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THE CHURCH AS THE NEW ISRAEL IN ROMANS

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Philip Chase Sears
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THE CHURCH AS THE NEW ISRAEL IN ROMANS

Philip Chase Sears

Read and Approved by:

Thomas R. Schreiner (Chair)

Brian J. Vickers

Date _____

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1QH	<i>Hodayot, or Thanksgiving Hymns</i>
1QS	<i>Serek hayyaad or Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline</i>
4QFlor	Florilegium (4Q174)
4QAramaic Apocalypse	“ <i>Son of God</i> ” Text (4Q246)
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>As. Mos.</i>	Assumption of Moses
1 Enoch	1 (Ethiopic) Enoch
<i>4 Ezra</i>	<i>4 Ezra</i>
Jdt.	Judith
<i>Jub.</i>	Jubilees
1-4 Macc.	1-4 Maccabees
Ps. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>On Sobriety</i>
T. Sim.	Testament of Simeon
Tob.	Tobit
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

PREFACE

Early in my theological education, the importance of understanding the relationship between the church and Israel was impressed upon me. How I understood this issue would certainly impact my ecclesiology and eschatology, but it would also influence how I approached teaching the Scripture as a whole. Having come from a dispensational background, I firmly held to a separation between the church and Israel. However, the summer before I entered my first year of seminary I read Anthony Hoekema's *The Bible and the Future* and George Eldon Ladd's *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*. After reading these two works I learned for the first time one could see a greater continuity between the church and Israel, while at the same time holding to a high view of the Scripture.

This discovery set me on a course in my theological education to reevaluate this topic from a different perspective. Along this journey I am thankful for the influence of my supervisor, Thomas R. Schreiner, whose theological works have greatly aided me in this pursuit. As I wrote this Th.M. thesis, my intention was to address this subject in such a way that it may prove useful to both seminary students and pastors wrestling through this issue on their own. I'm thankful for my wife, Sarah, whose support gave me the energy to work on this project. My prayer is that the effort in studying the Scripture will make me a better husband, father, and pastor.

P. Chase Sears

Jeffersonville, Indiana

May 2013

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An understanding that the promises made to OT Israel are now fulfilled in the church has a longstanding history.¹ Nevertheless, in biblical studies the view that the promises to Israel find their fulfillment in the church has been challenged by both dispensational and post-Holocaust theologians.² The former seek to maintain that many of the promises made to OT Israel will still find their ultimate fulfillment in a future national restoration rather than in the church.³ The latter oppose the idea that the promises to OT Israel are fulfilled in the church for fear that such a concession contributes to anti-Semitism.⁴

As debate swirls over the relationship between the church and Israel, it is often conducted within the discipline of systematic theology rather than biblical theology. An overemphasis in systematics can leave a void in understanding the theology of particular NT authors as it pertains to the relationship between the church and Israel. A failure to

¹Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 35–72. Vlach shows that the dominate view throughout the history of the church is that, in some form, the church has been viewed as spiritual or true Israel.

²Douglas J. Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 3 (2007): 76.

³See Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 232–34; Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 161–62; J. Lanier Burns, “The Future of Ethnic Israel in Romans 11,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 188–229.

⁴Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 408–22. It is fascinating to note that some dispensationalists have joined in making similar arguments asserting that the belief that the church is new or true Israel is a major cause for anti-Semitism throughout the years (See Horner, *Future Israel*, viii–ix.).

grapple with how a whole book or corpus understands this subject can lead to inaccurate conclusions when dealing with isolated texts. Therefore, further study needs to be done which examines the church and Israel relationship in light of the purposes and arguments of particular NT books and authors.

Thesis

In order to satisfy the need for a biblical theological approach to this subject the current thesis will argue that in the book of Romans Paul views the church as the new Israel. This assertion is supported by how Paul interprets his ministry of gospel proclamation in relation to salvation history. Specifically, three features of Paul's gospel will be pursued: first, the gospel centers on God's Son, the true Israel (1:3). It is through Jesus and by virtue of his resurrection that the new age has been inaugurated. Consequently, Jesus currently sits on the throne of David as the covenant head of the new Israel (1:3-6). God's people are no longer defined by ethnicity, but rather as those who belong to Jesus (1:6). As the covenant head, Jesus mediates the OT promises to all those who put their faith in him (5:1).

Second, Paul's gospel is a fulfillment of the promised deliverance from exile spoken by the prophets (1:2; 10:15; cf. Isa 52:7). Littered throughout Romans, Paul affirms that the blessings of the new creation have invaded the present. This good news is not limited to Jews, but is for everyone who believes (1:16). Because God's redemption has extended to the Gentiles, the promises to Abraham are being fulfilled (4:16-18). The promised Spirit has been poured out, circumcising the hearts of all those who have faith, thus enabling them to keep the Law (2:25-29; 8:1-4). A crucial argument in this thesis will be to show how these promises made to OT Israel, are currently finding their fulfillment in the church because of her union with Christ.

The third feature of Paul's gospel is that everyone who believes is given the privileged titles and status of Israel. For example, Paul refers to the church as God's

beloved (1:7), saints (1:7), true Jews (2:25-29), children of Abraham (4:1), adopted sons of God (8:14-15), and heirs of the promise (4:13). All these titles were given to OT Israel, and in Romans Paul applies them to all who believe the gospel.

Putting all this together, the current thesis will examine the following three themes: (1) God's Son as the true Israel so that all those united to Jesus find their identity in him; (2) the OT promises made to Israel regarding deliverance from exile and the new creation are being fulfilled in the church; and (3) the application of Israelite titles to all those who believe the gospel. When one considers the cumulative evidence, it is clear that Paul views the church to be the new Israel in the book of Romans.

Background

The debate surrounding the relationship between the church and Israel focuses on what the NT teaches in regards to the fulfillment of OT promises. Do the promises given to OT Israel find their fulfillment in the church? Or does ethnic Israel retain particular promises distinct from believing Gentiles? How one answers these questions will certainly affect one's approach to interpreting the Scripture.

Among dispensational theologians these questions are answered in different ways. There are three forms of dispensationalism, which must be distinguished from each other. First, there is classical dispensationalism represented by the writings of John Nelson Darby. At the heart of classical dispensationalism is the notion that God has two distinct redemptive purposes for Israel and the church. For Israel, God will fulfill his purposes with her as the earthly people of God, thus she will reign over the Gentiles in an earthly kingdom forever. The church, on the other hand, is the heavenly people, who will dwell forever in God's kingdom in heaven.⁵ Consequently, the church and Israel will be eternally separated.

⁵Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 23–30.

The second form of dispensationalism is known as revised dispensationalism. This variation, advocated by the likes of Charles Ryrie and John Walvoord, veered away from the eternal dualism between the church and Israel. However, a sharp distinction between the church and Israel was still preserved.⁶ Revised dispensationalists believe that God is still accomplishing his plan to redeem a people for himself, but the promises of the kingdom in the OT have been put on pause until God's purposes in the church are complete. It will be at this time that God will resume his plan with Israel and she will receive the promised kingdom. Although Israel and the church will not be eternally separated as earthly people and heavenly people, there will remain a distinction in identity.⁷

The third type, known as progressive dispensationalism, asserts that "Israel retains its Old Testament meaning as an ethnic people throughout the New Testament. Even though the believers in the church have come to share in the present messianic salvation along with Jews and the church is now serving God's kingdom purpose, Israel in its historic meaning will yet fulfill its promised destiny."⁸ In other words, progressive dispensationalists see more continuity than revised dispensationalists, but nonetheless still expect the nation of Israel to be restored and to fulfill a future role distinctly privileged over Gentile believers. Supporters of this view include: Robert Saucy, Craig Blaising, and Darrell Bock.

Among non-dispensational theologians more continuity is seen between the church and Israel. Although the church is not to be identified as ethnic Israel, it is rather the fulfillment of what Israel was to be. In Christ the division between Jew and Gentile has been removed, thereby bringing believing Gentiles into full membership of the

⁶Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 165–66.

⁷Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 32.

⁸Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 188.

covenant community. However, such a view does not demand one to reject a future salvation for ethnic Israel (Rom 9-11). Even though some non-dispensational theologians see a future salvation for Israel, they understand it differently from progressive dispensationalists who would see Israel “restored to a place of prominence among the nations . . . [with a] rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.”⁹ So the current debate is not whether the church has replaced Israel. The issue is whether believing Gentiles are on equal standing with believing Jews, being fully included in receiving all the OT promises through faith in Christ.¹⁰

To engage adequately in this debate, interpreters must carefully examine how the NT authors, in this case Paul in Romans, understand the fulfillment of OT promises. Particularly this discussion must include: (1) the role of the Messiah as the Davidic king and covenant head of the people of God; (2) how Paul’s use of new creation promises fit in the greater argument of the book of Romans; and (3) on what grounds Paul is able to apply titles to the church which were originally given to OT Israel.

Methodology

The method employed to write this thesis will follow the discipline of a biblical theology. The scope of the literature will be largely limited to the book of Romans and the OT passages referenced in it. By exegetically analyzing Romans the thesis will demonstrate that a theology of the new Israel is woven throughout the letter and integral to its meaning. The thesis will be defended by categorizing the new Israel themes in Romans and showing how these themes support the overall purposes of the letter. The three main categories are the following: (1) Jesus as the true Israel; (2) the inauguration of the new creation; and (3) titles and images of Israel given to the church.

⁹Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 140.

¹⁰Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 135.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS AS GOD’S TRUE SON, ISRAEL

As put forth in the introduction, the main argument of this thesis is that Paul views the church as the new Israel in the book of Romans. Critical to this argument is Paul’s assertion that Jesus is the true Israel, through whom the church finds her identity. To put it another way, Jesus is the antitypical fulfillment of Israel, and the church through union with Christ can be rightfully called the new Israel.¹ Indeed, this theological theme is found in the opening verses of Paul’s letter to the Romans (1:1-7).

In 1:1-7 Paul manages to condense the heart of the letter into one theologically pregnant paragraph. The focus of this salutation is on “the gospel of God” which Paul has been set apart to proclaim (v. 1). In an effort to mend tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers, Paul sought to demonstrate the authenticity of the gospel he preached.² Specifically, he saw this gospel as a fulfillment of the saving promises of the OT to bring about “the obedience of faith for the sake of [Jesus’] name among the all the nations” (v. 5).

It was OT Israel who was to serve as a light to the nations, and who would inherit the promises made to Abraham through a coming Davidic king (Isa 49). Nevertheless, Paul understands these promises to be fulfilled in the gospel which centers on Jesus, the “Christ” (v. 1), the “seed of David” (v. 3), the “Son of God” (v. 4), the “Lord” (v. 4). Paul views Jesus as the true Israel in whom “God’s saving promises for

¹Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 106.

²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 31–32.

Israel and the Gentiles become a reality.”³

Therefore, the aim of this chapter will be to demonstrate that Paul’s letter to the Romans teaches that as the Son of God, Jesus is the true Israel who fulfills the OT promises, and that those who are united to him through faith constitute the new Israel. This assertion will be substantiated by examining (1) the Jewish background to the title “son of God”; (2) Paul’s appropriation of the title, “Son of God” to Jesus; and (3) the significance of the church’s identification with Jesus, whereby the church is now called “sons of God.”

The Jewish Background of “Son of God”

The book of Romans has one of the most theologically complex salutations of all the NT epistles. This complexity is highlighted by Paul’s claim that the gospel he preaches is in fulfillment of the OT promises of God (1:2). However, at the heart of the good news is Jesus Christ whom Paul identifies as the “Son of God” (vv. 3, 4). Most scholars agree that the primary background for the title “son of God” is of Jewish origin.⁴ Therefore, it is advantageous to examine this background with an eye toward understanding the theological significance of this title applied to Jesus.

Old Testament Context

The concept of sonship is first introduced in the creation narrative, specifically as it relates to Adam. Although the title “son of God” is not explicitly used in Genesis 1-3, a connection is made with Adam being created in the “likeness” of God (Gen 1:26).⁵ This language of being created in the “image” and “likeness” of God is repeated in

³Ibid., 28.

⁴L. W. Hurtado, “Son of God,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 900. See also G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 401; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 234.

⁵Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 401.

Genesis 5:1-3 in reference to Adam fathering Seth. Stephen Dempster captures the idea well when he writes,

By juxtaposing the divine creation of Adam in the image of God and the subsequent human creation of Seth in the image of Adam, the transmission of the image of God through this genealogical line is implied, as well as a link between sonship and the image of God. As Seth is a son of Adam, so Adam is a son of God.⁶

Since Adam is a son of God, understanding his role is essential in grasping the biblical idea of sonship. Specifically, Adam's unique relationship with his Creator is that of royalty whereby he is to exercise dominion over the creation.⁷ The first humans were then commissioned by God who "blessed them, and . . . said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (Gen 1:28).

Not only was Adam to exercise rule and dominion in a kingly role, but Genesis 2:4-25 also presents him as a priest serving in the edenic-temple of God.⁸ Therefore, as God's king-priest in the garden, Adam was to fulfill the creation mandate given to him in Genesis 1:28 whereby he would expand the territory of the garden so that God's presence would fill the earth. This responsibility also included teaching his offspring the Law of God (cf. Gen 2:16-27).⁹

The next major occurrence of divine sonship appears in Exodus where the

⁶Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 58.

⁷Dempster states, "The language used to describe the royal status of the human pair is unambiguous. They are to have dominion (*rādā*) over the earth and subdue (*kābaš*) it. These words are associated with power and authority" (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 59.). See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 196.

⁸Evidence that Adam assumes a priestly role in the garden is found in Genesis 2:15, where the words "work" (עָבַד) and "keep" (שָׁמַר) appear together. Elsewhere in the OT this pair is used of the priests who keep guard over the ministry of the tabernacle (Num 3:7-8). For a fuller discussion see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 66–70.

⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 81–87.

nation of Israel is identified as God's firstborn son (Exod 4:22-23). This idea of Israel's sonship is found throughout the OT (Isa 1:2; 63:16; Jer 31:9; Hos 2:23, 11:1) and speaks of "a unique privilege of Israel as the people chosen and created by Yahweh for himself."¹⁰ That Israel bears the status as God's son also recalls Adam's role as son. Beale asserts, "The likely reason that Israel was referred to as God's 'son' or 'firstborn' is that the mantle of Adam has been passed on to Noah and then to the patriarchs and their 'seed,' Israel."¹¹ Understood this way, Israel is viewed as a corporate Adam and so explains such allusions as Genesis 1:28 in the opening of the book of Exodus, "But the people of Israel were *fruitful* and increased greatly; they *multiplied* and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them (Exod 1:7, emphasis mine).

Like Adam, Israel as God's son was to be a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6). She was to exercise rule and dominion over the promised land, which was like a new Eden (Exod 3:8, 15:17; cf. Gen 13:10; Ps 78:54; Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35; Joel 2:3). As God's firstborn son, Israel was to declare the ways of the Lord to the nations and bring them in relationship with him.¹² As Peter Gentry writes, "in this position [Israel] shows the nations how to have a right relationship to God, how to treat each other in a human way, and how to be faithful stewards of the earth's resources."¹³

Not only does the nation of Israel bear the title of "son," but so does the Davidic king (2 Sam 7:14; Isa 9:6; Ps 2:7). Following the canonical development of divine sonship we see that just as Israel assumed the role of Adam, the Davidic king does

¹⁰Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of all Christians in Paul Against the Jewish Background*, *Analecta Biblica*, vol. 83 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 16.

¹¹Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 402. For an overview of the creation mandate being passed down to Noah, to the patriarchs and then to Israel see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 21–22.

¹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 398.

¹³*Ibid.*, 399.

as well. In fact, Deuteronomy 17:14-20 anticipates that Israel would be led by a king who embodies the Law of God as the representative for the people.¹⁴ This is the point of 2 Samuel 7:8-17 where God establishes his covenant with David and says, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (v. 14). As God’s son, the king stands as the covenant head over God’s people, Israel (v. 8). Within the same context, God speaks of his covenant loyalty (אֱמֻנָה) that will not depart from him (v. 15). This again highlights a special covenantal relationship between God and his son. In light of this privileged relationship with God, one sees David’s status as a son carries the idea of having dominion and protection.¹⁵ Tangibly the privileges of sonship include: (1) the Davidic king being exalted (v. 9); (2) Israel being given a secured land to dwell in (v. 10); (3) Israel given rest from all her enemies (v. 11); and (4) a son of David who will sit on the throne forever (vv. 12-13). Along these lines, the prophet Isaiah looks to a day where one will sit on David’s throne and will rule justly, and he too is called a “son” (Isa 9:6).

