

## Romans: Verse-by-Verse

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### Romans 9:4-5

#### Study Notes:

Paul has expressed his sorrow over Israel's unbelief in the prior verses we looked at. He now outlines the truly remarkable advantages God's People possessed.

- **Theirs Is The Adoption As Sons:**

Exodus 4:22: "Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son...'"

Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."

Until the New Testament, no other nation or people group could claim a wholesale adoption by God. In Abraham's era, only his family was chosen, marked out, adopted as God's "son".

- **Theirs The Divine Glory:**

Just as Israel had the advantage of being God's "firstborn son", they also had the advantage of special revelation.

The rest of the world had general revelation – what can be known about God in nature, The Israelites had much more: The "divine glory", the visible presence of God was their particular possession:

- At the Red Sea: Exodus 13:21–22
- On Mount Sinai: Exodus 24:17
- At the Tent of Meeting: Deuteronomy 31:15
- At the dedication of the Tabernacle: Exodus 40:34-38
- At the dedication of the Temple: 2 Chronicles 5:14

The Israelites saw what no other nation saw: The glory of God in their midst.

- **Theirs Are The Covenants:**

Paul does not say, "Theirs is *the* covenant, but the "covenants". While God established an essential covenant with Abraham, there were multiple renewals and elaborations to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David.

The Israelites recognized the primary and foundational covenant established at Mt. Sinai and expressed through Israel's religious life. See: Exodus 24:8

This was a unique qualifier for Israel. What Gentile nation could say that the God of all the Earth had met with their progenitor and given them a specific covenant?

- **The Receiving Of The Law**

Perhaps nothing was more precious to Israel than The Law of Moses. While the Gentile nations stumbled along in the darkness, (Romans 1), ancient Israel had all the crucial information they needed.

For every human that asked the question, "What does God want from me?", the Israelites had an answer. (See Exodus 24:15-18).

Note what Exodus 31:18 says: "When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God."

Israel had a revelation of God's will that was both verbalized by God and written with his finger. What more could they need?

- **Theirs Is The Temple Worship:**

By "Temple Worship", Paul means all the prescribed regulations for the priesthood and sacrifices. These regulations were comprehensive: Israel was left with no doubts as to how worship was to be enacted under her covenant with God.

A partial list of what these regulations covered:

- Circumcision (Genesis 17)
- The Passover meal (Exodus 12:43-49)
- The Sabbath (Exodus 31:14b-17 and 35:1-3)
- The portion due to the priest (Leviticus 7:22-38)
- Inappropriate behavior for priests (Leviticus 10:6-15)
- Clean and unclean animals (Leviticus 11)
- Purification & Atonement (Leviticus 12, 13, and 5)
- Prohibition against an anointed high priest uncovering his head or rending his clothes (Leviticus 21:10)
- Prohibition against physically blemished priests offering sacrifices. (Leviticus 21:21-22)
- Case law concerning a blasphemer (Leviticus 24:10-15a and 24:23)

- The order for a trumpet sounding on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 25:9b)
- Redeeming property (Leviticus 25:23 and 25:26-34)
- Redeeming people (Leviticus 25:48-52, and 25:54)
- The commutation of vows (Leviticus 27)
- Concerning lepers, and dedicated things (Numbers 5:1-10)
- Law concerning women suspected of adultery (Numbers 5:11-31)
- Law of the "Little Passover" (Numbers 9:9-14)
- Laws concerning the duties and revenue of priests and Levites (Numbers 18)

- **The Promises**

Paul references the promises in the widest, general sense. What people could say with confidence that God had given them concrete promises for their current lives and for the future?

"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."— Genesis 12:3

"Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar: 'If those ordinances depart from before Me,' says the Lord, 'then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.'"— Jeremiah 31:35-36

"'For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,' says the Lord, who has mercy on you."—Isaiah 54:10

"O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones! He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance,'"— Psalm 105:6-12

God gave Israel unique and timeless promises, including a multitude of promises relating to the coming of the Messiah as God's prophet, priest and king.

- **Theirs Are The Patriarchs**

Paul's use of the word patriarchs is significant. While pointing to figures such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, he does not limit it to them. Paul is also thinking of the patriarchs of the twelve original tribes of Israel as well as historic figures such as Moses, Joshua, the prophet Samuel, and King David.

Paul notes: "... From them is traced the human ancestry of Christ." If you have read the gospel genealogical accounts of Jesus' ancestry, you know that Matthew traces him back to Abraham, while Luke traces him back to Adam.

What other nation can trace the Messiah's lineage all the way back to the first human? Doesn't this make God's ancient people very important to the history of the world?

### **The Benediction/Doxology:**

"Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."

The debate: Is Paul referring to Christ or God the Father? The problem: The lack of punctuation in the original manuscript. Translators must add the punctuation to make sense of the phraseology.

### **Three Historical Views:**

1. The early Greek Fathers: All three expressions, "over all", "God" and, "For ever praised' to Christ.
2. Some translators put a period after "Christ" and make the rest of the verse an independent sentence. This way it read, "God who is over all be blessed for ever."
3. A third translation is a bit of a compromise. It applies the words "over all" to Christ, but the rest of the sentence to God the Father.

Scholars debate whether Paul would have called Christ, "God", and noted that everlasting praise should be offered to Him: 1. Paul's normal title for Christ is "Son of God" or God's "Own Son". 2. Most of the New Testament doxologies are addressed to God, and not to Jesus.

Alternate Information: In Romans 14:9, Paul does designate Christ as "The Lord of both the dead and the living". He repeatedly affirms Christ's pre-existence by describing Him as "in the form of God" and having "equality with God".

Charles Cranfield: "It is virtually certain that Paul intended to describe Christ as "God over all, for ever praised. There is ... no good ground for denying that Paul here affirms that Christ, who, in so far as his human existence is concerned, is of Jewish race, is also Lord over all things and by nature God blessed for ever."

God's Old Testament people should have been the most prepared for the arrival of God's Son than any other people on earth. How could they have so miserably failed at recognizing and embracing their own Messiah?