fairly recently, I really related to the question that Esau asks when he comes in and he discovers the deception and he goes, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me also." And I've, as a young reader, found myself like, "Yeah, like why can't you give him a blessing too? Like how hard is it? Like bless him also—that this should not be that complicated. Like put your hands on him, declare your blessing. God will bless him too." But Isaac's response is, "I've already given him everything. I've made you his servant. Why is there only one blessing?"

What blessing gets passed along later that Jacob references is the blessing of the nations, which sits for a while until we get to this passage at the end of the final time where the blessing has passed. And this time Jacob is passing it through to Joseph's second born. And we get the final in Genesis of the same blessing that's given to Abraham, that's given to Isaac, that's given to Jacob.

And Jacob, by the way, has 12 blessings. He blesses all 12 of his children, right? He even splits the leadership from—Joseph gets the birthright and gets the double portion, but Judah gets the leadership. But who gets the nations? It's complicated because Ephraim will become the fullness of the nations. Judah will rule, right? So the blessing gets passed down in this way at the end of Genesis. This is the nar—this is how to read Genesis from the New Testament perspective. It's all about the blessing to the nations through the patriarchs, right? And the blessing of the nations culminates in Ephraim becoming—his seed will become the fullness of the nations.

Now Ephraim becomes the chief tribe of the northern kingdom who then gets assimilated by the nations. And now we get to the end of this and Paul says not my people is coming in. And

this has been part of God's design all along.

God's Purpose in Disobedience

After all, God's purpose was to save all Israel. And how is God going to save all Israel? Well, it's not all Israel unless you include the fullness of the nations, is it? Because the fullness without the fullness of the nations, you don't have Ephraim or also the other tribes under Ephraim. You without the fullness of the nations, you don't have them. So this is how God has chosen to do it. Ephraim became the chief and ruling tribe of the northern kingdom and carries that blessing with him even in disobedience.

And this, by the way, is why Paul goes to the potter and the clay bit. God is actually capable of using. So if God makes a promise to someone, if God has a purpose for someone, there are multiple ways that God will get his will out. Multiple possible ways that God can get his will out of your life. One is through your obedience. And God will bless you and everything around you because of your obedience. Sometimes in very strange blessing ways. Are you sure this is a blessing, Lord? But if you don't obey, God will get his will and his purpose out of your life through your disobedience. And that's what he does with Israel. That's what he does with Ephraim is he basically says, "Look, I set you up to be a light to the people, to be a teacher of the nations. I set you up to be a kingdom of priests for all nations." And you blew it. You refused to do any of it. In fact, you said, "I want to be like all the other nations." So, you know what? Fine. I will give you what you want and I will use your disobedience to bring about what I want with the nations in the end anyway. I will use your disobedience to produce my purpose. So you are going to be my instrument whether you want to be or not. It's just a matter of whether you cooperate and receive additional blessing as a result or whether you don't and you ultimately lead to the blessing of everybody anyway.

So Israel's assimilation among the nations is precisely what enables God to take possession of all the nations, right?

It's not as light a thing for you to redeem the tribes of Jacob. I will give you the nations also. Why? Well, because the tribes of Jacob are among the nations. So, you know what? It's not enough for you to redeem the tribes of Jacob. I will give you the nations also. All who are not my people now come in, and all Israel will be brought in. And this is how it works.

This is where Paul's conclusion is: the Gentiles who are receiving the spirit are in fact God's way of restoring not just the Jews but all of Israel—including the parts of Israel that have effectively ceased to be Israel by being grafted into the tree, coming into Christ, and receiving the spirit.

They're being incorporated into Israel. They don't replace Israel. That's nonsense. You can't replace something you're coming into, right? It's like you get this idea that immigrants to the United States are replacing America. No, they're becoming Americans. That's how this works, right?

Mass Immigration into God's Kingdom

So what you have is a case of mass immigration for the people of God, and they're immediately being incorporated and acculturated to God's ways, to the law of God, to behave in accordance with the king who rules that kingdom. So you have mass immigration that fills up the nation. They don't replace Israel. Their salvation comes by participating in Israel's salvation, and Israel's salvation is only made complete by their participation. Otherwise, you would only have Jews and a few others. But here you have all of Israel. You have the fullness of the nations as promised.