However, as God’s son, the Davidic king will not only exercise authority over Israel, but also the nations (Pss 2:7-12; 89:27).

As the divine son, the Davidic king was to effect the divine instruction or torah in the nation as a whole and was, as a result, a mediator of the Mosaic Torah. However, since the god whom the Davidic king represented was not limited to a local region or territory, but was the creator God and Sovereign of the whole world, the rule of the Davidic king would have repercussions for all the nations, not just for Israel.¹⁶

This global rule is what God originally intended for Adam in the garden, but due to his failure has been passed down to Israel who would be led by a faithful king.

Considering the OT background to the title “son of God” one can see that it refers to Israel’s unique relationship to God. Bearing this title, Israel then was to carry out

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham*, 18.

¹⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 400.

the creation mandate originally given to Adam, exercising dominion over the earth and functioning as God's king-priests. This title is also given to the Davidic king who would represent Israel as a whole. He received the same promises which were given to Israel, and as the covenantal head, served to bring God's promises to fruition. In other words, "Israel will rule the world for God through its appointed king, who will be the son of David."¹⁷ So from the OT background alone, the title "son of God" carries the idea of having a privileged relationship with God, whereby those bearing the status of "son" are to exercise dominion over the earth and be God's representative king-priests.

Intertestamental Context

Having briefly surveyed the OT background to the title "son of God" it is also beneficial to observe later Jewish understandings of this title. Looking at Second Temple Judaism one will likewise find that the title "son of God" is used as a reference to Israel and the Messiah. Having evaluated the intertestamental evidence, Byrne concludes that "Sonship of God is the privilege of Israel alone."¹⁸ This is confirmed by several texts which present Israel as God's sons/children, and distinct from the other nations (Ps. Sol. 17:30; 18:4-5; *Jub.* 1:25-28, 2:20; *Jdt.* 9:14; *Tob.* 13:4-6; *As. Mos.* 10:3; 3 *Macc.* 5:7-8; 6:3, 28; 7:6-7). Within these texts the title "son(s) of God" is essentially used as "a synonym for the 'People of God', for 'Israel'."¹⁹ Further, the theme of sonship takes on an eschatological nuance looking forward to a purified Israel who conquers the surrounding nations. This theme is clearly articulated in Psalms of Solomon which says,

For he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God. And he shall divide them according to their tribes upon the land, and neither sojourner nor alien shall sojourn with them anymore. He shall judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. Selah. And he shall have the heathen nations to serve him under his

¹⁷Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 235.

¹⁸Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham*, 62.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

yoke; and he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of all the earth; and he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old (17:30-33; cf. *Jub.* 1:25ff; Test Levi 18:13-14).²⁰

Also during this period, “son of God” was used as a messianic title. For instance 4QFlor applies 2 Samuel 7:11-14 to the “Shoot of David” and 4QAramaic Apocalypse refers to a future ruler who will be called “Son of God . . . the son of the most high.”²¹ Perhaps 4 *Ezra* is most clear, “For my Son the Messiah shall be revealed, together with those who are with him, and shall rejoice the survivors four hundred years. And it shall be, after these years that my Son the Messiah shall die and all in whom there is human breath” (7:28-29; cf. 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9).²²

In light of these extra-canonical Jewish texts, one sees the biblical pattern continue which applies both to Israel and the Davidic king the title “son of God.” It is a title reserved exclusively for the people of God, namely Israel, whereby the coming Davidic king will exercise judgment upon the nations and restore Zion in holiness and purity. Therefore, “the conjunction between ‘Messiah’ and ‘Son of God’ in the NT is scarcely surprising.”²³

Jesus as the “Son of God”

Having given attention to the Jewish background to the title “son of God” one is now in a position to examine Paul’s usage in Romans. The title, “Son of God” is first introduced in Romans 1:3 when Paul says the gospel of God is “concerning his Son.”²⁴

²⁰Charles R. Henry, ed., *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2004), 649-50.

²¹Directed to these references by Hurtado, “Dictionary of Paul,” 901.

²²Henry, *Pseudepigrapha*, 582.

²³Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 235.

²⁴On the one hand, Moo is correct to point out that the participial clause of verse 3 “focuses on the Son of God coming into human existence. This clause assumes the preexistence of the Son” (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 46.). On the other hand, Schreiner is also apt to observe that, “the term ‘Son’ works at more than one level; it designates Jesus as the true Israel and as the Son who existed before his incarnation”

Again in verse 4 Paul attributes this status to Jesus, calling him “the Son of God.” In fact he uses this designation five other times in Romans (1:9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32) highlighting its importance to the argument of the letter. As mentioned above, Paul wishes to communicate to the Romans that the good news which he preaches is in fulfillment of the promises of God found in the OT, and is centered on God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (vv. 3-4). Although on a popular level, “Son of God” is often understood to be a title referring to Jesus’ divinity, it primarily communicates “Jesus’ unique status and intimate relationship with God.”²⁵ Therefore, by identifying Jesus as God’s Son, Paul imports the Jewish meaning of this title to present Jesus as the true Israel and Davidic king, who will accomplish the creation mandate originally given to Adam.

Jesus as the True Israel

That Paul viewed Jesus as the true Israel is evident by his identification of Jesus as God’s Son. After examining much of the OT background to this title, it should not surprise anyone that Paul would identify Jesus with Adam (Rom 5:12-21). In fact Paul even calls Adam a type pointing to Jesus (v. 14).²⁶ The typological relationship between Adam and Christ is significant, because both of these men stand as representative heads of humanity.²⁷ More will be said when the church’s union with

(Schreiner, *Romans*, 38.).

²⁵Hurtado, “Dictionary of Paul,” 900. See also C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 58; Moo, *Romans*, 44.

²⁶It is beyond the scope of this thesis to iron out the various definitions of typology. However, for the sake of clarity the following definition of typology by Greg Beale has been adopted and accurately reflects its usage in this thesis: “the study of analogical correspondence among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God’s special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning (G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 14.).

²⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 158. See also Constantine R. Campbell who rightly distinguishes “representation” from “corporate personality” (Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 343–47.).

Christ is given attention, but for now it is important to understand that Jesus as the last Adam, brings “righteousness” (v. 16, 18) and “life” (v. 17, 21). Jesus is God’s obedient Son who breaks the curse of sin by doing what the first Adam should have done in obeying the Father (v. 19).²⁸

It should be further noted that as the eschatological Adam, Jesus represents corporate Israel who also bore the title “son of God” (Exod 4:22-23; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1; Wis. 18:13; Ps. Sol. 17:30; 18:4-5; *Jub.* 1:25-28, 2:20; Jdt. 9:14; Tob. 13:4-6; *As. Mos.* 10:3; 3 Macc. 5:7-8; 6:3, 28; 7:6-7). This is consistent with what Paul says elsewhere that Jesus is the singular seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16), through whom the world would be blessed. It is precisely this point that Paul wants to communicate. The gospel he preaches is about Jesus, the true Israel, who has brought about the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham (Rom 4:9-12).

The nation of Israel was to be a kingdom of priests who would serve to make known the Law of God to the nations and bring them into a right relationship with him. To administer the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, Israel was given the Mosaic Law whereby through faith they would experience the blessings of the promises to Abraham and extend these blessings to the nations.²⁹ Furthermore, the Law of Moses was given to “show them how to be [God’s] true humanity. It will direct, guide, and lead them to have a right relationship with God and a right relationship with everyone else in the covenant community. It will also teach them how to have a right relationship to all the creation.”³⁰ In other words, Israel was a corporate Adam who was to exercise dominion over the creation until the knowledge of God filled the earth. Nevertheless, just as the first Adam failed, so too did the nation of Israel.

²⁸Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 428.

²⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 304.

³⁰*Ibid.*

Therefore, it is imperative to see that “Jesus’ two roles as the last Adam and true Israel are two sides of one redemptive-historical coin.”³¹ As the Son of God, Jesus succeeds where both Adam and Israel (a corporate Adam) failed, by extending the knowledge of God to all peoples through faith in him. Specifically, Paul argues that Jesus brought about the fulfillment of the Law (Rom 3:27-31) and extended God’s saving promises to the nations (Rom 1:5, 13; 3:29; 4:17-24; 9:24, 30; 11:11, 12, 13, 25; 15:9-12, 16, 18, 27; 16:26).

Jesus as Davidic King

Returning to Paul’s opening statements in Romans, he not only identifies Jesus as God’s Son, but he is God’s “Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was appointed to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:3-4). The relationship between what Paul has asserted in verse 2 and what he says about Jesus’ Davidic status cannot be overlooked. Jesus as the Son of David fulfills what the OT prophets foretold concerning a righteous king to rule over Israel and the nations (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 11:1–5, 10; Jer 23:5–6; 33:14–17; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25).

There is some discussion as to the exact meaning of τοῦ ὀρισθέντος in verse 3. Many of the modern translations render this participial clause, “who was declared to be the Son of God” (ESV, NASB, HCSB). Understood this way, Jesus who is eternally God’s Son, is shown to be the Son of God by the power of the resurrection. Although theologically true, this is not Paul’s point. The verb does not mean “to declare” or “to show.” Throughout the NT it always carries the meaning, “fix,” “determine,” or “appoint” (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb 4:7).³² Despite what may

³¹Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 428.

³²Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:61.

appear as a theological difficulty, one should translate τοῦ ὀρισθέντος in Romans 1:4 as “who was appointed.” The OT background is likely Psalm 2:7 where the son of David is “decreed” to be the anointed king over the nations.³³ Schreiner captures the idea well when he says,

The idea here, then, is not that Jesus was “declared” or “shown to be” at the resurrection what he was all along, namely, the eternal Son of God. Rather, the point is that Jesus was “appointed” to be God’s Son in power at the resurrection of the dead. He was exalted to a level of power and authority that he did not have previously.³⁴

Therefore, Jesus by virtue of his resurrection from the dead is appointed as the Davidic king, who is the Son of God. There may also be a further allusion to Psalm 2 with Paul’s reference to his apostolic mission “to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (v. 5). If so, Paul sees his apostolic mission to be a fulfillment of God’s promise to give the nations as an inheritance to his Son (Ps 2:8).³⁵

This connection between Psalm 2 and Paul’s apostolic mission is consistent with what Paul says in Romans 15:8-13 where he summarizes the themes of the entire letter.³⁶ In these verses Paul quotes from the Psalms (vv. 9, 11), Torah (v. 10), and the Prophets (v. 12), to show that through the ministry (διάκονος, v. 8) of Christ, the Davidic king, the promises of Abraham have been fulfilled whereby both Jews and Gentiles are united together in worshipping and praising God.³⁷ In verse 9 Paul first cites Psalm 18:49.³⁸ The background to the Psalm is David’s victory in being delivered from all his

³³Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 104; Schreiner, *Romans*, 41–42.

³⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 41–42.

³⁵Hurtado, “Dictionary of Paul,” 904.

³⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 752.

³⁷Moo, *Romans*, 878.

³⁸Or also the citation could be from 2 Samuel 22:50, Moo says, “The LXX text of these two

enemies and from the hand of Saul (cf. 2 Sam 22:1). The praise David offers in this Psalm shows that he is the rightful king who has been exalted (v. 48). As the king, not only were these victories David's, but verse 50 suggests they were also shared by "his offspring" (cf. 2 Sam 22:51). This idea of a shared victory is significant because David is the speaker in whom the nation of Israel is corporately represented singing praises to God for giving him victory over the Gentiles.³⁹ Paul uses this text typologically to show its fulfillment in the new David, Jesus. So in the same way, Jesus represents Israel, and because of his victory, the Gentiles are included with the Jews in praising God.

Paul again presents Jesus as the promised Davidic king in verse 12 citing Isaiah 11:10 (LXX) which says, "the root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." The prophet Isaiah speaks about a day of restoration which will occur after severe judgment has come upon Israel. The entire line of David will have been removed, nevertheless a "shoot shall come forth from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit" (Isa 11:1). Essentially Isaiah is speaking of a day when "the Lord will begin afresh and create a new David out of the 'stump of Jesse'"⁴⁰ This new Davidic king will judge with righteousness (vv. 3-5), he will bring about the restoration of the earth (vv. 6-9), he will restore the remnant of Israel from the nations (vv. 11-16), and of him the nations will inquire (v. 10).

Any discussion concerning the future Davidic king in Isaiah must also engage with how the prophet links the eschatological David with the Servant of the Lord. Critical to the argument of this chapter, is that Jesus is the true Israel. A brief examination of this relationship between the coming Davidic king and the Lord's Servant, will aide one in

verses is identical, except for the placement of the vocative *κύριε*, which Paul omits. With this exception, Paul's text reproduces the LXX exactly" (Ibid., 878 n. 36.).

³⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 757.

⁴⁰Mark A Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 686.

understanding how Paul views Jesus as the true Israel.

Isaiah says that this Servant will be given as a covenant for God's people, to be a light for the nations and bring deliverance to those in captivity (Isa 49:6). Further, in Isaiah 49 the Lord's Servant is made mentioned, but this time is identified as Israel (v. 3), who will bring about the restoration of the nation (v. 5). Although in Isaiah it is difficult to discern whether the Servant should be identified with the nation Israel or with an individual, it is best to view the Servant as the future Davidic king who will rule as Israel's covenant head.⁴¹ In fact, in Isaiah 37:35, the Lord refers to the future Davidic king as his servant. As discussed above, the Davidic king represented the nation of Israel. This corporate representation is exactly what is seen in Isaiah 49, and how Israel's commissioning of blessing the nations would be fulfilled. Therefore, the Servant should be seen functioning as Israel.⁴²

So in returning to Romans 15:12, when Paul quotes Isaiah 11:10 (LXX) he is presenting Jesus as Isaiah's new David who has come to rule over the Gentiles. However, this rule is not one of judgment, but rather of salvation. This salvation is precisely what the Lord commissions his Servant to accomplish in Isaiah 49:6 where he says "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

⁴¹With a casual reading of this verse one might conclude the Servant is not an individual, but rather the nation Israel. This interpretation is somewhat understandable since the nation Israel is said to be Yahweh's servant elsewhere in Isaiah (Isa 41:8, 9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20). Nevertheless, there are several reasons for viewing the Servant in Isaiah 49 as an individual. First, the Servant is a human being who was born of a woman (v. 1b). Second, this Servant is said to bring restoration to Israel (v. 5). Third, assuming that 49:1-7 is a development of 42:1-7, this Servant is given as a covenant for Israel (42:6; 49:8); a light for the nations (42:6; 49:6); to open the eyes of the blind (42:7); and to bring deliverance from bondage (42:7; 49:9). In contrast to the Servant, Israel had broken God's covenant (1:2ff); she had despised God's name among the nations (52:5); she is blind and deaf (35:5); and has been sold into exile (5:13). For an excellent treatment of the identity of the Servant in Isaiah 40-55 see Mark Gignilliat, "Who is Isaiah's Servant? Narrative Identity and Theological Potentiality," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61, no. 2 (2008): 125-36.

⁴²John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 291.

In Romans Paul understands this salvation, which has come not only for the Jews but also the Gentiles, to have been accomplished by Jesus' sacrificial death (Rom 4:23-25; 8:32). Paul says, it is Jesus "who was delivered up (*παρεδόθη*) for our trespasses" (4:25). This phrase recalls Isaiah 53 where the Servant of the Lord suffers on behalf of the sins of Israel (Isa 53:5, 10, 11, 12). Again Paul alludes to Isaiah 53 when he says that the Father "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Rom 8:32).⁴³ It must not be missed that that the prophet Isaiah identifies this Servant to be the true Israel (Isa 49:3) who by his sufferings fulfills the promises of deliverance from exile (Isa 40-66).⁴⁴ Therefore, by equating Jesus with Isaiah's suffering servant, Paul also sees Jesus as the true Israel.

Such conclusions pose serious challenges for dispensationalists like Robert Saucy who contends that Isaiah only pictures "Israel as a corporate personality in which the head first ministers to the body in order that the body may then accomplish its mission through the head."⁴⁵ In other words, the Messiah merely represents the nation Israel to restore the nation to accomplish its original mission. Saucy continues to say "That this use of 'Israel' for Christ as the head of the corporate people of Israel does not include Gentiles is seen in the fact that Christ never applied this name to himself, nor did the early church ever call Jesus 'Israel.'"⁴⁶

The difficulty with Saucy's position is that it goes precisely against how Paul interprets Isaiah. Paul understands Jesus to be the true Israel promised in Isaiah, who by

⁴³Moo rightly notes that Paul's use of *παράδωμι* is taken from Isaiah 53. He says, "The verb, *παράδωμι*, which is prominent especially in the Gospel passion predictions, and is picked up from LXX Isa. 53, where it is used three times to describe the 'handing over' of the suffering Servant. . . . Paul also uses the word frequently with reference to Jesus' death – sometimes as here, of the Father's 'handing him over to death' (Moo, *Romans*, 540 n.19.). See also Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:436; Schreiner, *Romans*, 459–60.

⁴⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 243.

⁴⁵Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 191.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

his sacrificial death brought about salvation for both Jews and Gentiles (1:16, 10:9-13). To say it another way, Jesus is the Servant of the Lord whom God handed over “for us all” (ὕπερ ἡμῶν πάντων, 8:32), not just the nation Israel. Paul purposely uses inclusive language to show that the Gentiles are included along with the Jews in benefitting from the suffering Servant’s sacrifice.⁴⁷ So Paul does not see Jesus as restoring merely the nation of Israel so she can bless the nations. Instead, Jesus as true Israel accomplishes this task in himself. He brings about the fulfillment of Isaiah’s new creation promises of deliverance from exile, the new covenant blessings and Abrahamic covenant blessings in the church. More will be said about the inauguration of the new creation in the following chapter. For now it suffices to say that a future restoration of Israel to accomplish these things would be unnecessary.

In summary, it is important to understand that Paul presents Jesus as the Davidic king, the true Son of God, who embodies his people Israel to fulfill God’s promises of blessing the nations and making God’s presence known in all the earth. What is noteworthy is that if Jesus is God’s true Son and Davidic king who embodies Israel, then God’s people are now defined by being rightly related to him. This reality therefore explains how the Gentiles are able to become partakers of these promises which at one time seemed only available for the nation Israel. It is to this subject of being united with Christ that attention must now be given.

The Church’s Union with Jesus

Having examined Paul’s appropriation of sonship to Christ one discovers that it primarily identifies him as true Israel and the promised Davidic king. Functioning as the covenant head over God’s people, it is through Christ that “God’s purposes for

⁴⁷James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 501.

creation are realized, including his purposes for Israel.”⁴⁸ Therefore, it is not surprising then that in Romans Paul applies the same status of sonship to all those who are united to Christ by faith (8:14-17). Paul understands that

In Christ, the antitype of Israel, all of God’s promises are yes and amen. We, as the church, the people of Christ receive all the benefits of his glorious, effective, and triumphant word *by virtue of our faith union with him*. He, as our covenant head, wins for us our redemption, and all that he has achieved becomes ours due to that union.⁴⁹

It is through union with Christ which allows Gentiles to be grafted into the people of God (11:17) and inherit the privileged blessings of Israel (8:15). However, some reject such a notion suggesting that union with Christ does not provide such status and does not present the church as the new Israel.⁵⁰ It is argued that Scripture does present Jesus as the “ideal” or “true Israel,” but that Christ does not replace the nation’s mediator role to be a light to the Gentiles.⁵¹ The primary difficulty with such an idea is that it conflicts with what Paul said in 15:8-13, where the Christ serves to extend the promises of God to the Gentiles (vv. 8-9), thus fulfilling what the nation of Israel failed to do. This inclusion of the Gentiles is made possible through union with Christ, as the mediator of the promises of God.

Expressions of Union in Romans

In Romans Paul expresses the believers’ union with Christ in various ways.⁵² The most popular expression is that believers are said to be ἐν Χριστῷ. Under this formula believers are (1) justified through the redemption that is in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 3:24); (2)

⁴⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 690.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Michael J. Vlach, “What does Christ as ‘True Israel’ Mean for the Nation Israel? A Critique of the Non-Dispensational Understanding,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 23, no. 1 (2012): 44.

⁵¹Ibid., 54.

⁵²For an exhaustive treatment on the subject of Paul and union with Christ see Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*.

believers are made alive to God in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 6:11); (3) believers have eternal life by a gift of God in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 6:23); (4) there is no condemnation for those in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 8:1); (5) believers have been set free from the law of sin and death in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 8:2); (6) the love of God is found in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 8:39); and (7) believers are incorporated into one body in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 12:5).⁵³

Paul also uses other expressions to communicate the reality that believers are united with Christ. These include the following: (1) εἰς Χριστόν, where believers are baptized into Christ (6:3), denoting one's identification with him; (2) σὺν Χριστῷ, believers have died with Christ (6:8), being associated with him in his death; and (3) διὰ Χριστοῦ, through Christ believers have peace with God (5:1) and so they will reign in life (v. 17).⁵⁴ Although this discussion is not an exhaustive treatment of union in Romans, it should be evident that union with Christ is a dominant theme which is significant to the argument of the letter. The dominance of this theme explains why Paul sees Christ as central to the gospel he preaches, namely the promises and blessings of God find their fulfillment in him, the true Israel. Therefore, it follows that those who are united to Jesus are the recipients of these blessings. Paul assures believers of these things in Romans 5:12-21. As one examines this text more closely, these promises are secured because of what Christ has accomplished for those whose identity is in him.

Union with the New Adam

When discussing union with Christ it is essential to address Paul's Adam Christology. Having already seen that Jesus bears the title "Son of God" it is fitting that he would also be called the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45). In Romans 5:12-21 Paul presents Adam and Christ as the two representative heads over humanity. On the one hand, the

⁵³Ibid., 67–199.

⁵⁴Ibid., 200–40.

first Adam represents the old creation which is ruled by sin, death, and judgment (vv. 12, 16, 18). On the other hand, the last Adam represents the new creation where righteousness and life reign (vv. 16, 17, 18, 21).

Earlier in Romans Paul argued that “there is no distinction” (3:22b) between Jew and Gentile, because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (v. 23). Paul universalizes humanity because all are naturally “in Adam” who by his disobedience allowed sin and death to enter the world and so rule over his posterity. However, to be “in Christ” is to share in the new creation marked by righteousness and life.⁵⁵ This participation in the new creation is consistent with Paul’s other writings where he says those who are “in Christ” are “a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

Chapters 5-8 mark a new section in Romans which is characterized by hope.⁵⁶ It is the hope that believers share in God’s glory (5:2; 8:18, 30), having been justified (5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30, 33), having peace with God (5:1; 8:6), and being loved by God (5:5, 8; 8:35, 39), despite the threat of tribulation and suffering.⁵⁷ As will be seen in the next chapter of this thesis, these promises of God regarding a future with him can be encapsulated in the new creation which was for Israel (Isa 65:17-25). In the first four chapters of Romans Paul has argued that “God’s saving promises made in the OT have been fulfilled, that they are available for all peoples, and that they are secured through faith.”⁵⁸ Now, in Romans 5:12-21 Paul presents Christ as the head over the new creation, whereby all who are united to him by faith become a part. Therefore, Schreiner is correct to assert, “The church is a new society that expresses in part what God intended when he made Adam and Eve. The saving promises made to Abraham are becoming a reality in

⁵⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 616–17; Schreiner, *Paul*, 158–59.

⁵⁶Moo, *Romans*, 293; Schreiner, *Romans*, 246.

⁵⁷Moo, *Romans*, 293.

⁵⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 246.

Christ since he reverses the curse and devastation imposed on the world through the first Adam.”⁵⁹

In sum this “new society” is the new Israel in Christ. Christ represents those who are united to him, so that what he inherits is also theirs (8:17, 32). Therefore, because of this union with God’s Son, believers are also called “sons of God” (8:19) and are being conformed into the image of the Son (v. 29). And as children of God, believers eagerly await “the glory that is to be revealed to us” (v. 18), namely a new creation (v. 21).

Summary

A lot of ground has been covered in this chapter which serves as the foundation for the forthcoming chapters. First, the Jewish background to the title “son of God” was surveyed. From this overview it was discovered that the title “son of God” was initially applied to Adam, but later placed upon the nation of Israel and the Davidic king. As God’s son, Israel was to be led by her king and carry out the creation mandate originally given to Adam, thus exercising dominion over the earth and functioning as God’s king-priests. Therefore, in light of the OT alone, it was concluded that the title “son of God” carries the idea of having a privileged relationship with God, whereby those bearing the status of “son” are to exercise dominion over the earth and be God’s representative king-priests. This definition also held true as the intertestamental context for the title “son of God” was examined. Similar to the OT context, the title was used synonymously for the people of God, namely Israel, whereby the coming Messiah and Davidic king would exercise judgment upon the nations and restore Zion.

Having examined the Jewish background to the title “son of God,” it was then shown that Paul imports this understanding when he appropriates the title to Jesus. As a

⁵⁹Schreiner, *Paul*, 159.

result, Paul not only identifies Jesus as true Israel, but as Israel's Davidic king. Therefore, as God's true Son who embodies Israel, God's people are now to be defined by rightly being related to him.

Finally, time was devoted to the church's union with Christ in Romans, and that those united to Jesus no longer have Adam as their representative head. Rather they are "in Christ" and so too bear the title "sons of God," thus identifying them as the new Israel and rightful heirs of the new creation. With this foundation laid, one is now in a position to inspect more closely how the OT promises to Israel of a new creation have been inaugurated in Christ and are mediated to the church. This reality will then explain how throughout Romans Paul is able to take OT titles and images originally given to Israel and apply them to the church.

CHAPTER 3

THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW CREATION

Paul begins Romans by declaring that his gospel is a fulfillment of the promised deliverance from exile spoken by the prophets (1:1-2; cf. Isa 52:7). This so called new exodus, is closely linked by Isaiah with God's promise of a new creation (Isa 42:9; 43:18-19; 48:6-7; 65:17; 66:22).¹ Woven throughout Romans, Paul affirms that the blessings of the new creation have invaded the present. The good news which he preaches is not limited to Jews, but is for everyone who believes (1:16). Since God's redemption has extended to the Gentiles, the promises to Abraham are being fulfilled (4:16-18). In addition, the promised Spirit has been poured out, circumcising the hearts of all those who have faith, thus enabling them to keep the Law (2:25-29; 8:1-4). That all through faith are the rightful recipients of these blessings is consistent with what was seen in the previous chapter. There it was concluded that believers are united to Christ and so bear the title "sons of God," thus identifying them as the new Israel and rightful heirs of the new creation.

This chapter will continue the argument already made, namely that Jesus is the true Israel and those united to him become the new Israel. However, this assertion will now be substantiated by tracing Paul's new creation motif throughout Romans. In particular it will be argued that God's saving promises to Israel concerning a new creation have been inaugurated in Christ and are experienced in the church through union with him. That the future new creation has invaded the present is made evident by the

¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 269.

fact that Paul sees the new exodus, the new covenant, and the Abrahamic covenant to be fulfilled in the church. If such is the case, it is difficult not to see the church as the new Israel in Christ.

The New Exodus

Gospel

In the opening paragraph of Romans Paul presents his gospel to be in fulfillment of the saving promises of God to Israel (vv. 1-2). As Ross Wagner states, “[Paul] is convinced that, despite its radical newness, the gospel he preaches stands in deep continuity with the witness of the biblical texts to God’s continuing faithfulness to the covenant with Israel.”² However, it is this “radical newness” of Paul’s gospel which he understands to actually fulfill the OT in a greater way than was expected (Rom 9-11).³ In particular, Paul envisions the OT promises of a new exodus where Israel would experience both physical and spiritual restoration, to currently be fulfilled in the church. The present fulfillment of the new exodus is immediately apparent by Paul use of the word “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον).⁴ The term “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) recalls the good news of Israel’s deliverance from Babylonian exile (Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1 LXX) and future restoration (Isa 42:9; 43:18-19; 48:6-7; 65:17; 66:22 LXX).⁵

For Paul, the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16), because “in it the righteousness of God is revealed” (v. 17). Most

²J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul “in Concert” in the Letter to the Romans*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 101 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 11. See also Richard B Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 157–60.

³Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 38.

⁴Paul uses both the noun, εὐαγγέλιον, and the verb, εὐαγγελίζω, throughout Romans (1:1, 9, 15, 16; 2:16; 10:15, 16; 11:28; 15:16, 19, 20; 16:25).

⁵N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 332.

commentators agree that verses 16-17 serve as the theme or thesis for the entire letter.⁶ This assumption is correct, for much of Paul's vocabulary in Romans is introduced with the mentioning of "gospel," "salvation," "faith," and "righteousness."⁷ Furthermore, it is the proclamation of the gospel that Paul has been set apart as an apostle (v. 1). It is the gospel for which he wishes to preach when he comes to Rome (v. 15). And the gospel is what he longs to bring to Spain (15:20-24).

Paul wishes to preach the gospel where Christ is not yet named (15:20), because it has the power to affect salvation. More will be said about this later, but for now it will suffice to say that when Paul refers to salvation he is thinking of the saving promises of deliverance made to Israel in the OT.⁸ Significantly though, Paul does not limit the recipients of these promises to the Jews. Rather, Paul says it is for "everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also to the Greek" (v. 16). This theme of the universality of the gospel permeates the entire letter (2:5-11; 3:9, 22-23, 29-30; 4:9-12, 16-17; 9:24; 10:11-13; 11:32; 15:8-12). It is not surprising then that Paul understands Gentiles to be on equal footing with Jews through faith in the gospel of God's Son.

That Paul views his gospel as the fulfillment of Israel's promise of a new exodus is observed in Romans 10:14-21. These verses are part of a larger section (Rom 9-11) where Paul seeks to defend his gospel against the charge that the word of God has failed (9:6), because Israel for the most part has not believed and so obtained the Abrahamic promises. In 10:8-13 Paul details the connection between "the word of faith"

⁶C. K Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 27; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 87; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 38; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 135; R. D. Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community: Jew and Gentile in Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 30; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 64; Schreiner, *Romans*, 59.

⁷Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community*, 30.

⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 61.

(v. 8) that he preaches and the response to that message. Citing Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32, he asserts that the one who “believes” (v. 9, 11) and “who calls on the name of the Lord” (v. 13) will share in God’s salvation and righteousness (vv. 9, 10, 13). In verses 14-21 Paul retraces the steps by which one will “call” upon the Lord and so be saved. He does this through the use of four rhetorical questions, which culminate with the need for preachers to bring good news. Paul’s response to his last question results in a citation from Isaiah 52:7⁹ “revealing the crucial role that his own mission plays in the outworking of God’s redemptive purpose.”¹⁰

Isaiah 52:7 is a part of God’s prophecy concerning the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian captivity. Wagner states, “The long-awaited deliverance from exile, promised to God’s people at various points throughout Isaiah, at last finds its realization as heralds come bounding over the mountains to Jerusalem with the triumphant cry, ‘Your God shall reign!’”¹¹ It is these messengers whom Isaiah spoke about in 40:1-9 who were to announce the Lord’s return to Zion whereby he would redeem his people. Paul understands Isaiah’s new exodus to find its fulfillment in the apostolic preaching of Jesus’ death burial and resurrection. Paul is saying that “messengers have been sent out, the good news is being preached, the return from exile is at hand, and this salvation is now available to both Jews and Gentiles.”¹²

Paul’s point is that the Jews cannot say they have not heard the good news, for it has gone out into the world, just as the OT said it would (vv. 18; cf. Ps 19:4). Not only have the Jews heard it, but they actually understood it (vv. 19-20; cf. Deut 32:21; Isa

⁹Although Paul’s citation is closest to the MT over the LXX, he does stray from both in his use of the plural τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων. Moo says this “manifests his desire to make the text applicable to the multitude of Christian preachers” (Moo, *Romans*, 663 n. 12.).