So this means that for Paul, Israel is being resurrected as a people. Israel died among the nations. Now Israel is being resurrected and bringing everybody else with it. And this is the magic of the gospel in this sense.

Resurrection: Ezekiel 37

This is [Ezekiel 37](#): "Can these dry bones live?" And they are enlivened and then they have the spirit breathed into them and they stand up on their feet, a great army. Right? This is what that promise is. This is how Paul understands it. The union between Judah and Ephraim requires that you have Jews and spirit-filled Gentiles joined together.

And God's plan all along then is fulfilled: Israel becomes a light to the nations and brings the nations in so that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the world are blessed. Now, the promises and purposes of God for Israel and for the nations are thus happening in one move. Right? It's not a "this, then that." God's like the martial artist who strikes and defends at the same time, right? You have some that have two beats and then others that are one.

God's Promise Beyond Death

So Israel didn't obey. God used Israel's disobedience. Israel died. God's promise extends beyond the grave. Israel's redemption means salvation for the nations. Salvation for the nations means Israel's redemption.

It's no wonder then that Paul concludes with this note of praise—and I think we have one more here. It's no wonder that Paul concludes with this note of praise:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God."

Was that the last one? Yeah. Okay.

Paul's conclusion—he finds himself just... it's stunning. No one would have ever seen this. No one would have ever seen this coming. And yet, it's all right there. And that's why he concludes, and he's just like, "Well, there's nothing left to do but praise, right?" There actually is one last thing left to do on that.

The Removal of Impiety

At the end of all this, he says, "Thus all Israel will be saved. As it is written, I will remove the impiety from Jacob." Remember, in the first talk I talked about how the very first thing that Paul says God's wrath is revealed against—in [Romans 1:18](#)—it's the same word: impiety. And this is the lack of the love of God.

And he says the promise is: I will remove impiety from Jacob. And this is how this is actually happening. The love of God comes into the heart. And so now, what God's wrath is revealed against—what led to all of these things including Israel's exile, death, and all these other things—as Israel comes to life and receives the spirit, the impiety problem is taken care of. The love of God is automatic. The love of God is just there.

The Responsibility to Love Neighbor

So now there's only one thing left. And that's what the last three chapters of Romans are about: How to love neighbor? The love of God is taken care of. How do we love neighbor? Because that's really all that remains. If you have the spirit, the love of God—that's taken care of. You don't have to worry. You don't have to make yourself love God. Can't. But you do have a responsibility to love neighbor and to let that love of God pour out in these ways.

And so then the remaining three chapters—12 through 15—are all about, okay, if this situation comes up, how do we apply the love of God to bring about the proper behavior in the kingdom? That's all that's left.

All right, that's all I got. Let's go ahead and pray quickly and then we can move into whatever remains here.

Father, we thank you for the wonder of your plan and your foresight, and that you will use us even in our disobedience. But make us obedient as you promised, and let us understand your ways and how we fit and how best to live in your kingdom. We ask this in the name of your Son. Amen.

Questions and Answers

All right. So, what do we have? We got a little bit of additional Q&A. Is that how this is going to work?

I'm up. I'm up for it.

Yes, sir.

I am going to grab my water real quick.

All right. So this is what you explained—it's why, for 2,000 years, the Christian church has emphasized—as we say in the evangelistic world—accepting Christ, receiving Christ.

I call that pledging allegiance to Israel's Messiah, King.

And I'm seeing that as a reversal of First [Kings 12](#), when the kingdom splits and the northern tribes say, "To your tents, O Israel, to your own house, O David."

So it's undoing that disobedience, pledging again—I'm thinking bayat, that's the Arabic term—to the king, to be brought into the kingdom.

That's right.

Okay.

Yeah. Kiss the son, that he be not angry. Right? This is—be my friend, Godfather.

Right? Kiss the son. This is: you walk in and you kiss the king's hand and now you are his.

And it is again, you are absolutely right. It is the reversal of "To your tents, O Israel, to your own house, O David."

Yeah.

Um, thank you so much for both your talks. I learned a lot.