¹⁰Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 170.

¹¹Ibid., 174.

¹²Schreiner, *Romans*, 568.

65:1, 2). However, Israel has refused to believe the message (v. 21; cf. 16). Nevertheless, in order to make Israel jealous (v. 19), God has extended his offer of eschatological salvation to the Gentiles (vv. 19-20). This inclusion of the Gentiles is consistent with what we have seen throughout Romans. The people of God are not defined by their ethnicity, but rather through faith in the gospel of God's Son. It is being rightly related to the true Israel, whereby one shares in the restoration promises of the OT.

Additional evidence that Paul views his preaching of the gospel to be in fulfillment of the promises of a new exodus can be seen in Romans 15:16. Here Paul identifies himself as “a minister (λειτουργὸν) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service (ἱερουργουῦντα) of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Paul's use of the word λειτουργός could simply refer to him as a “minister” or “servant.” However, coupled with “the sacrificial language in the latter part of the verse makes it more likely that he intends the term to connote *priestly* ministry specifically.”¹³

The proclamation of the gospel then is an act of priestly service. In this service Paul presents the Gentiles as an offering to God.¹⁴ Paul likely views this offering of the Gentiles to be in fulfillment of Isaiah 66:20.¹⁵ Leading up to this verse, Isaiah declares that in the last days the nations will see God's glory (vv. 18-19). He then says, “they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord” (v. 20). These “brothers” are the converted Gentiles from the nations who become part of the one people

¹³Moo, *Romans*, 889.

¹⁴Most commentators agree that in the phrase ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν the genitive ἐθνῶν is appositional. Therefore, it is not the Gentiles who bring an offering to God, but rather Paul offers the Gentiles as the offering. See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 860; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 756 n. 3; Schreiner, *Romans*, 767.

¹⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 767.

of God.¹⁶ In Romans 15:16, Paul perceives his gospel ministry as the fulfillment of this eschatological event.

Paul then continues to say that the bringing of the Gentiles to obedience is accompanied by signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God (vv. 18-19). This language recalls how God brought Israel out of Egypt by the power of signs and wonders (Exod 7:3; Deut. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 34:11; Neh. 9:10; Ps. 104:27 LXX).¹⁷ Paul expresses that the signs and wonders accomplished through him point to the inauguration of the new exodus and the new age. This is confirmed in verses 20-21 where Paul cites Isaiah 52:15 in support of preaching the gospel where Christ is yet to be named. This verse from Isaiah is part of the Servant songs, where the Gentiles who have not seen or understood the message of the Servant of the Lord will be enlightened. Like in Romans 10, Paul sees himself as the herald of this good news of deliverance from exile which comes from the true Israel, Jesus.

Resurrection

Central to Paul's gospel then is Jesus Christ and his resurrection (Rom 1:4). The resurrection harkens back to Israel's promises of return from exile (Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:1-4), and signifies the inauguration of the new creation.¹⁸ Paul regularly refers to the resurrection in the book of Romans (1:4; 4:24-25; 6:4-5, 11-13; 7:4; 8:11; 10:9). And as mentioned above, the resurrection of Christ is to be viewed as the fulfillment of the OT promises (vv. 1-4). J. R. Daniel Kirk goes so far to suggest that the theme of resurrection

¹⁶Contra Dunn who understands Isaiah 66:20 to speak of "diaspora Jews who form the eschatological offering" (Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 860.). More likely Isaiah speaks of the eschatological offering of the Gentiles who are incorporated into the one people of God. For a defense of this interpretation see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 457-60.

¹⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 768.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 44-45.

is the hermeneutical key to interpreting Paul's purposes in Romans.¹⁹ Although this may be an overstatement, it is true that Paul envisions Christ's resurrection to be fundamental to the gospel and the basis for the hope of the fulfillment of God's promises.

This importance placed on the resurrection is consistent with how the OT and Second Temple Judaism understood the resurrection. Wright has persuasively argued that the resurrection of the dead in Judaism is inseparable from the promises of return from exile and the fulfillment of the new creation.²⁰ He says,

Thus the Jews who believed in resurrection did so as one part of a larger belief in the renewal of the whole created order. Resurrection would be, in one and the same moment, the reaffirmation of the covenant and the reaffirmation of creation. Israel would be restored within a restored cosmos: the world would see, at last, who had all along been the true people of the creator god.²¹

Wright is correct, for in turning to the prophets one sees that the resurrection is linked to the promises of restoration. For example, the prophet Ezekiel says that God will bring about a spiritual renewal of Israel. This renewal will consist of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (36:26). Because of this renewal God says he will "cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (vv. 27-28). In Ezekiel 37 these promises are set in the context of resurrection.²² In verses 12-14 the prophet writes,

Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I

¹⁹J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 55.

²⁰Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 320–34. See also Kirk who suggests that the resurrection of the dead in Judaism had four functions: (1) providing vindication for Israel and God; (2) motivating God's people for righteous behavior; (3) securing the restoration of the cosmos; and (4) the restoration of the Israel (Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 15.).

²¹Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 332.

²²G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 252.

am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.

What is seen here is a close connection with Israel's restoration to the land coupled with spiritual and physical resurrection.²³ Isaiah also links the promises of Israel's deliverance with resurrection when he says, "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead" (Isa 26:19).

Returning to Romans, Christ's resurrection marks the fulfillment of God's promises of resurrection for Israel (Rom 1:1-4). This truth explains why Paul's gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον*) is considered the good news of God's salvation (v. 16). However, this good news made possible by the resurrection of Jesus, is not only for the Jews, but "for everyone who believes" (v. 16). This inclusion of the Gentiles is made possible because Jesus' resurrection is the basis for the believer's resurrection. Again, it is through union with Christ that one receives the promises of God.

No doubt in Romans 6-8, Paul draws upon much of what was promised in the OT concerning resurrection and deliverance from exile. For instance, in 6:1-4, Paul says believers are incorporated into Christ whereby they have been baptized into his death, so that they may also be raised with him (v. 4). Paul's reference to baptism speaks of the washing away of sins which occurs at conversion. This experience of conversion is what Ezekiel prophesied in 36:25-28, namely that God would sprinkle clean water upon Israel cleansing his people from all their sin and that they would be given a new heart and spirit so to walk in righteousness. Paul says this reality of experiencing eschatological resurrection is sure in Christ because they are "united with him" (v. 5).

This concept of union with Christ is what Paul established in Romans 5 when he said believers are no longer "in Adam," but rather they are "in Christ." Being united to the last Adam, death and sin no longer have reign over the believer. Instead, "they have

²³Ibid.

been liberated from the power of sin and transferred into the realm of righteousness.”²⁴ Paul says in 6:4, believers are able to “walk in newness of life,” (ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν) because they share in Christ’s resurrection. Here Beale notes that Paul employs new creation language, through the use of καινότης which is a cognate of καινος.²⁵ In both 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15 καινος is used for “the well-known inaugurated eschatological expression ‘new creation,’ where in both cases it refers to resurrection life.”²⁶ What Paul says in Romans 6:4-5 could be interpreted that believers will only experience resurrection in the future. However, in verses 11 and 13 it is clear that Paul envisions present resurrection. What Paul has said in verses 4-10 serves as the basis for believers to consider themselves “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11) and to present themselves “to God as those who have been brought from death to life” (v. 13).²⁷ In other words, the OT promise to Israel of eschatological resurrection and deliverance from exile has been inaugurated in Christ, and now is being experienced among the new Israel.

This participation in the promised resurrection is further demonstrated in Romans 7:4-6 where Paul says believers belong to Christ “who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God” (v. 4) and serve “in the new life of the Spirit” (v. 6). Again Paul employs new creation language borrowed from Ezekiel 36:26 where God promised to give Israel a “new spirit” (cf. Jer 31:31-34).²⁸ Just as Paul explained in chapter 6, so here he reiterates that believers are no longer under the dominion of the old age which is passing away. Instead, since they are joined to Christ,

²⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 298.

²⁵Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 251.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Moo, *Romans*, 367.

²⁸Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 366.

the last Adam, they experience the powers of the new age.²⁹

The themes of resurrection and new exodus restoration are probably most expressed in Romans 8. In verses 1-11 Paul again closely associates the Spirit with life. Beale is helpful to point out that “Ezek. 37:5 is the only passage in the LXX that makes the same linkage in an eschatological context.”³⁰ When Paul speaks of “life” he has in mind resurrection life. In Ezekiel 37 the Spirit of the Lord was the instrument whereby Israel’s resurrection would be accomplished (vv. 5-6, 9-10, 14). Here Paul sees this eschatological promise occurring in the church. Paul’s point in Romans 8:10 is that with the presence of the Spirit “believers will not be saddled with their weak and corruptible bodies forever.”³¹ The Spirit is life-giving and assures believers that they will overcome death through the resurrection of their bodies. Paul says, the reason the Spirit is life is “because of righteousness” (v. 10). Paul refers here to God’s saving righteousness demonstrated by the work of Christ on the cross. God for his own righteousness sake will give life in Christ. This truth is consistent with the Jewish expectation that God would resurrect his people to vindicate his own name.³²

Furthermore, in verse 11 Paul grounds the certainty of believers’ resurrection in Christ’s resurrection by the Spirit. It is because Christ is the true Israel that the promises of God find their fulfillment in him. Therefore, because Christ has been raised, so will all those who belong to him. Since the resurrection is tied to Israel’s new exodus, it is not surprising then that in verses 14-17 those united to Christ and participate in his resurrection are also adopted as God’s sons. They become his children and his heirs (v. 17). Within the OT, the idea of “inheritance” was associated with the land (Deut 30:5;

²⁹Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:340; Schreiner, *Romans*, 352.

³⁰Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 253.

³¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 414.

³²Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 16.

Num 34:2), the promises made to Abraham's offspring (Gen 15:7; 17:8), and the promise of restoration after exile (Isa 60:21; Ezek 36:8-12).³³ However, later Jewish writings seemed to expand the idea of "inheritance" to describe the eschatological life (Ps. Sol. 14:10; 1 Enoch 40:9; 4 Macc. 18:3).³⁴ Therefore, it's likely that Paul imagines the "inheritance" to be the fulfillment of the OT promises realized in the new creation. If so, Christians are God's new creation people who inherit these promises.

Continuing on to verses 18-23 one sees that the resurrection coincides with a new creation. Here Paul links the future resurrection and redemption of the body with the resurrection of the creation. As already established, the new creation was promised to Israel (Isa 65:17; 66:22), but Paul sees this promise belonging to the church, the new Israel. This reality is what Paul has been arguing throughout chapters 6-8, namely that "Christians . . . [are] to be the actual beginning fulfillment of the prophesied spiritual resurrection of Israel that was to transpire in the latter days at the time of their restoration from exile."³⁵ Even though there is yet a full realization of these promises in the future, Paul understands the blessings of the new age to have invaded the present by virtue of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Salvation

The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection "is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16) Salvation is a term which describes God's work of delivering his people. For Paul such salvation is primarily eschatological.³⁶ In Romans 5 Paul declared that "since . . . we have been justified by his blood, much more will we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (v. 9). Again in verse

³³Moo, *Romans*, 505.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 505 n. 45.

³⁵Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 254.

³⁶Schreiner, *Paul*, 225.

10 Paul will say that since believers have been reconciled they “will be saved by his life.” In both verses Paul speaks of a future reality. The eschatological nature of salvation is also seen in Romans 10:9-11 where those who confess Jesus as Lord and believe on him with their hearts “will be saved” (v. 10). This understanding is reinforced in verse 11 where Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 which says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” Paul does not view this as a present reality by which believers will no longer experience any shame. Rather, this is an eschatological blessing of the coming age. Finally, Paul’s future oriented look at salvation is confirmed in Romans 13:11 when he says, “Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”

Although fundamentally eschatological, it would be a mistake to assume that Paul limits salvation to the future. For in 8:24 Paul also sees salvation to be a past event, because it is “in this hope we were saved.” Since the coming age has invaded the present, there is an already-not-yet dimension to salvation. Nevertheless, the consummation of this promise is still yet future.

The eschatological salvation, which Paul speaks, harkens back to the OT where Israel was promised salvation (Isa 1:27; 10:22; 12:2; 19:20; 30:15; 33:2; 35:4; 37:20; 45:17). In the OT, God’s promises of salvation were closely related to his righteousness.³⁷ This relationship is apparent by looking at the Psalms and Isaiah where God’s righteousness is found in conjunction with his salvation. For instance, Psalm 98:2-3 (Ps 97:2-3 LXX) says,

The LORD has made known his salvation (σωτήριον); he has revealed his righteousness (δικαιοσύνην) in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation (σωτήριον) of our God.

From this passage the close connection is established between God’s salvation to be made known and his righteousness to be revealed. These two terms are parallel showing

³⁷Mark A Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 9 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 39.

that God's righteousness is a saving righteousness.³⁸ This understanding is again seen in Isaiah 51:5-8

My righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) draws near, my salvation (σωτήριόν) has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation (σωτήριόν) will be forever, and my righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) will never be dismayed. 'Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) will be forever, and my salvation (σωτήριόν) to all generations.

In the citation above it is seen that God's salvation for his people is linked to his righteousness. It should also be noted that this relationship is not foreign to the rest of the OT (Pss 31:1; 36:10; 40:10; 71:2; 88:10-12; 143:1; Isa 46:13).³⁹

Paul makes this same connection in Romans 1:16-17 highlighting that the gospel "is the power of God for salvation" because "in it the righteousness of God is revealed." One could say, in the resurrection of the crucified Christ, God's saving act of righteousness has been manifest. Therefore, Seifrid is correct to say, "God's righteousness is his 'vindicating act' of raising Christ from the dead *for us*. Here the biblical themes of deliverance of the oppressed, his vindication of his Servant, his faithfulness to Israel and his salvation of the world are implicitly present."⁴⁰ Paul understands that through the preached gospel, the OT promises of God's mighty act of salvation for Israel have been made available for "everyone who believes" (v. 16; cf. 3:21-24).

Redemption

Coinciding with salvation and deliverance is the concept of redemption

³⁸Schreiner, *Paul*, 198.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 47.

(ἀπολύτρωσις). Although the term itself is not used more than twice (Rom 3:24; 8:23), the imagery of being set free from bondage is also found in Romans (6:15-23; cf. 7:2). The theme of redemption points back to the Exodus, whereby Israel was set free from slavery in Egypt (Exod 6:6; 15:13; Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18). As written earlier, the prophet Isaiah wrote about a second exodus that was to come where God would fulfill his saving work in their lives (Isa 11:15-16; 40:3-11; 42:16; 43:1-19; 49:6-11; 51:10).⁴¹ Often within Isaiah's prophecies concerning this second exodus, redemption terminology was used (44:22, 23, 24; 51:11; 52:2; 62:12).⁴²

It is Isaiah's prophecies of a new exodus which Paul sees fulfilled in the redemption found in Christ. Even though these prophecies were partially fulfilled with Israel's return from Babylon, they were not fulfilled in their totality. Israel did not experience the washing away of her sins, the indwelling Spirit, or the restoration of the cosmos. These elements have begun to be fulfilled through the redemption of Christ, and therefore should be described as "freedom from exile."⁴³

The freedom which Christ brings is from the power of sin. In Romans 3:24 Paul joins redemption with justification, because "in Christ" believers are "acquitted by God from all 'charges' that could be brought against [them] because of his or her sins."⁴⁴ Moreover, justification is said to be "free" (δωρεάν) because it is based on the redemption that was provided by Christ. Because of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection, believers "having been set free (ἐλευθερωθέντες) from sin, have become slaves (ἐδουλώθητε) of righteousness" (6:18). In Christ, believers are transferred from the power of sin, and made subject to the power of righteousness. It was Israel who was promised

⁴¹Schreiner, *Paul*, 230.

⁴²G. K. Beale, "Colossians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D.A. Carlson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 848.

⁴³Schreiner, *Paul*, 230.

⁴⁴Moo, *Romans*, 227.

deliverance from exile when their sins were forgiven and everlasting righteousness would reign (Dan 9:24). Paul understands this liberation from the power of sin to fulfill the promises to Israel in the OT.⁴⁵ Those in Christ are experiencing the freedom of the new exodus, and blessings of the new creation.

Not only did Christ redeem believers from the power of sin, but also from the curse of the Law (cf. Gal 3:13). Although in Romans 7 Paul does not make use of ἀπολύτρωσις, the imagery of redemption is still there when he says, “But now we are released (κατηργήθημεν) from the law to that which held (κατέχω) us captive” (Rom 7:6). To be held (κατέχω) by the Law is another way to speak of being under the power of sin. It refers to the “state of Israel in the old age.”⁴⁶ However, Paul says believers through their identification with Christ have died to the Law (v. 4) and now “serve in the new way of the Spirit” (v. 6).⁴⁷ Therefore, because believers have been liberated by Christ, they are now experiencing the powers of the new age. Nevertheless, though the promises of the new exodus have become a reality for those in Christ, Paul understands that redemption is still yet to be consummated. In Romans 8:23 Paul links the redemption of the body and the adoption of sons with the resurrection. At the resurrection not only will believers have their bodies redeemed, but the entire creation will be renewed as well (vv. 20-21).

Summary

So far it has been shown that the theme of Israel’s new exodus is saturated throughout Romans. With the preaching of the gospel, Paul declares that the promises of

⁴⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 334.

⁴⁶Schreiner, *Paul*, 231.

⁴⁷In Romans 7:6 Paul contrasts the “new way of the Spirit (πνεύματος)” with “the old way of the written code (γράμματος).” The γράμμα describes the old age ruled by the law, whereas πνεῦμα represents the arrival of the new age. See Bernardin Schneider, “The Meaning of St. Paul’s Antithesis ‘The Letter and the Spirit’,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, no. 15 (1953): 163–207; Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 143.

Israel's restoration have now come in Jesus Christ. In the OT the promises of deliverance from exile and restoration were often associated with resurrection. The good news that Paul preached is that Jesus has been raised, thus inaugurating the new exodus. Just as Jesus triumphed over the enemies of sin and death through his resurrection, so too those who are united to him will share in a resurrection like his. As a result, the gospel of God's Son affects salvation for both Jew and Gentile, whereby they are redeemed from sin and the curse of the Law. It is these promises which were to accompany Israel's new exodus. Therefore, Paul's theology of a new exodus has become a reality in Christ, and those identified with him are rightly understood to be the new Israel who inherits the promise of the new creation.

The New Covenant

In the OT God's promises to Israel of restoration coincided with a new covenant (Jer 31:31-40). This covenant would not be like the old covenant which Israel broke (v. 32). Rather, (1) God would write his Law on their hearts (v. 33); (2) everyone in the covenant community would have a saving knowledge of God (v. 34a); and (3) God would forgive all their sins (v. 34b). Although, the phrase "new covenant" is not used by Ezekiel, the same promise is made in Ezekiel 36:22-32. The Lord says that when Israel is restored he will cleanse the nation of all her sin (v. 25), he will give them a new heart and place his Spirit within them so that they may obey the Law (vv. 26-27), and they will be his people and he will be their God (v. 28).

In the book of Romans the apostle Paul argues that the blessings of the new covenant are a present reality in the church, shared by both Jews and Gentiles. These blessings include: (1) the gift of the Spirit (Rom 2:29; 5:5; 7:6; 8:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 23, 26; 14:17; 15:13, 16, 19, 30; cf. Joel 2:28-29; Isa. 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27); (2) the circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:5, 29; cf. Jer 31:33; 32:39, 40; Ezek 11:19; 36:26, 27); (3) the ability to obey the Law (Rom 2:26-27; 3:27-31; 8:1-4; 13:8-10; cf. Jer

31:33; Ezek 36:27); and (4) the forgiveness of sins whereby God's people would be justified (Rom 2:13; 3:24, 26, 28; 4:5, 6, 9 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30; 9:30; 10:10; Isa 53:11; Jer 31:34; Ezek 36:25).

With the promises of the new covenant finding their fulfillment in the church, it is right then to identify the church as the new Israel.⁴⁸ Paul does not view the church as merely partakers in the “spiritual blessings” of the new covenant.⁴⁹ Rather, the “already” aspect of these blessings is a guarantee of the inheritance to come (Rom 8:12-17, 23). Both Jews and Gentiles having been united to Christ are on equal footing, together inheriting all the promises of God.⁵⁰

The Gift of the Spirit

In Romans Paul assures believers that they have a secure hope because “God’s love has been poured into [their] hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to [them]” (5:5). The gift of the Spirit was to mark the new age promised to Israel in the OT (Joel 2:28–29; cf. Isa 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26–27). This gift was to enable Israel to be obedient to God’s Law. Paul says this reality has come in the church where the Law is being fulfilled by Gentiles (Rom 2:26-27, 8:1-4). In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that those who have the Spirit are true Jews (2:29).

Again it is through union with Christ that believers have entered into the realm where righteousness and life reign (5:17). Subsequently, in 7:1-6 Paul can say that those

⁴⁸Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, Andrews University Monographs, vol. 13 (Berrien Springs, Mich: Andrews University Press, 1983), 121.

⁴⁹Contra Vlach who says, “the new covenant also has an ‘already/not yet’ aspect to it in regard to the manner of its fulfillment. Spiritual aspects of the new covenant such as forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit are being realized in the present era while the physical blessings of the covenant await a future fulfillment with national Israel” (Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 158.).

⁵⁰Contra Bruce Ware who suggests that the nation of Israel will receive distinguishable promises distinct from the church (Bruce A. Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 96–97.).

who are united to Christ are now in the new era of the Spirit as opposed to the old era of the Law. He says, believers “are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.” It is the new way of the Spirit which fulfills the old covenant promise that Israel would one day be able to keep the Law.

Moreover, Paul assures believers that they will experience the redemption of their bodies and the adoption as sons, because they have the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (8:23). The imagery of firstfruits is a metaphor borrowed from the OT recalling how Israel, by faith, was to offer up the firstfruits of her crops to God and trust that he would supply the harvest. In the same way, the Spirit is the firstfruit which promises the full realization of the age to come.⁵¹

Circumcision of the Heart

Along with the gift of the Spirit, God promised to circumcise the hearts of his people so that they may obey his statutes (Jer. 31:33; 32:39, 40; Ezek 11:19; 36:26, 27). In Romans 2:25-29 Paul contends that with the arrival of the new covenant, physical circumcision no longer marks off the people of God. The covenant sign of circumcision only has salvific value if one perfectly practices the Law. Such an assertion is a “radical reevaluation of the covenant,” for the covenantal sign of circumcision was of utmost importance to the Jew.⁵² Keeping with the command given to Abraham in Genesis 17:9-14, it would be unthinkable that any Jew would not be circumcised. After all, the Lord himself said to Abraham, “Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” Therefore, in the mind of the Jew, to be circumcised marked one off as part of the covenant people

⁵¹Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community*, 151.

⁵²Schreiner, *Romans*, 138.

of God.

In verses 25-27 Paul combats the idea that physical circumcision guarantees acceptance in the people of God. He says circumcision only has salvific value if one keeps the whole Law. In very shocking terms Paul says of Jews who transgress the Law “their circumcision, becomes uncircumcision” (v. 25). Namely, they are not regarded as the people of God. However, Gentiles who keep the Law, their uncircumcision will be counted (*λογισθήσεται*) as circumcision (v. 26). These Gentiles are then regarded as the true members of the Abrahamic covenant.

The reason for this assertion is given in verses 28-29 when Paul says true “circumcision [is not] outward and physical . . . [it] is a matter of the heart by the Spirit (*πνεῦμα*) not by the letter (*γράμμα*).” Paul contrasts circumcision of the flesh (v. 28b) with circumcision of the heart (v. 29b). Even from the OT, God has always called his people to be circumcised in heart (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; 9:26.). The OT also looked forward to a day when God would circumcise the hearts of his people (Deut 30:6; cf. Ezek 36:26). However, the fulfillment of this promise would not come until God made a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34). In the new covenant God would write his Law on the hearts of his people so that all may obey his commands. The prophet Ezekiel explains that this obedience will not come until God replaces their dead hearts and gives them his Spirit (Ezek 36:36-27).

Therefore, the Jews would have been looking to the day when God would perform this heart change.⁵³ Yet, the Jews did not expect physical circumcision to no longer be necessary.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, this change is precisely what happened, for the “uncircumcised” Gentiles “who keep the law” will be considered circumcised on the last day (v. 26). The Gentiles of whom Paul speaks have received the blessings of the new

⁵³Moo, *Romans*, 174.

⁵⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 141–42.

covenant, namely the gift of the Spirit and the circumcision of their hearts (v. 29). Byrne points out that this antithesis is an “eschatological distinction.”⁵⁵ The circumcision of the heart which God requires cannot come through the old covenant of the Law (i.e. the letter). Rather, it must come in the newness of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 7:6).⁵⁶

The Fulfillment of the Law

With the arrival of the Spirit, God promised to circumcise the hearts of his people so that they may keep his Law (Ezek 36:26-37; cf. Jer 31:33). As seen in Romans 2:25-29, Paul argues that this new covenant promise has already become a reality for Gentile Christians.⁵⁷ Again in 6:17 Paul gives thanks to God for the Romans who are no longer slaves of sin, but have become “obedient from the heart.”⁵⁸ This heartfelt obedience harkens back to Paul’s statement in 1:5 where he speaks of his apostolic commissioning to bring about “the obedience of faith . . . among all the nations” (cf.

⁵⁵Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 104.

⁵⁶Moo says, “The ἐν in this phrase could be instrumental – the circumcision is accomplished ‘by’ the Spirit – but this meaning does not fit well with the other object of the preposition: γράμματι. It is preferable, therefore, to think that it denotes sphere” (Moo, *Romans*, 175 n. 45.). However, Käsemann is probably correct to suggest that a decision over whether the ἐν should be viewed instrumentally or locally “is relatively unimportant” (Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 146.). Paul most likely has both ideas in mind. Heart circumcision is “by” the work of the Spirit and “in” the new age of the Spirit.

⁵⁷Contra Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 51–53; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 110; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 322; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 73; Moo, *Romans*, 169–171; Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 174. For a defense that Paul views these Gentiles as Christians see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:173; A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 184–86; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 233–35; Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 127–29; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Did Paul Believe in Justification by Works? Another Look at Romans 2,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, no. 3 (1993): 148–49; N. T. Wright, “The Law in Romans 2,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 134–36.

⁵⁸Frank Thielman, “The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5-8,” in *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series, vol. 23 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 187–88.

15:18). The reason Paul is able to call the nations to obedience in Christ is because the new age of the Spirit has been inaugurated.

That the new age has dawned is made explicit in 8:1-11. Here Paul states that through the power of the Spirit believers now have the ability to keep the Law (v. 4). For those “in Christ” Paul says, there is “now no condemnation” (v. 1). When Paul says “now” (νῦν) he “signals a new era of salvation history, one in which God’s covenantal promises are being fulfilled, when his people are enjoying the freedom from condemnation God promised.”⁵⁹ With the dawn of the new age, “the law of the Spirit of life has set [believers] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (v. 2). This freedom is made possible by the atoning sacrifice of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. As argued in chapter 2 of this thesis, “Son” is a reference to Israel, thus identifying Jesus as the true Israel. In Paul’s theology, those who are identified with the true Israel, share in the blessings of the new covenant made to Israel. It is then Christ’s work on the cross which serves as the foundation for the “transformative work of the Spirit.”⁶⁰

Paul describes the work of the Spirit in verses 5-8. He says, “those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (v. 5b). This Spirit led life is in contrast to those who live according to the flesh (v. 5a). Paul says, that those who live according to the flesh will die (v. 6), because they are unable to submit to the Law of God (v. 8). However, those who have the Spirit receive the blessing of “life and peace” (v. 6), because they do what the Law commands and so please God (vv. 7-8). The theology of Paul, laid down in 8:1-11, serves as the basis for later exhortations in Romans. For example, in 13:8-10, Paul exhorts believers to love one another (v. 8a). The one who loves, Paul says, “has fulfilled the law” (v. 8b). He then substantiates his claim by quoting from the Law of Moses, showing that all the commandments “are summed up

⁵⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 397.

⁶⁰Schreiner, *Paul*, 264.

in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (v. 9).

What is evident from these passages is that the new covenant promise to Israel that the Law would be kept through the work of the Spirit is fulfilled in the church. Paul argues that those who find their identity in God’s Son, the true Israel, have been given the Spirit and so are able to keep the Law. They are then pleasing to God (8:8) and experience the promised life and peace of the age to come (8:6). It is these who keep the Law, who are rightly a part of God’s new covenant people, the new Israel.

The Forgiveness of Sins

Another blessing of the new covenant is that God would forgive Israel’s sins and cleanse his people of all their iniquities (Jer 31:34; Ezek 36:25, 33). Surprisingly, in Romans Paul does not speak specifically of believers having their sins forgiven. Instead, he uses the language of “counted as righteous” (Rom 4:5). Paul links this language with forgiveness in verses 7-8 where he cites Psalm 31:1-2, “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*) is primarily a forensic term in Paul, and speaks of God’s saving righteousness which is made available by faith (1:17).⁶¹ The forensic nature of righteousness is more clearly seen through Paul’s use of the verb *δικαίωω*. For example in 3:28 Paul says, “For we hold that one is justified (*δικαιοῦσθαι*) by faith apart from the Law (cf. 3:20, 24, 26, 30; 5:1).⁶² If righteousness comes by faith, and not through the works of the Law, then God judiciously declares believers to be vindicated from all their sin (cf. 6:7).

⁶¹The limitations of this thesis prevent discussion over whether righteousness should be understood as covenant faithfulness. For a defense of the forensic view of righteousness see Schreiner, *Paul*, 189–217; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*.

⁶²Schreiner, *Paul*, 204.

This vindication from sin is what Paul articulates in 4:5 when he says, “And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies (δικαιοῦντα) the ungodly, his faith is counted (λογίζεται) as righteousness (δικαιοσύνη). It is within the context of justification that Paul then cites Psalm 31:1-2 which speaks of forgiveness of sin (vv. 6-8). Therefore, Paul sees a close relationship between righteousness and forgiveness (cf. 4:25).⁶³ This is further evidenced through Paul’s use of λογίζομαι. This term means “to reckon” or “count” and is used in a law-court setting.⁶⁴ In Paul’s theology, God, the judge, counts sinners as righteous through faith in Jesus.

To be declared righteous then is to have your sins forgiven, and as already seen it is a benefit of being in the new covenant. Paul says elsewhere that, “since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1). Peace was an eschatological gift promised to Israel in the OT whereby God would fulfill his covenant promise (Isa 9:6–7; 32:15–17; 48:20–22; 54:10; Mic 5:4–5; Hag 2:9; Zech 8:12).⁶⁵ Ezekiel speaks of the new covenant as a “covenant of peace” (Ezek 34:25; 37:26), where his people would be led by the future Davidic king (34:23–31; 37:24–28; cf. Isa 9:6–7; Mic 5:4–5).⁶⁶ Paul writes that through Christ (Rom 5:1), the Davidic king (1:3), the church has the forgiveness of sins and now is at peace with God in the new covenant (1:7; 8:6; 14:17; 15:13).

Another means by which Paul expresses the idea of forgiveness is the reconciliation of believers to God (5:10, 11: 11:15). When Paul speaks of reconciliation, he has in mind the OT restoration promises of the prophets (Isa 49:18-26; 61:1; Ezek

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴H. W. Bartsch, “λογίζομαι,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 354-55.

⁶⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 253.

⁶⁶Ibid.

37:1-14; 39:29).⁶⁷ Both Isaiah and Ezekiel even present the restoration of Israel to coincide with God establishing his “covenant of peace” (Isa 54:10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26).⁶⁸ Paul understands the basis of believers’ reconciliation with God to be that they “have now been justified by [Jesus’] blood” (5:9). Since justification is linked with forgiveness (4:5-8), it is not a stretch to see reconciliation as also being closely related.