Um, so I had a question about this notion of infectious holiness, which I love. And I was thinking: Is there a connection here with Yeshua's healings? Like when he, for instance, heals

impurity—like the leper?

Absolutely, yeah. So actually, this is where I think Matthew Tissson's book *Jesus and the forces of death* is helpful on that. It's not perfect, but it's very good—an excellent book. And he points out that essentially what you get in these healings in the gospels is Jesus as the holy one is the bearer of life. And you know, when you look at impurity—impurity, so if we want to understand the purity system in the Torah—impurity basically represents mortality, right? It represents your being subject to death and reproduction, right? We are fleshly beings, and being fleshly comes with all sorts of nasty stuff, right? Our bodies are leaky. They, you know, and the older we get, the more leaky. It's like younger and older get more and more leaky and just, you know, kind of gross, right? And all of the things that have to do with that—whether that is things specifically associated with menstruation or semen or any of the reproductive aspects, things that have to do with death itself—the most impure thing is a human corpse. You can't get more death than that, right? All of these things and things that resemble death, scaly skin, pallid skin, these sorts of things get marked out as "this is like a death infection." And what does Jesus do? He walks in the door and his life is more powerful than the death that would oppose him, right? And that culminates in resurrection from the dead. He is that dude, right? So that's what that ultimately is about.

And so his life is infectious beyond the normal bounds of, you know, if you put one of us in the room and attached us to a corpse for four, five, six days, ten days, eventually that rot is going to actually infect us. We're going to die because of being in close proximity to the corpse after a while. But for Jesus, you make him touch that corpse and the corpse comes to life. So it's a different thing, yeah.

Um, so that's a motif then that we see throughout the New Testament.

Um, a couple other quick questions, if you don't mind.

Um, so you talked in the first talk about obedience from fidelity.

Mm-hm.

Um, Paul uses this unique phrase in the very beginning and end of Romans. So he kind of frames it—obedience of faith is how it's usually translated.

Paul's Mission: Bringing About the Obedience of Faith

And he says that Christ gave him apostleship in the beginning of Romans to bring about the obedience of faith. And he says >> that's his mission. >> Then he says something similar at

the end. So that's connected then to this bringing about fidelity from faithfulness. >> Yep. That's shorthand. So you could say from fidelity or you could say of fidelity. The genitive is >> from or of is basically the same idea, but the concept here is that the obedience is derived specifically from the fidelity that is in the person.

Two Ways of Obedience: Works of Law vs. Heart Transformation

Now, the question that Paul has to get to all along, and it's just so easy to misunderstand this because of a couple thousand years of baggage, but it's not hard to understand what he's arguing about here. What he's trying to get at is how do you get the right kind of obedience that's going to satisfy God?

And there are a few different ways to try to go about this. One is by works of law, which is to treat the law as instruction. I mean, Torah is instruction as a manual of exercises for moral reformation and as technology of transformation and justification. So by making sure that I don't eat these things, that I do eat these things at these times, that I have my foreskin cut off at the right time, that I do all of these various things—all this stuff is done—that is actually going to make me into an obedient and just person who loves God correctly and does all the things that please God.

And Paul actually argued—and by the way, this was a very common view in early Judaism. We see this in Philo. We see this in the Letter of Aristeas. We see this in 4QMT, in the Damascus Document. We see this in the Wisdom of Solomon. It's all over the place. This is a very common notion that you observe these things in order to become a person.

Paul argues it doesn't work. Philo argued that by removing the foreskin, the man is going to be less inclined to be basically a man. He's not going to go and do all the things that he would have done. It's going to deal with the lusts. And Paul's like, "Are you kidding me?" Right? Like, which by the way, are you aware? I mean, in the United States, most men are circumcised. That's not the case in most of the world. Do you know why it's the case in the United States?

>> No. >> It's a good guess. The answer is body, unfortunately. Yeah. And actually in most of the rest of the world where there are Christians, they are not circumcised. Reading Galatians and such, that's not a surprise. It goes back to how there's been different panics in America. You have like reefer panic, reefer madness. You have like the satanic panic of the '80s, which Stranger Things recently has been iterating on and all that. You have all sorts of panics about whatever. End of the 19th and early 20th century, you had the masturbation panic. And the basic idea is that this was a behavior that led to madness of all sorts, led to terrible

physiological ills of all sorts, and so on. And so what needed to be done is everything possible to essentially eradicate and eliminate that behavior from human life. And one way that they determined was definitely going to help was to make sure that you circumcised your baby boys because they were less likely to find themselves and engage in this practice that would be so bad for them, right? That's why—not because of Christianity.