While it is true that in Romans Paul does not use the language of “forgiveness of sins,” it by no means suggests that he does not view forgiveness to be a reality for believers. Rather, the new covenant blessing of forgiveness is presented in the themes of “justification,” “having peace with God,” and “being reconciled to God.”

Summary

It should be noted that Paul argues that the new covenant promise to Israel is now realized in the church. In Christ believers experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has circumcised their hearts, so that they are now able to keep the Law. Through faith, believers do not have their sin counted against them, because they have been justified by God. All these blessings were promised to OT Israel. Therefore, those who are recipients of these promises are rightly identified as the new Israel in Christ.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Within the storyline of Scripture, the covenant God made with Abraham “stands in contrast to the judgments of God on human sin and presents anew the plan of creation.”⁶⁹ From the OT one sees that God promises Abraham that he would have a great name, a multitude of offspring, a land to dwell in, a relationship with the covenant God, and through his offspring the nations would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3; 15:4-5; 17:1-8;

⁶⁷Thielman, “The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5-8,” 178.

⁶⁸Ibid., 178.

⁶⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 630.

18:18-19; 22:16-18).⁷⁰ In light of God's promise in Genesis 3:15, the Abrahamic covenant is the means "by which God will fulfill his promises for humanity (universal, creation focus, which drives us forward to the new covenant)."⁷¹ Wright describes the Abrahamic covenant saying "Abraham emerges within the structure of Genesis as the answer to the plight of all humankind. The line of disaster and of the 'curse', from Adam, through Cain, through the Flood to Babel, begins to be reversed when God calls Abraham and says 'in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'"⁷²

In Romans, Paul understands the Abrahamic covenant to be fulfilled in the church through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 4:24-25). With the inauguration of the new covenant the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are being realized as both Jews and Gentiles exercise a faith like Abraham (vv. 11-12). As a result, the blessing of forgiveness is made for all nations (vv. 6-9) and Abraham's children have become heirs of the world (v. 13).⁷³

All the Nations are Blessed

From the outset of Romans, Paul has made it clear that the gospel is the good news of salvation for all nations (1:16; cf. 1:5, 13; 3:29; 4:17-24; 9:24, 30; 11:11, 12, 13, 25; 15:9-12, 16, 18, 27; 16:26). It is Paul's intention to contend that through faith in Christ, the people of God has now expanded to all the nations, and the promise to Abraham that in his offspring all the nations will be blessed is coming to pass (Gen 12:3; Isa 19:18-25; 49:6; Dan 7:14, 27). Paul understands the blessing which was promised to Abraham and his offspring to be "the blessing of forgiveness which is pronounced upon

⁷⁰Ibid., 630-31.

⁷¹Ibid., 631.

⁷²Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 262.

⁷³Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community*, 89-90.

both the circumcised and the uncircumcised (Rom 4:6-9).”⁷⁴ This inclusion of the uncircumcised is consistent with what Paul teaches in Romans 2:25-29, that physical circumcision no longer marks off the people of God. Therefore, it is essential to Paul that his readers understand that since the basis of becoming a true child of Abraham is through faith in Christ, then it must be that both Jews and Gentiles are equally a part of Abraham’s family.

Heirs of the World

Paul also says, as children of Abraham, believers have become heirs of the world (4:13-16). Even though in the Hebrew Scriptures, there is not an explicit statement that Abraham and his children would be heirs of the world, the OT does suggest this to be the case (Pss 2:7–12; 22:27–28; 47:7–9; 72:8–11, 17; Isa 2:1–4; 19:18–25; 49:6–7; 52:7–10; 55:3–5; 66:23; Amos 9:11–12; Zeph 3:9–10; Zech 14:9)⁷⁵ Beale observes that “The rationale underlying Paul’s worldwide view is most probably the various OT texts . . . in which Israel’s promise of the land was viewed to concern the whole world.”⁷⁶ In Romans 8 Paul identifies this inheritance to be a new creation (vv. 16-25). Therefore, Paul sees the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant to be joined with the promises of a new creation. These promises were originally given to OT Israel, however being fulfilled in the true Israel, these promises are mediated to all by faith.

Summary

It was the aim of this chapter to demonstrate that God’s saving promises to Israel concerning a new creation have been inaugurated in Christ and are experienced in the church through union with him. This was first argued by examining how Paul’s

⁷⁴Ibid., 89.

⁷⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 227.

⁷⁶Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 757.

declaration that the promises of Israel's eschatological restoration have now been inaugurated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul therefore preached the good news of God's deliverance whereby salvation and redemption are made available for not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles. Second, it was put forth that the new covenant promise to Israel is now being realized in the church. In Christ believers experience the new covenant blessing that the Holy Spirit would take residence in their hearts. As a result, the Spirit has cleansed believers from all their iniquities and has circumcised their hearts, so that they are now able to keep the Law of God. Third, with the inauguration of the new covenant, Paul stresses that the promises to Abraham are also being fulfilled. Through faith in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles become children of Abraham and heirs of the world.

With Israel's promises being present realities in the church, Paul states that this new community in Christ is the new Israel. Through Christ, Gentiles have been made co-heirs of these promises, and with the saints of old, stand in expectation of the eschatological hope in the glory of God. It is no wonder then, as will be seen in the next chapter, that Paul applies OT titles and images of Israel to the church. Since the church is the rightful recipients of God's saving promises of a new creation, then it follows that the church bears the titles of God's true people, the new Israel.

CHAPTER 4
TITLES AND IMAGERY OF ISRAEL APPLIED TO
THE CHURCH

The preceding chapters have laid a foundation which enables one to understand why Paul describes the church as Israel. Some have tried to suggest that the application of Israelite imagery to the church only shows that “believing Jews and Gentiles compose the one people of God in a salvation sense. But this truth does not rule out a future role for national Israel or indicate that the church is now Israel.”¹ However, to argue that the unity of Jews and Gentiles is only in a “salvation sense” does not support the idea that the nation of Israel retains a distinct and privileged position in the future. As was demonstrated in chapter 3, the promise of salvation is linked with Israel’s restoration promises. Paul does not portion out the rest of the OT promises to be reserved for the nation of Israel. Rather, he argues that “in Christ” both Jews and Gentiles are rightful recipients of all God’s promises. Nevertheless, Paul does not present the church to have “replaced” Israel, but that “the church is the continuation of Israel into the new age.”²

It is the goal of this chapter to show that Paul does apply titles and images of Israel to the church, because it is in the church where the OT promises find their fulfillment.³ These promises which were at one time only available for believing Jews,

¹Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 156.

²Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 709.

³For much of this chapter was indebted to the work of Charles D. Provan, *The Church Is Israel Now: The Transfer of Conditional Privilege* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House, 2003). Although the present author do not see as much continuity between the church and Israel as Provan does, nevertheless the survey of various titles and images of Israel applied the church has been helpful.

have now expanded to include the Gentiles through faith in the true Israel, Jesus. Because the church is united to Jesus, “it is important to maintain that the church is not merely like Israel, but actually is Israel.”⁴ This designation will become clearer as one turns his attention to the specific titles and images of Israel employed by Paul in Romans.

The Titles Church, Called, Saints, Beloved, and Foreknown

Church

Surprisingly, in Romans Paul does not use the term “church” (ἐκκλησία) until chapter 16. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that he does not view the Roman Christians to be a part of the church. In verse 5 Paul sends greetings to Prisca and Aquilla who host a house church in Rome. Paul refers to other Christian assemblies as the church (vv. 1, 4, 16). The greetings Paul offers are a demonstration of the love which all who belong to the Lord share.⁵ This is why Paul concludes his greeting with “All the churches of Christ greet you.” Paul views the local church in Rome to be united with the universal church abroad.

It is the “church” (ἐκκλησία) which Paul identifies as this new covenant community of Jews and Gentiles who have come to faith in Christ. Why does Paul use this term to describe God’s people? The answer does not lie in the etymology of the word ἐκ-καλεω “called out.” While believers are those who are “called” and “elect,” Paul does not link such realities with the term ἐκκλησία.⁶ Rather, Paul draws upon the term “church” (ἐκκλησία) from the old covenant community of Israel. In the OT one regularly

⁴G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 653. Contra Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 189.

⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 790.

⁶James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 537.

finds Israel referred to as the “assembly of the Lord” (קְהַל יְהוָה, cf. Num 16:3; 20:4; Deut 23:1, 8; 1 Chr 28:8). It is not insignificant then, that elsewhere, one finds Paul using the phrase “church of God” (1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 2:14). In Romans 16:16, Paul uses a parallel phrase “the churches of Christ.” Dunn proposes this phrase implies “continuity with ‘the assembly of Yahweh,’ without allowing confusion over who ‘the Lord’ might be in talk of ‘the assembly of the Lord.’”⁷ Consequently, there is “little doubt that Paul intended to depict the little assemblies of Christian believers as equal manifestations of and in direct continuity with ‘the assembly of Yahweh,’ ‘the assembly of Israel.’”⁸ In other words, Paul presents the church to be the new people of God, the new Israel.⁹

Called

Just as Israel was “called” (καλέω [Isa 41:9; 42:6; 43:1; 45:3; 48:12; 51:2]), so Paul says that the church has been called (κλητός; καλέω [Rom 1:6, 7; 8:28, 30; 9:24, 25, 26]). It is important to note that Paul identifies the church as those “called to belong to Jesus Christ (1:6). Here again Paul pictures the church as united to the true Israel. This union serves as the basis for why Paul can say the church is called “saints” (1:7), “my people” (9:25a), “beloved” (9:25b), and “sons of the living God” (9:26). It is this calling by which God has chosen a people for his own possession just as when he called Israel out of Egypt.

⁷Ibid., 538.

⁸Ibid.

⁹See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 39; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 582; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 328; Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 708; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 332.

Saints

Saints is another designation used to describe Israel. In the OT Israel was to be a Holy (ἅγιος) nation (Exod 19:6 LXX; cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 28:29). Here in Romans Paul also calls the church saints (1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:2, 15). However, the most likely background for Paul's usage of "saints" is from Daniel 7. The vision in Daniel 7 speaks of the coming messianic figure, the "son of man," whereby he will be given the eschatological kingdom, and all peoples will serve him and he will exercise dominion forever (vv. 13-14). But in verse 18, as the vision is interpreted, the reader notes that it will be "the saints of the most high [who] shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever, and ever" (cf. v. 22). The relationship between the "Son of Man" and the "saints" both receiving the kingdom can be explained by what some refer to as "the one and the many" or "corporate representation," where a kingdom, nation or family is represented by a king, priest or father.¹⁰ In Daniel 7, the Son of Man represents the nation of Israel, in whom they are summed up.

In the gospels Jesus identifies himself as the "Son of Man," and in Romans, Paul now speaks of those who are in Christ, as the eschatological saints. This hope for Israel is now applied to the church who are the end-time "saints of the most high" (Dan 7:22).

Beloved

In Christ, Paul also calls the church God's "beloved" (1:7; 9:22-25; 12:19; 16:5, 8, 9, 12). The title beloved is frequently applied to Israel in the OT (Deut 32:15; 33:12; Isa 44:2; Jer 11:15; 12:7; Pss 60:5 [59:7 LXX]; 108:6 [107:7 LXX]).¹¹ An important reference where Paul calls Christian's God's beloved is found in Romans 9:25-26 where he says, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who

¹⁰Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 192.

¹¹Ibid., 669.

was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’” Paul cites Hosea 2:23 and 1:10, two texts regarding the future salvation and restoration of Israel. However, Paul applies these texts to the salvation of Gentiles.¹² That Paul has Gentiles in mind is made clear in the previous verse where he says, “even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles” (v. 24).

Some object to this interpretation suggesting that Paul is merely quoting Hosea to show that “God’s electing purposes for Gentiles is parallel or analogous to God’s choosing Israel.”¹³ However, Moo is surely correct to say, “Paul requires more than an analogy to establish from Scripture justification for God’s calling of Gentiles to be his people.”¹⁴ It is not enough to argue that Paul’s use of “as indeed” (ὡς καὶ) in verse 25 is an indication of analogy and not fulfillment. In verse 29 Paul uses an equivalent grammatical construction (καὶ καθὼς, “and just as”) to introduce the initial fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that only a remnant of Israel would be saved. Furthermore, Paul not only applies Hosea to Gentiles, but also to believing Jews (v. 24). Therefore, “to say that somehow the prophecy is fulfilled by Jews and merely analogically applied to gentiles would be a convoluted and inconsistent conclusion.”¹⁵ Instead, Paul understood that both Jews and Gentiles through faith in Christ constitute the inaugural fulfillment of Hosea 1-2.

Earlier in Romans Paul has already opened the door for non-Jews to be considered part of Israel (cf. Rom 2:25-29). He continues this direction in 9:6 where he

¹²Contra John A. Battle, Jr., “Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:25-26,” *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (1982): 115–29.

¹³Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 103.

¹⁴Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 613.

¹⁵Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 706.

says, “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.” Even though in this verse Paul is speaking of a distinction between ethnic Israelites, he has opened up the possibility for Gentiles to be a part of true Israel without becoming ethnic Israelites.¹⁶ Paul’s presupposition that Gentiles through faith have become part of Israel is substantiated by the context of Hosea 1:10. In Hosea 1:11 one reads, “And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head.” Israel’s restoration will come about as she is led by her covenant “head.”¹⁷ There is little doubt that this “head” is the future Davidic king who is spoken of in Hosea 3:5, “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.” Beale describes the significance of this context as Paul applies Hosea to Gentiles,

Paul’s contextual purview likely included the notion of a messianic deliverer who would lead the restoration, with whom end-time Israel would be identified. Paul’s application of the prophecy, not only to Jews but also to gentiles, suggests that he sees gentiles to be identified with this messianic leader, which the OT and NT elsewhere identify as an individual representative for eschatological Israel.¹⁸

If so, this example of corporate representation is consistent with what has already been argued that Jesus is the true Israel and Davidic king, in whom the new Israel is defined. This also explains why in Romans 9:25-26 Paul not only applies the title “beloved” to the church, but also “my people” and “sons of the living God.” The application of “beloved” with these other titles is strong evidence that the church is now in the blessed position of

¹⁶Dunn concurs, “By switching terms to ‘Israel,’ however Paul opened up a different possibility. For if the function of ‘Israel’ as a name is to identify primarily by relation to God and to God’s choice, and not by differentiation from other nations and race, then the issue of whether Gentiles can be included may be resolved on a quite different basis. Strictly speaking, it is not possible to include ‘Greek’ within ‘Jews’; that is simply a confusion of identifiers. But it might be possible to include ‘Gentiles’ within ‘Israel’ and this in effect is what Paul attempts to do in Romans 9-11 (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 506.). See also Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 706–07.

¹⁷Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 707.

¹⁸Ibid.

receiving God's covenantal love as the new Israel.¹⁹

Foreknown

Paul also speaks of the church as those whom God “foreknew” (προγινώσκω, 8:29). This term does not simply refer to an intellectual foreknowledge, but “that special taking knowledge of a person which is God’s electing grace.”²⁰ The background for this term recalls God’s foreknowing of Israel and his covenantal love for them (עָרַף, Gen 18:19; Exod 33:17; 1 Sam 2:12; Ps 18:43; Prov 9:10; Jer 1:5; Hos 13:5; Amos 3:2).²¹ Paul even speaks of ethnic Israel this way as those whom God “foreknew” (Rom 11:2). It is noteworthy then, that Paul imports this idea of electing foreknowledge which lies behind the “foundation of the People of God in Jewish tradition” and applies it to the church.²² Although Paul will argue later that there is still a future salvation for the nation of Israel, because of God’s foreknowing of them (11:2), this salvation will not be experienced outside of the new covenant community, the church.

The Family of Abraham

One of the more explicit images that Paul uses to describe those in Christ as the new Israel is when he identifies them to be children of Abraham. Paul makes this point in Romans 4. In 4:1-8 he argues that Abraham was justified by faith, apart from works. In verse 9 he refutes a common belief by many Jews of his day, “Is this blessing

¹⁹Contra Peter Richardson who argues that “Gentiles or even the church” do not inherit the position of Israel, but rather become God’s people in a “universal sense” (Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series, vol. 10 (London: Cambridge U.P, 1969), 215.).