>> Yeah. You have the very look on your face I expected. [laughter]

>> Yep. It's like yeah. Well, this, by the way, is the same reason cornflakes was invented.

>> You knew this too, huh?

>> We've talked about it.

>> This is why cornflakes was invented. The inventor of cornflakes was a Seventh-day Adventist who believed that essentially mental health and all of these things were directly related to the kind of life that you lived in terms of how much richness and pleasure and so on you allowed in your life. And if you ate fatty and sugary foods, then you would have less self-control in other areas. And then that lack of self-control would lead to madness and would wind up getting you in a sanitarium. And this guy was in charge of an insane asylum, a sanitarium. And so what did he do? Oh, I see, I've said too much, huh?

The Cornflakes Cautionary Tale

So what did he do? He decided, you know, and the idea is like if you eat the blandest food possible and if you avoid anything that would stimulate your senses, then by living in this way, you would be less likely to do any of these bad things. So he invents cornflakes as a way to—I figured out if I take corn and I kind of cook it up this way on a sheet and then I mash it up or whatever. This is pretty close to the least palatable thing I can think of, the most bland thing. And if you eat this, you're going to be fine. That is exactly the sort of thing that Paul is arguing against here in terms of how to treat the Torah. Paul says, if you're doing that, you understand, like it's not going to work, right?

>> Right. Like the circumcision of baby boys thing when you know that versus the internet, and the internet has won, right? It's how that works. So and the same thing with cornflakes, like I think it was his brother or his cousin who saw this, got a hold of it, and was like, "This is not a bad idea. If you add a little bit of sugar to it, this ain't half bad." And this gets very marketable. And so now you have

>> Kellogg's

>> Kellogg's Frosted Flakes. And then cornflakes themselves with added sugar became the first thing. And it's like, you can see the original was—this is exactly the opposite. Buddy's like, "We're making money hand over fist here. We're going to make breakfast the most important meal of the day. Eat your sugary meal and then we'll obviate that circumcision right away, right?"

But and you cannot persuade me that the mascot or the symbol of cornflakes is an accident. It's totally trolling, but you know, it's yeah. [snorts] It's classic.

But what Paul's doing here? Yeah, you've just realized it, yeah.

>> Yep. You see what I'm saying? They're trolling.

So, you know, sometimes history is weirder than you think. So this is what Paul's arguing against. And he's saying, "Look, you can go get—and that's not going to change the heart that makes you want to look at that woman and go and do things that are disobedient to God. That's not going to change that. Obedience has to come from the heart out, and then you're taken care of. But you cannot go outside in and try to train yourself to obedience with all of this discipline.

>> It's not going to make you righteous.

>> It's not going to actually make you righteous. Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom, because the heart has to change and then it's going to work. So this is the obedience of faith or fidelity that comes from that internal transformation that he's talking about.

The Question of Isolated Peoples

>> So you know how there's like isolated tribes that don't have any contact with the rest of the world. How do they assimilate with like Israel and all that stuff?

>> I have no idea. This is not my plan.

>> Yeah. There you'll have to ask someone a good bit more knowledgeable and maybe omniscient than I am. But I do wonder how many of these isolated tribes have been isolated for how long and how isolated. We don't know in many cases, right? I mean, you go back a few hundred years, maybe a thousand years, and you get tribes that have been isolated for a thousand years. That still gives you what, 1500 to 2000 years before that for some sort of connection, and all it would take is one. So, you know, I do wonder. I just don't know.

>> Yeah, >> this is a fun one to give God a lot of credit for being able to figure out those things on another level. Like when Jesus said, "I can raise up stones to be Abraham's seed." He's like, "Okay, I guess you can do whatever you want because you're God."

Infectious Holiness and Godly Offspring

>> But the thought I had was infectious holiness. On another level, Paul also mentions in [1 Corinthians 7](#) about the believing woman who has a husband who's not a believer, and ultimately God makes her marriage holy because God's looking for godly offspring. So it's transferring that holiness in a more church sense rather than in the physical Israel sense.

>> And the children who are the result of that union are holy by nature. They are born holy, and that's something important to understand. I've heard it said a lot in evangelical circles that God has no second generation children, right? I mean, every child is born totally depraved and corrupt and outside. And I've even known people who've argued that if a child dies before they have the chance to accept Jesus and pray the prayer, then that child's going to hell, right?

Sanctified by the Believing Spouse

And same expression you had earlier, right? So here's the thing: if you read [1 Corinthians 7:14](#), where he says the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the believing spouse, and otherwise your children would be unclean, so your children are holy. Otherwise they would be unclean, he's saying that the children born to a single believing parent are regarded as gods from the jump. That child is born in, and I mean, this is basic Jewish logic, right?

Born Into the People

Today it's Jewish mother, but in Paul's day it was a Jewish mother or a Jewish father made a person a Jew. You're born a part of the people. Period. Now, you have the opportunity to work your way out through infidelity, but you're born in—and that's how Paul's logic works, right?

And I know there's a small number of Jewish New Testament scholars.

Interactions with Jewish Scholars

>> But have you interacted regarding your thesis with them and how has it been received? >> More than a few. Yes. It's a little bit mixed. I've gotten some who've been like, "Yeah, I think this actually probably you may actually have cracked it, like this might be right." I know of one. I

remember Mark Nanos once, when I first was talking about this with him. He looked at me and he was like, "I think you might be right, but I really hope you're wrong." So I've gotten that.

There have been some others who had differing responses. For the most part, I would say, to date, it's been, "I need to really chew on this for a while." So we'll see. I mean, there are a number of really prominent Jewish New Testament scholars, and there are some prominent Messianic scholars like Mark Kzer, for example. I don't really know what Mark's response has been yet. But by and large, the non-Christian Jewish scholars have generally been like, "Yeah, this is probably right."

So my adviser when I was in my undergrad, where I first started working on this project, was a Jewish New Testament scholar. My adviser was David Levenson at Florida State, and I was working on this project with him while I was his student before I was anywhere else.

Early Church Fathers and Cosmic Redemption

>> Yeah. I just, at the end of everything, Paul is just sitting there with his mouth open and that's the way we should all feel, right? This is like the mystery of the gospel has been revealed to us. It's not a mystery anymore. Paul has brought it out, and I just kept hearing stuff from the Antonyean fathers and some of what you're sharing there with respect to the cosmic redemption or the recapitulation. Yep. And a lot of Irenaeus coming through in your message as well. So >> yep >> it's just awesome the way that God works. He solves the problem by internal means. He enters into the created order and he brings us up to where he is. It's very like, you know, that's kind of like the main way that the atonement and the redemption is viewed, you know, in the Orthodox—the Eastern Orthodox church as well. >> Yeah. Yeah. And it turns out that our early church fathers weren't bad readers. They weren't idiots. Who knew?

Anna of Asher: The Difficult Question

>> A few more questions here. >> Oh. I just wanted to understand how you address [Luke 2:36](#) because from what I understand, the idea is that the northern tribes they essentially... >> Gentile of Asher. >> Yeah. Anna of Asher. Yeah, that's a complicated—or that's a difficult one for me to answer because it's the only case in which we have someone from Asher for roughly eight centuries, and then we have no one from Asher again after that.

So there's been a number of ways to try to deal with this. One is, I mean, a lot of biblical scholars are just like, "Yeah, obviously she wasn't really from Asher, but this is Luke's symbolic way of representing this." I'm less inclined to go that direction. I think if we're going to take

Luke seriously there, that this is actually something that happened, then we would have to conclude that there were at least a few people. There might—I mean, for all we know, there's one family from Asher that still recognizes itself as from Asher in some way that is around, from which Anna is there. Okay, fine. I mean, Balcom and others have tried to address this. This is a hard question for anybody.