²⁰C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 431.

²¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 452.

²²Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of all Christians in Paul Against the Jewish Background*, Analecta Biblica, vol. 83 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 115.

then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised?” He answers this objection in verses 10-12 by stressing that Abraham was counted righteous before he was circumcised, so that he may be “the father of all who believe without being circumcised” (v. 11). Therefore, Paul claims that to become a child of Abraham does not mean one must become Jewish through circumcision.²³ Rather, it is by faith that one has Abraham as his father (vv. 16-17).

In Romans there are two passages which further employ this imagery. First, in 2:25-29 believing Gentiles who are physically uncircumcised are reckoned circumcised and considered true Jews. Second, in 11:11-24 Paul says by faith Gentiles have been grafted into the one olive tree. By looking at these two passages one will see that Paul firmly believes Christian Gentiles have been incorporated into the family of Abraham. And as true members of Abraham’s family, they are members of the new Israel.

Circumcision and True Jewishness

Already the significance of circumcision as it pertained to entrance into the old covenant has been discussed (see chap. 3). Nonetheless, it is worth noting again the utmost importance circumcision was to the Jew. According to Genesis 17:9-14, Abraham’s children were to be circumcised as a sign of God’s covenant. However, anyone who was not circumcised would be “cut off” from the covenant (v. 14). Therefore, physical circumcision designated one as a member of God’s covenant community. This is also testified to in other Jewish writings. One reads in the *Book of Jubilees*, “And every one that is born, the flesh of whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day, belongs not to the children of the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, but to the children of destruction” (*Jub.* 15.26).²⁴

²³Moo, *Romans*, 267.

²⁴Charles R. Henry, ed., *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2004), 36.

In the Maccabean period, Antiochus Epiphanes decreed that the Jews should not circumcise their sons. Circumcision therefore became “a test of covenant loyalty and a mark of Jewish national distinctiveness” (1 Macc. 1:48, 60-61).²⁵ This even led to the Hasmoneans insisting on the circumcision of foreigners who dwelt in the land (*Ant.* 13.257-58, 318). Circumcision not only marked one off as belonging to the people of God, but some Jews believed it secured salvation and kept one from going to Gehenna.²⁶ As has been observed, the rite of circumcision was extremely important in Second Temple Judaism. It is likely that such views were still prominent during Paul’s day (Acts 15:1) and is a belief he combats in Romans 2.²⁷

In Romans 2 Paul’s aim is to demonstrate that no one outside of Christ will escape the judgment of God. He argues that if the Jews practice the same things which the Gentiles do, they cannot expect to find mercy from God on the last day (vv. 1-5). Since God does not show partiality (v. 11), he will judge each person, whether Jew or Gentile, according to what they have done (vv. 6-10). Speaking to those who call themselves Jews (v. 17), Paul wishes to remove any presumption they may have that merely possessing the Law (vv. 12-24) or bearing the mark of circumcision (vv. 25-29) will deliver them on the day of God’s wrath (vv. 5, 7-9, 12, 27). As Thielman states, “Jewish sin is as grave in God’s sight as Gentile sin, and identity with Jewish people will give no one an advantage on ‘the day of wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed’ (2:5).”²⁸

In verses 25-29, Paul specifically addresses the issue of circumcision. He begins by stating, under the new covenant, physical circumcision has no salvific value

²⁵Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 119.

²⁶Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 321.

²⁷Moo, *Romans*, 167.

²⁸Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 352.

because to accept it would demand that one keep the whole Law (v. 25). However, Paul says later that “by the works of the law no human being will be justified” (3:20).

Therefore, Paul definitively says to the Jew who boasts in his circumcision, that “if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision” (2:25). This is another way to say, this individual is not a part of the people of God. In verse 26 Paul flips the scenario and says “if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his circumcision be regarded (λογισθήσεται) as circumcision?” Paul is speaking about believing Gentiles being counted as children of Abraham, without bearing the mark of physical circumcision.

How is this possible? Paul’s point is that with the inauguration of the new age, true Jewishness and circumcision are not physical (v. 28), rather they are spiritual realities made possible by the eschatological work of the Spirit (v. 29). Therefore, Paul is not merely defining who the true ethnic Jews are.²⁹ On the contrary, verses 28-29 serve as the basis for how the Gentile is regarded as “circumcised” even though he is physically uncircumcised. Undermining any notion that the people of God are determined by ethnicity, Paul says “The Jew is not one outwardly, neither is circumcision outward in the flesh, but the true Jew is in secret, and true circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit not the letter” (vv. 28-29a). Already in verse 16 Paul has told his interlocutor that “God will judge the secrets (τὰ κρυπτά) of men.” Paul now sheds some light on what the final judgment will reveal. Not all who are ethnically Jews are really Jews. The true Jews are those in secret.³⁰ Therefore, the fundamental aspect of Paul’s antithesis is between that which is seen (v. 28a) and that which is hidden (v. 29a).

In light of this salvation-historical contrast Paul can say elsewhere, “For

²⁹Contra Horner, *Future Israel*, 278–79; Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 146–47. Moo is correct in saying, “Paul is not so much describing a group of people as specifying what it is that qualifies a person to be a ‘true Jew’ and so to be saved” (Moo, *Romans*, 175.).

³⁰Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:175.

neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Gal 6:15). That some Gentiles are able to “observe” and “fulfill” the Law is evidence that the new age has arrived (Rom 2:26-27).³¹ Paul will explain this more in Romans 8, where he says the gift of the Spirit enables believers to fulfill the Law (8:3-4).³² Therefore, Paul is redefining who belongs to the people of God.³³ With the dawn of the new age, all who have been circumcised in heart are considered “true Jews.” This brings one back to Paul’s words in Romans 4 where he says all those of faith are regarded as children of Abraham (v. 11).

In Romans 2:25-29, Paul has effectively removed any room for boasting in Jewish nationalism. He has argued that with the coming of the new covenant, physical circumcision no longer marks one off as a member of the people of God. To rely on circumcision to render a favorable verdict at the judgment is a worthless endeavor; for such requires perfect obedience to the Mosaic Law. However, those who have been circumcised in heart are now able to keep the Law and will therefore be “reckoned” as circumcised on the last day. True Jewishness is not something external. Rather, it is an inward reality made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. Again Paul has demonstrated that to be a true child of Abraham has nothing to do with ethnicity. Unlike “membership in old Israel [which] required circumcision and acceptance of the Law; membership in the new Israel requires individual personal faith and confession of Christ as Lord (Rom 10:9).”³⁴

³¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 143.

³²Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 223.

³³Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 334.

³⁴George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 590.

The Olive Tree

Another image which Paul uses to contend that Gentiles through faith have become members of Abraham's family is found in Romans 11:16-24. Here Paul uses an illustration of an "olive tree" (v. 17) with both natural and wild branches (vv. 17, 21, 24). The imagery of the olive tree, pictures the one people of God, consisting of both believing Jews and Gentiles. Paul's choice of the olive tree to represent the people of God is not by accident. Paul borrows this imagery from the prophets who identified Israel as an olive tree (Jer 11:16; Hosea 14:5-6).³⁵ Even in later Jewish literature Israel would be described as God's planting or olive tree (2 Macc. 1:29; *Jub.* 1.16; 1 Enoch 10.16; 26.1; 84.6; 93.10; T. Sim. 6.2; 1QS 8.5; 11.8; 1QH 14[6].15-17; 16[8].5-11; Philo, *Sobr.* 13 §65).³⁶

Within the analogy, the wild branches are the Gentiles and the natural branches are the Jews. It is important for one to see that the Gentiles are included in the olive tree. In fact, this inclusion is assumed by Paul's Gentile audience, because he warns them not to think of themselves as superior to the Jews who for the most part have been excluded. It is possible that the Gentiles over emphasized the truth that they were the new people of God, the new Israel, and believed they had replaced Israel.³⁷ In order to eliminate Gentile boasting over Jews, Paul reminds them that they "now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree" (v. 17) and "it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you" (v. 18). The "root" which the Gentiles now share is the patriarchs and the promises which were given to them.³⁸ This is confirmed in verses 28-29 which says, Israel is "beloved for

³⁵Moo, *Romans*, 702; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 413.

³⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 605.

³⁷Moo, *Romans*, 704.

³⁸C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 567; Moo, *Romans*, 704; Schreiner, *Romans*, 600.

the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.”

With the analogy of the olive tree, Paul has argued that ethnic Israel’s rejection of the gospel has been the means by which the Gentiles have been “grafted” into the people of God, the family of Abraham (vv. 11-12, 15, 19). Nevertheless, ethnic Israel’s rejection is not permanent, “for God has the power to graft them in again” (v. 23). Consequently, what one cannot overlook is that Paul regards the true people of God as including both Jews and Gentiles. And it is in this new people where the promises to Abraham are being fulfilled.

The Family of God

To be a member of the true family of Abraham is also to be a part of the family of God. In Romans 8 Paul makes it clear that those who have received the eschatological gift of the Spirit are “sons of God” (v. 14). The Holy Spirit even testifies to believers that “we are children of God” (v. 16). As mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis, Israel was identified as being the son(s) of God (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; Isa 43:6; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Hos 1:10; 11:1). Therefore, with Paul’s application of this title to “all who are led by the Spirit of God” (v. 14), he identifies the church to be true children of God, the new Israel.

This identification is made even more clear through Paul’s imagery of “adoption” (*υιοθεσια*, v. 15, 23). Although the term “adoption” (*υιοθεσια*) is only used by Paul, and is not even found in the LXX, it does not preclude that such an idea was foreign to the Jews.³⁹ In fact Paul elsewhere associates the adoption of believers with the redemption from Egypt (Gal 4:1-7), just as Israel was called out as God’s son (Jer 31:9, Hos. 11:1).⁴⁰ The picture of adoption is also found in 2 Samuel 7:14 where the promised

³⁹J. M. Scott, “Adoption, Sonship,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 16.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

Davidic king and Messiah would be like a son to God.⁴¹

In Romans 9:4 Paul attributes the privilege of adoption to belong to Israel. Some have tried to suggest that the adoption spoken of in 9:4 is not the same adoption which Christians enjoy in 8:15, 23.⁴² Richard Bell goes so far to say, “The sonship or adoption which Paul speaks in 9.4 is a present possession. It is a gift which Israel has retained whether she believes in Jesus or not.”⁴³ If Bell is correct, then why does Paul express “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” over his fellow kinsmen who are cut off from the Messiah (vv. 2-3)? It is true that the privileges of “adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” belong to Israel (v. 4). However, it is not the physical descendants of Abraham who inherit these promises; it’s the remnant (vv. 6-8). It is all those who share in a faith like Abraham (4:16).

Furthermore, it is the reality that Gentiles through faith are experiencing the blessed privilege of adoption which serves as the means to provoke Israel to jealousy (10:19; 11:11, 14). If the adoption which Christians share is different than the adoption of Israel, it is difficult to perceive why Israel would become jealous. Therefore, it is more consistent with Paul’s argument in Romans to understand that all the promises of Israel are fulfilled in the church through Christ. This truth necessitates that Paul address the problem of Israel’s unbelief in chapters 9-11.

The issue of Israel’s failure to receive God’s saving promises is highlighted as one compares chapters 8 and 9.⁴⁴ In chapter 8 Christians are said to receive the “Spirit of

⁴¹Ibid., 17.

⁴²C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Rev. ed., Black’s New Testament commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 166; Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, vol. 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 202–03.

⁴³Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 203.

⁴⁴Byrne was beneficial in pointing out the parallels between Romans 8 and 9 (Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham*, 127–28.).

adoption” (v. 15), which anticipates their eschatological adoption (v. 23). In chapter 9 adoption is the privilege which belongs to Israel (v. 4). Again Christians are called “sons” and “children of God” (8:14, 16-17, 19, 21) who will be “conformed in to the image of God’s son” (v. 29). Israel on the other hand, is also called God’s children (9:8) and the eschatological people of God will be called “sons of the living God” (v. 26). These privileges are closely related in both chapters with God’s calling (8:28, 30; 9:7, 12, 24, 25, 26), election (8:28, 33; 9:11) and glory (8:18, 21, 30; 9:4, 23).⁴⁵ Therefore, what is significant about the interconnectedness of chapters 8 and 9 is that the privileged blessing of Israel has become the object of the Christian’s hope.⁴⁶

By being united to Christ, both Jews and Gentiles have received the blessing of joining God’s family. As members of the household of God, believers are heirs with Christ, inheriting all the saving promises of God. That Gentiles are equal sharers in this inheritance is what Paul later calls a “mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made know to all nations according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith” (16:15-26). Paul’s usage of mystery (*μυστήριον*) refers to something previously hidden, but now revealed. The mystery to which Paul refers to was not that the Gentiles would merely become members of the people of God. This could be ascertained in the OT (Gen 15:3; Exod 12:48; Pss 47:9; 87:6; Isa 11:10; 19:24-25). What was obscure in the OT was whether or not the Gentiles would be subordinate to the nation of Israel (Ps 72:10-11; Isa 2:2-4; 45:14; 49:23; 60:10-14; Mic 7:17; Zech 14:17).⁴⁷ What Paul argues is that through faith in Christ Gentiles have inherited the same promises and privileges as Israel. This is the mystery revealed through the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring about the obedience of

⁴⁵Ibid., 128.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 57.

faith among all the nations (1:1-5; 16:25-27).

Summary

In this chapter it has been argued that Paul applies titles and images of Israel to the church, because it is in the church where the OT promises find their fulfillment. As the new assembly of the Lord, the church, like Israel of old, has been “called” by God (Rom 1:6; cf. Isa 41:9) to be “saints” (Rom 1:7; cf. Exod 19:6); “beloved” (Rom 9:25; cf. Deut 32:15); and “foreknown” (Rom 8:29; cf. Amos 3:2). These titles were exclusively applied the nation of Israel, but now are spoken of in reference to the church. Because the church bears these titles, it is also consistent then that Paul would identify the church with the family of Abraham (Rom 4:16). Through the eschatological work of the Spirit, true Jewishness is not external through physical circumcision, but rather internal by the circumcision of the heart (2:28-29). With this salvation-historical shift, Gentiles are now being grafted into God’s “olive tree” whose root is the patriarchs, thus becoming members of Abraham’s family (11:16-24). Finally, as members of Abraham’s family, the church consists of those who have been adopted in to the family of God and become heirs of God’s promises (8:14-17). With the application of these titles and images of Israel, Paul has identified the church as the new Israel and rightful recipients of all God’s promises.

CHAPTER 5 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Implications for the Future of Ethnic Israel

The goal of this thesis has been to demonstrate that in Paul's letter to the Romans, the church is presented as the new Israel. Such an assertion, though, raises questions regarding the future of ethnic Israel. Does this mean the church has replaced Israel, leaving the nation with no future? Or does a future for Israel negate that the church is the new Israel. For example, Richardson contends "as long as a part of 'Israel' is expected to come to repentance, it is unlikely that the name would be appropriated...." to the church.¹ Nevertheless, this seems to be a false dichotomy that needs not to be so. Instead, one can still consider the church to be the new Israel while at the same time hold to a future for ethnic Israel.

In Romans 9-11, Paul answers the objection of a Jewish interlocutor that the gospel Paul preaches calls into question God's faithfulness to Israel. From what Paul has argued in Romans, ethnicity does not determine the people of God (2:25-29). The promises that were made to the nation of Israel are fulfilled in those who believe in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.² Those in Christ are the children of Abraham (Rom 4), inheritors of the promise, God's elect and adopted sons who have received the promised

¹Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph series, vol. 10 (London: Cambridge U.P., 1969), 73. See also, Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 313-14; Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 193.

²Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 549.

Spirit (8:14-29).³ With the dominance of Gentile reception to Paul's gospel, coupled with the vast rejection by the Jews, it "seems that Israel has not only been disinherited but replaced."⁴ If it is so that the Jews have been rejected, then it appears that God's promises to Israel have failed. Therefore, God's faithfulness is brought into question.⁵

Despite how it may appear, Paul discards any notion that God's promises to Israel have failed when he says, "it is not as though the word of God has failed" (9:6). In order to defend the righteousness of God, Paul argues that there is still a future for ethnic Israel (11:26). Nevertheless, how God fulfills his promises to the nation is a mystery (11:25). It is this mystery that Paul explains in 11:25-32. For the purposes of this thesis, the discussion will be limited to 11:25-26. In examining these two verses one must answer the question, what does Paul mean by "and in this way, all Israel will be saved"? Scholars usually answer this question three ways.