The Restoration of All Twelve Tribes

>> Oh yeah. >> No, he's very interested in demonstrating that this is not just Jews that Jesus is coming for. He wants to say—I mean, that's from the jump, in Luke. He wants to argue that Jesus is the king of Israel and of the whole world, and that this involves the restoration. I mean, how does Acts end? Paul talking about, on trial, "I am on trial for the hope of our 12 tribes," right? So Luke has this in mind all along. But the question is, is Anna something like Tobit, where, you know, it's like a Naphtalite who's conveniently there for your narrative to work? Again, I'm less inclined to go that direction.

I think it's entirely possible that you have, you know, a family here, a family there, that identifies with some sort of tribal background. And you know, that would just mean, okay, you've got somebody from Asher. We still have to have Reuben. We don't see anybody from like —there's no evidence of anybody from Reuben for centuries. For you know, by that point, it's been like eight centuries since we last saw someone from Reuben. So the short answer is, I don't know. The longer answer is, it may well be someone actually from the tribe of Asher, which in no way invalidates any of this. It just means that she also would be a part of Israel, larger Israel, and you have to, you know, God is still concerned with the rest of the people from her tribe.

So I do want to emphasize that this does not basically become "God is going and searching out only the people who have some sort of ancestor who's from Israel." What happens here is, because they get assimilated among all the nations, or among the nations, the doors are open to all from the nations because the nations themselves have been unlocked, essentially. They've come under the possession of Israel and Israel's God and Israel's Messiah. So that may actually help a little bit for some of the unreached tribe question, or the isolated tribe question. You know, it doesn't necessarily matter in a genetic sense. What matters is that in the larger sense, this has thrown the doors open to all, specifically for the purpose of redeeming the whole people of Israel.

>> Yeah.

Circumcision and the Covenant of Abraham

>> Thank you, doc. I had a question about 1 Corinthians chapter 7. I just wanted your take on it in terms of you were talking this afternoon about circumcision, and I was thinking about—I think it's somewhere like verse 18 or something, [1 Corinthians 7](#)—where he's talking about if you are circumcised, don't try to do anything to get rid of that. If you are not, don't try to become that. And he says circumcision is, you know... >> Circumcision is nothing. Foreskin is nothing, right? >> All there is is keeping the commands of God. >> Yeah. So I guess my question is, is that, to have been properly circumcised or to become circumcised, is that a commandment of God? To have to have said, you know, don't necessarily worry about it, but what's important is that you keep the commandments of God. >> So you're asking, well, isn't circumcision a command? >> Yeah. No, it's not a command for you to circumcise yourself, right? When is it, when is an Israelite boy or a Jewish boy supposed to be circumcised? This isn't a command that you could keep for yourself anyway, in that respect, right?

Now then the question comes in: okay, true, but in the covenant with Abraham in [Genesis 17](#)—and this is surely what Paul's opponents are saying—is they're saying God says to Abraham, "I will do all these things. As for you, you will be circumcised. And you will be circumcised in the foreskin of your flesh, and this will be the sign, or as for you, you will be circumcised, and this will be my covenant with you. And you will be circumcised in the foreskin of your flesh, and this will be the sign of the covenant that I have with you. You and all your seed after you will be circumcised in the poor skin of the flesh. And if anyone doesn't—if any man is not circumcised among you, then he will, he must be cut off from among the people." Right? That then sounds like if you're going to join the covenant of Abraham, you need to be circumcised, right? So then you could make, you could read that into a command.

What Paul does with that is he understands this a little bit differently. This is often read as synonymous parallelism: that you'll be circumcised, and you'll be circumcised in the foreskin of the flesh, is a way of repeating the same thing. What Paul does is he understands the first circumcision as the circumcision that is the covenant, and that's the circumcision of the heart.

Heart and Flesh: Two Forms of Circumcision

The second circumcision is the circumcision of the flesh, which is the sign of the covenant mandated to Abraham and Abraham's seed. But if you have the circumcision of the heart already before you're circumcised, that actually isn't necessary—because then you're like Abraham when he had a foreskin, and you're already faithful. God has already declared that

you're in. So circumcision is irrelevant to you. That's how he understands it; he divides those two things. And he's not the only one who makes that distinction between circumcision of the heart and circumcision of the flesh in that passage of Deuteronomy or Genesis. Philo does the same. Philo just thinks that you need to do the symbolic one too, no matter what.

Belief as Covenant and Allegiance

>> Dr. Staples, thank you so much for your time with us. It's been a pure joy. I got a two-parter for you. You started and mentioned a little bit about Jesus's resurrection being for the purpose of the Torah, and talked a little bit about that. You mentioned belief in Jesus a little bit, and I'm just curious: what are your thoughts about the role of belief in Jesus and what that term means to believe in Jesus and accept him into your heart? And from that, what role does that play in the restoration of both modern-day Jews and Gentiles?

Okay, so first of all, the word "belief" is coming from "pistis"—right, this is faith, fidelity, that sort of thing. I think that the primary, central meaning of this is fundamentally covenantal, in that when you're talking about "pistis" and "Christos"—right, so faith in—you're talking, and actually, interestingly, in many cases it's the faith of Christ. We'll talk about that in a moment. But you're first and foremost talking about the allegiance that you have declared, the commitment that you've declared to Jesus. So this is again like going into the mafia godfather and saying, "I want to be part of the family. I have allied myself to you and yours. I'm here for whatever you want me to do." That commitment is what that belief basically entails. What you might refer to as belief. And then living out that commitment is the fidelity that we're talking about. But it's a little bit more sophisticated or complicated than that, because you only commit to someone that you actually believe in, right?

Trust and Fidelity

You commit your fidelity to someone who you think is trustworthy. So this requires the other side of the notion of faith or belief: I wouldn't have married my wife if I didn't trust her, right? I believe in my wife—big reason why we got married, right? And then that requires that I show fidelity to her. Her fidelity towards me continues to build on my confidence and belief in her. So that's the other part of this.

The Ambiguous Genitive: Faith of Christ

But then we get to the other aspect of this, which is the idea that in most of the cases that we see Paul talk about what most Bible versions translate as faith in Christ—most of the time, almost all the times we see this in the New Testament—this is "pistis." This is faith in Jesus Christ or faith in Yeshua Messiah, right? It's how it's normally translated in Greek. What that actually means is "faith of"—it's a genitive. Now the problem is that you can have an objective or subjective genitive. So the genitive can refer to something being its object or its subject. So you think about the worship of angels: Am I referring to worshiping angels, or am I referring to what angels worship or how angels worship? Either of those could be the worship of angels, right?

The same thing works with the faith or fidelity of Jesus. Are we talking about faith toward Jesus? The faith that is in Jesus, which is how it's often translated? Or are we talking about Jesus's faith—the faith that Jesus displayed in his life or the fidelity that is like Jesus's own fidelity?

My take on this is that Paul uses an ambiguous phrase because he wants it to mean both. But the primary meaning is actually the faith of Jesus—in that it's Jesus's faith. Because what Paul believes is that salvation, or more properly justification, comes from the fidelity of Christ. Christ's faithfulness goes all the way through the cross and to the resurrection, which brings about his exaltation because of his faith. He lives, right? And now that fidelity that is in Christ is extended to us so that we can receive the same faith that he has so that we can live by that faith. But then that faith that we have is extended back to Christ as faith in Christ—so it's the faith of Christ that Christ receives from us, right?

Gospel and Salvation Through Christ's Fidelity

So this is how I think that works in the way that the gospel is framed. Now that gets to your question about evangelism and so on and so forth. I think ultimately the job of evangelism is to proclaim the king of the kingdom, and then teach to do what he said and to do so because he is the king.

I do suspect that when it comes to judgment, many of us will be surprised that many who prophesied in his name and were out in the streets doing miracles in his name will be told, "I never knew you." And others who are completely unaware of their fidelity that they have received from him—who have been giving cups of water to his brothers—will hear, "When were you hungry, Lord?"

So I think we have to be very aware that when the judgment comes, we may be a bit surprised, but our job is to proclaim the dominion and the rule and the justice and the love of the king. That's as far as we can go.

Paul's Rhetoric on Circumcision in Galatians

>> As a followup to this gentleman's question and your answer, could you speak a bit about your view of Paul's rhetoric in Galatians regarding circumcision?

>> Can you clarify exactly what you mean? Why is Paul prohibiting seemingly Gentiles from circumcision?