Israel Refers to the Church

First, John Calvin argued that when Paul refers to "all Israel" he is speaking of the church, the elect among both the Jews and Gentiles. He states,

I extend the word 'Israel' to all the people of God according to this meaning – 'When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both.'⁶

Calvin finds support for his view in Galatians 6:16, where Paul seems to identify the church as the "Israel of God." Although Calvin rightly interprets Galatians 6:16, his understanding of Romans 11:26 is improbable because it sees the Israel in verse 25 to be

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 471.

⁶John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 437.

different from the Israel of verse 26. This is unlikely for a least two reasons. First, in verse 25 Paul says, “A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.” Clearly Paul has in mind ethnic Israel. Besides, within chapters 9-11 Paul has spoken of “Israel” ten times, each referring to the nation.⁷ Therefore, it is difficult to imagine Paul abandoning this definition of Israel without some explanation. Second, Paul is in some measure reacting to the Gentile tendency to boast over the Jews (11:18), who view themselves as the exclusive heirs of the promise.⁸ To suggest, as Calvin does, that the Israel being saved is the “new Israel,” would not serve as a correction to the Gentiles.

Israel Refers to Elect Jews

The second view understands “Israel” to refer to the nation. However, the salvation to which Paul mentions is not an eschatological one. Rather, it refers to the salvation of the elect Jews throughout all of history. Those who hold this position include Herman Ridderbos and O. Palmer Robertson.⁹ Several reasons are put forth as to why “all Israel” must mean elect Jews throughout history. First, the whole context of Romans 9-11 should come to bear on what Paul says in chapter 11. Looking to 9:6-7, Paul has already defined who Israel is: “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.” In other words, “God’s promise to Abraham never included the promise that his descendants would be saved based on their ethnic identity. True Israel consists of those who are children of the

⁷Moo, *Romans*, 721.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 354–61; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (P & R Publishing, 2000), 187. See also Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 140–41; Charles M. Horne, “The Meaning of the Phrase ‘And Thus All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Romans 11:26,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 4 (1978): 328-34; Ben L. Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 4 (2000): 707-22.

promise.”¹⁰ Thus for Paul to propose a future salvation is in store for ethnic Israel would contradict what he said about there being no soteriological distinction between Jews and Gentiles (10:22).¹¹ Second, Paul’s question does not relate to the future salvation of Israel, but rather pertains to whether or not God has rejected them. It is argued that nowhere does Paul anticipate a future salvation. On the other hand, Paul’s emphasis is on the continued hope that God will save some from Israel.

Another reason offered that Paul did not envision a future salvation is his focus on a remnant (11:5). So in 11:25 when Paul mentions that a partial hardening has come upon Israel he “is speaking quantitatively (‘in part’) and not temporally (‘for a while’).”¹² Therefore, a part of Israel is hardened until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, and it is in this “manner all the elect within the community of Israel will be saved.”¹³ It is argued that this understanding makes better sense of Paul’s discussion of a remnant. That only “a part” of Israel is being saved addresses why most Jews currently reject the gospel. Otherwise, to suggest that Paul speaks of a future salvation for Israel would make his discussion on the remnant seem arbitrary.

This view is appealing and certainly more plausible than the first. Nonetheless, in the end these proofs are not persuasive. For starters, Paul’s use of “mystery” (*μυστήριον*) is not adequately addressed. Merkle rightly identifies the “mystery” to be threefold.¹⁴ However, he does not explain how Paul’s revelation of the mystery is anything new. After all, Paul has already shown that throughout history it was only the

¹⁰Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” 712.

¹¹Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 715.

¹³Robertson, *The Israel of God*, 186.

¹⁴Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” 715. He defines the threefold mystery as “(1) the hardening of part of Israel; (2) the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles; and (3) the salvation of all Israel.”

elect/remnant who were saved (11:1-5). Therefore, to assert that “all Israel” simply refers to all the elect Jews hardly classifies as a mystery. Would not such a statement be obvious?¹⁵

An additional difficulty with this position is the way it handles Paul’s use of “all” (πᾶς) in verse 26. If one only had verses 25-26 the argument could be made that “all” should be limited to the elect throughout history. However, the rest of Romans 11 does not allow such an interpretation.¹⁶ Throughout Romans 11 Paul has been building up to verse 26 by contrasting Israel’s present rejection with their full acceptance (vv. 12, 15, 23-24). Because of Israel’s current rejection, great blessing has come to the Gentiles. Paul therefore remarks, “How much more will their fullness mean!” (v. 12). Paul’s anticipation for Israel’s acceptance is illustrated in table 1. Paul’s progression of thought can be clearly understood reaching a climax in Israel’s full salvation in verse 26. Therefore, the present situation for Israel is different than what will be in the future.¹⁷

Table 1. Tension between Israel’s rejection and acceptance

Israel’s Current Rejection	Israel’s Future Acceptance
“riches for the Gentiles” (v. 12a)	“how much more will their fullness mean” (v. 12b).
“reconciliation of the world” (v. 15a)	“what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead” (v. 15b).
Gentiles were “grafted... into a cultivated olive tree” (24a)	“how much more will these... be grafted back into their own olive tree” (v. 24b).

¹⁵C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 576–77.

¹⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Church as the New Israel and the Future of Ethnic Israel in Paul,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 13, no. 1 (April 1983): 27.

¹⁷Moo, *Romans*, 723–24.

Therefore, when one comes to verse 25 where Paul says a “partial hardening has come upon Israel” he must understand that Paul is referring to the present state of Israel’s rejection of the gospel. This state will continue “until the fullness (πλήρωμα) of the Gentiles has come in.” Paul’s use of “fullness” (πλήρωμα) in Romans 11 serves as a clue for how we should interpret “all” (πᾶς) in verse 26. Paul says the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of Israel (v. 12b), will not occur until the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of the Gentiles has consummated (v. 25b). Once all the elect from among the Gentiles believe, it is at this time “all Israel will be saved” (v. 26a). Consequently, the “all” (πᾶς) of verse 26a must correspond with the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of verse 12b. Otherwise, Paul’s argument would be anticlimactic.¹⁸

Israel Refers to the Nation

That “all Israel” refers to a future salvation of the nation as a whole is the majority position held by most scholars today.¹⁹ However, this does not mean that every Israelite throughout history will be saved.²⁰ Besides, such an assertion runs contrary to the heart of Romans (cf. 2:3-4). All those Israelites who have been hardened and die in this state will receive judgment from God. Schreiner says,

The point of 11:11–32 is that this hardening of Israel will not last forever. At the conclusion of history God will remove their hardness and the end-time generation of ethnic Israel will be saved, and he will fulfill his covenantal promises. No hope, however, is held out to Israelites who die without acknowledging Jesus as their

¹⁸Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:577.

¹⁹Ibid.; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed., Black’s New Testament commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 207; Craig A. Blaising, “The Future of Israel as a Theological Question,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (2001): 450; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 606–08; Moo, *Romans*, 723; Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 194; Schreiner, “The Church as New Israel,” 29.

²⁰Contra Bell, who states, “If the gifts and call of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11.29), it would seem natural to take πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ in 11.26 as diachronic. . . . Rom 11:26-27 suggests that Israelites from every age will believe in the Christ when they see him coming again in his glory” (Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 265.).

Messiah.²¹

Such a conclusion makes the most sense out of the context. First, it explains how Israel's salvation is a mystery. Namely, what could not be seen in the OT is (1) a partial hardening has presently come upon the nation of Israel; (2) this hardening will continue until the full number of the elect Gentiles comes in; and then (3) the nation of Israel will experience an eschatological salvation. Therefore, Israel's present condition (vv. 7-10) is not her permanent condition (vv. 11-16). Second, for the reasons already stated, a future salvation of the whole of Israel adequately explains the "all" (πᾶς) in verse 26.

In sum, in 11:26 Paul does not define "all Israel" to be the new Israel. Neither does he see the "fullness" of Israel's salvation to occur throughout history. Rather, Paul envisions a day when the vast majority of Israel will turn to Christ and be saved. These Israelites who embrace the true Israel, Jesus, will then receive all the saving promises of God along with everyone else who believes.

The Nature of Israel's Future

Having argued for a future salvation for the nation of Israel, one can see that this truth does not contradict Paul's conception of the church as the new Israel. However, some believe a future salvation for ethnic Israel does not take Paul's argument far enough. It is suggested that Romans 11 argues not only a future salvation for the nation Israel, but also a future restoration.²² Evidence for this restoration is believed to be found in Paul's appeal to Isaiah 59:20 and Jeremiah 31:33-34.

Since both of these are new covenant texts it is proposed that Israel's salvation must include the "OT promises of a restoration of Israel to its land."²³ Walter C. Kaiser

²¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 511–12.

²²Horner, *Future Israel*, 232–34; Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 161–62.

²³Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 162.

Jr. explicitly states, “[Rom 11:27] is nothing less than a reference to the New Covenant of Jer 31:33-34, which is itself an expansion of the very promises God had made with Abraham and David. Thus, we are back to the promise-doctrine again, which also includes the promise of the land.”²⁴ Horner, concurs saying “conclusive proof in this regard concerns the eschatological hope of Israel because of ‘their forefathers’ (Rom 11:28). Surely a reference here to the Abrahamic covenant must include the essential component of the land.”²⁵

Does Romans 11:26b-28 provide conclusive proof that Israel will be restored to her land? The notion of an eschatological return of Israel to prominence as a nation has several problems. First, Paul’s allusion to Jeremiah 31:33-34 does not necessitate a national restoration for Israel. Paul is simply saying that Israel will not be left out of the new covenant. Further it must not be forgotten that the new covenant includes the Gentiles as well (see chap. 3). Otherwise, Paul’s emphasis on the Gentiles being grafted into the one people of God is undermined (11:17-24).

Second, 11:28 does recall God’s promise to Abraham, but again Paul has already said the Gentiles are heirs of this promise (Rom 4:11-12). Furthermore, in 4:13 it is likely that Paul understands the land promise to be expanded from Palestine to “the world.” However, for the sake of argument, even if Paul did have the land promises in mind, the Gentiles would have the same rights to it as the Jews. Third, the focus of these OT quotations is on God’s graciousness in forgiving Israel’s sins. Paul even relates this graciousness back to the Gentiles to show that Israel will receive the same mercy (11:30-31).

Therefore, Paul’s objective in recalling the new covenant and God’s promise to

²⁴Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual and National,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 302.

²⁵Horner, *Future Israel*, 233.

Abraham is to ground his assertion that Israel will be grafted back into the covenant people. Paul has come full circle from Romans 9:6 to defend the righteousness and faithfulness of God. Cranfield is certainly correct when he says, “It is also to be noted that there is here no trace of encouragement for any hopes entertained by Paul’s Jewish contemporaries for the re-establishment of a national state in independence and political power, nor – incidentally – anything which could feasibly be interpreted as a scriptural endorsement of the modern nation-state of Israel.”²⁶

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue that in Romans Paul views the church as the new Israel and rightful heirs of all God’s saving promises. Paul is able to present the church as the new Israel because of her union to the true Israel, Jesus. That Jesus is identified as true Israel is seen in the title he bears as “Son of God.” Chapter 2 demonstrates that the title “son of God” was applied to the nation of Israel, who as a corporate Adam was to carry out the creation mandate, exercising dominion over the earth and functioning as God’s king-priests. The same title was also used in reference to the Davidic king, who would represent Israel, leading her to accomplish God’s purposes. When Paul calls Jesus, “God’s Son,” he identifies him as the promised Davidic king who embodies his people Israel to fulfill God’s promises of blessing the nations and making God’s presence known in all the earth. Therefore, functioning as the covenant head, God’s people are now defined by being rightly related to Jesus. It is no surprise then that Paul calls believers “sons of God” (8:14) and “heirs of God” (8:17). Through union with Christ, both Jews and Gentiles obtain the privileged status of being God’s people and the rightful heirs of his promises.

That the church has obtained these promises was further defended in chapter 3,

²⁶Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:579.

which focused on the fulfillment of the new creation in Christ. Although, the promise of a new creation was made to OT Israel, Paul argues that through faith in Christ this promise is being experienced in the church. Jesus' resurrection marked the inauguration of Israel's eschatological restoration. Christ's resurrection was the heart of the gospel which Paul preached whereby salvation and redemption are made available to both Jew and Gentile. The promises of the new covenant that God made with Israel, namely the gift of the Spirit, the circumcision of the heart, the fulfillment of the Law, and the forgiveness of sins, are all fulfilled in the church. Because the church includes Gentiles, the covenant of Abraham is fulfilled as well. All these promises to Israel were anticipated to come with the new creation. It is Paul's contention that, through union with Christ, the blessings of the new creation have invaded the present, and the recipients of these blessings should be viewed as the new Israel.

Because the promises of OT Israel find their fulfillment in the church, it is understandable then that Paul would apply titles and imagery of Israel to the church. Chapter 4 examined this Israel language to demonstrate that Paul indeed views the church as the new Israel. Like Israel of old, the church is the "assembly of the Lord" whom God has called his "saints," his "beloved," and those he has "foreknown." The church makes up the family of Abraham, and so are true Jews (2:28-29). Furthermore, believing Gentiles have been grafted into God's olive tree, the true people of God (11:16-24). To be a true descendent of Abraham is also to be a true member of God's family. It is those who have the eschatological Spirit, who are "children of God" (8:16), and as children, they are heirs (8:17).

Although one could object that Paul never explicitly calls the church the "new Israel," one should not shy from this theological designation. To identify the church as the new Israel is merely a term which encompasses the truth that the church is God's covenant people and heirs of all his saving promises. The church is not the replacement

of Israel, but the continuation of Israel reconstituted in Christ. Therefore, Gentiles through faith in Jesus are on equal footing with believing Jews, inheriting the promises of Abraham. Nevertheless, Paul's assertion that the church is the new Israel does not preclude a future salvation for the nation of Israel. Rather, in the mysterious plan of God there is presently a partial hardening that has come upon the nation until the full number of the Gentiles are grafted into the people of God. With the inclusion of believing Gentiles into the covenant people, God is provoking Israel to jealousy (11:11). When this is complete there will be an eschatological salvation for the whole of ethnic Israel, whereby through faith in Christ, she will be grafted back into the olive tree (11:25-26).

Paul envisions all those grafted into the olive tree to constitute the new Israel in Christ. As a result all the promises of God are being fulfilled, and God's righteousness is upheld. Therefore, Paul can maintain that his gospel is in continuity with the OT, and he is right in desiring to take this message where Christ has yet to be heard (15:20). In light of this glorious gospel all that is left to be said is "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways" (11:33).

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ABSTRACT

THE CHURCH AS THE NEW ISRAEL IN ROMANS

Philip Chase Sears, Th.M.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Chair: Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner

By following a biblical theological approach, this thesis demonstrates that a theology of the new Israel is woven throughout the book of Romans. Chapter 1 discusses introductory matters relating to the current debate on the relationship between the church and Israel. Chapter 2 explores Paul's designation of Jesus as God's Son, true Israel, through whom the church finds her identity. Chapter 3 focuses on the new creation promises made to Israel which are fulfilled in Christ and experienced in the church. Chapter 4 then examines the titles and imagery of Israel which Paul applies to the church, identifying her as the new Israel. Finally, chapter 5 addresses some implications of this study for the future of ethnic Israel, and concludes by reasserting that the church is the new Israel, God's covenant people and heirs of all his saving promises.

VITA

Philip Chase Sears

EDUCATION

B.S. Communication, University of Kentucky, 2005

M.Div., The Master's Seminary, 2008

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Campus Minister, Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, 2007-2008

Associate Pastor, Grace Community Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 2009-2012

Associate Pastor, Oak Park Baptist Church, Jeffersonville, Indiana, 2012-