>> Oh, okay. Yeah. So I spend a decent amount of time in my book on this, but the basic issue, as I understand it, is that you have people who've been coming to these gentile believers who are now the seed of Abraham. They're not Gentiles per se. They're Gentiles, but they're not Gentiles, right? They're fully part of the people of God. And you have people that are coming in and they're saying, "That's nice that you are now a follower of Israel's Messiah, but if you want to be fully a part of the people, you need to be circumcised and you need to do things this way. And in fact, that's actually how you handle the desires of the flesh. You need this training. This is how you become righteous."

And Paul freaks out at this idea. He's like, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. If you get circumcised in order to join the people of God, you're acting as though what happened to you already to bring you into the people of God is invalid. You are invalidating that. So with that action, you're treating God's action on your behalf as though it doesn't mean anything. And if you're treating it that way, I mean, read between the lines on what you're doing.

Secondly, it doesn't work anyway. All it does is make you a part of the written covenant that all Jews are under. And guess what? All of us have been under the curse. So all you're doing is bringing yourself under the covenantal terms from which we're all being saved by Jesus to begin with. So why would you do this? You've already got the promise, and now you're going to take a step back and put yourself under the curse so that you can be saved from the curse, but you're acting as though putting yourself under the curse is going to make it so that you actually can receive salvation. But now it's under your volition and through your action rather than Christ's. That's not how that's going to work. So that's how he understands it.

Jonah's Anger

>> Dr. Staples, I know we've kind of run to the end of the time that we committed to. I thank you for opening yourself up to the firing squad. But since I have the mic, I'd like to ask one more question.

>> I love it.

>> I'd love your hot take on [Jonah 48](#).

>> Ah, yes. One of my favorite verses. I think you mean 4:9, but did I sign it with 48? Should have been 49. So this is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. Any of you who've ever had anything signed by me will discover that I have a rotating circuit of verses that I accompany with. But [Jonah 4:9](#)—which it should be anyway. I think 4:8 is related, but 4:9 is where the Lord said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And Jonah said, "I do have good reason."

The Ending of Jonah

angry enough to die. I love that verse. That whole last part of Jonah is the part that always gets left out in children's Bibles, unfortunately. And it's like where the main message of Jonah actually lives. And the whole thing is like, Jonah gets furious because of his own discomfort. And God comes to him and is like, "You have good reason to be angry?" It's like, "Yes, I do." God's like, "Well, I've been the one that's providing for you all along. Why are you angry about this? You didn't do any of this work." And they finally do this thing.

And then the funniest, probably the funniest verse in the Bible is the final verse of Jonah, right? Which is, "Do I not therefore also have reason to be concerned for the city of Nineveh, which has 120,000 people who don't know their right hand from their left and all those cattle." And that's the end of the book. God's last word is like, "And all the cattle," and your concern is the cattle of Nineveh.

Okay. But yeah, I love that so much. He's just like, "Don't you understand? I've got bigger things in mind. Somebody please think of the cattle."

>> It's great. I just love Jonah.

>> We love Jonah as well.

So I appreciate you expounding on that.

Closing and Next Steps

Well, everybody, please give a hand if you enjoyed Dr. Staples. [applause]

>> Thank you.

This was a real treat, as you guys know, and it will be recorded. It'll be on our YouTube channel, Founded in Truth—both sections in one video. So just a reminder, guys, thank you so much. And we would love to not only bless Dr. Staples, but also make room for this to be a more frequent occurrence where we invite scholars and academics into the pulpit, which has been far too long removed. And so this is definitely something I support, and I hope you support that with us.

Giving and Blessing

If you'd like to give, please give. I'm not even going to ask. Please give. You can do so with one of the QR codes that is for offerings in the brochure, or there is a box out in the lobby. So, thank you everybody. And with that, Shabbat shalom.

>> shuov.

Oh son, hear the words [music and singing] of

Watch or listen: foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/dr-jason-staples-all-israel-will-be-saved-romans-11-teaching/

This automated transcript has been lightly edited for readability; scripture quotations appear as spoken. For the authoritative teaching, watch the video. • Founded in Truth Fellowship, Rock Hill SC • Saturdays 11:00 AM • Your giving keeps every teaching free: foundedintruth.com/give