

Romans 9:4-5 (NKJV)

4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;

5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Last week we covered verse 4 up to the covenants.

We are taking up from last week in verse 4 beginning with the giving of the law.

the giving of the law-

Remember that we have been talking about the things that only the Jewish nation was given. Paul is lamenting the fact that **these people** who were so **blessed by God** have thrown it all away **by not receiving their Messiah**.

The word that Paul picks for **“giving”** is interesting. It does not emphasize the facts that the Jews **possessed** the law. The emphasis is on God’s **giving** the law. Duet 4 paints a picture of just how important this was. As we read this, look at the connection of the law and the land they were to possess. We might view those as separate topics, but the Children of Israel would have easily connected them both.

Deuteronomy 4:1-40 (NKJV)

1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you.

See what I mean? The law and the land were connected.

2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor.

4 But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.

5 Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

(Here again we see a set apart people to live in a set apart land living by a set apart law.)

6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

(Here Moses tells them that it is not their culture or bloodline that makes them special. It is their worship of God by obeying His law that will set them apart.)

7 For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?

(We see here that the giving of the law and the presence of God came in a package. What is so special about the law is that God brought the law, God came close to deliver it. The law represents the presence of God to this people.)

8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

Moses makes it clear just how special this law is. It separates the Jews from every other nation. There are none like it.

9 "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

Look at this warning. Moses places the responsibility for faithfulness on each individual. There is no blanket endorsement for free. He makes no statements about their blood line and the blessings of God carrying them through. They must take heed to themselves. They must be diligent. They must care about these things above all others. And what happens if they don't make it a point to heed and be diligent? The same thing that happens to us. We forget. Those Jews who were so cocky because of their blood lines were not taking to heart the words of their hero Moses. Moses warned them of the danger of getting complacent toward God and His law.

10 especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

11 Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness.

12 And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.

13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.

Remember that Paul is emphasizing not just the possession of the law but the giving of it. He is saying that this is such a big deal that it should never be

forgotten. It is of monumental importance. God **spoke** to the Jews when giving the law. He was right there. He did what he so rarely did in human history. He verbally communicated to man. Remember that the Bible was written over thousands of years. But in those years, how many times did God speak to man? We can be grateful that it has happened as often as it has. But the statistics are very minimal. Maybe once every hundred years of man's existence. But here, the Lord not only spoke to the nation of Israel, but communicated to them His law, His guide to living, His instruction manual for humans. It is no wonder that Paul is emphasizing **the giving** of the law. If we were there I think it might be something not easily forgotten.

15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,

16 lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female,

Here Moses lets them know that since you could not see the form of God, you had better not make any kinds of image of Him to worship Him. Let's skip ahead to verse 23

23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.

24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

And on to verse 32

32 "For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard.

33 Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?

34 Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.

36 Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.

37 And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power,

38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day.

39 Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

40 You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

We can see here just how great the giving of the law was, what a significant event in human history it was. Yet Paul is heartbroken that Moses's ancestors missed the point. God came near again in Jesus Christ and they completely missed the boat.

Now we might look at that and think, how did they do it? How could they have lost the significance of this event? How could they miss the very heart of it? How could their actions go so against the lawmaker as to kill His Son?

Well, let me ask you this. When is the last time the Lord convicted you about something? Think about this. When is the last time you were convinced that a change was needed in your life because God came near to you. His Holy Spirit worked on your heart and softened your attitude toward His message. Do you remember what the conviction was? What did you **do** about it? Did you make the change that you knew you needed to make? Were you obedient to the message you got **when the Lord came near to you**? Taking heed and being diligent weren't only needed by the **Israelites**. We need those traits just as much. They are commanded in the New Testament as well as the old. If we as a church just changed **one thing**, if we just changed so that we **carried out every conviction** that we have been gifted with by the Holy Spirit, I believe that we would see **dramatic changes in our lives** and the lives around us. Because that is what happens when we walk according to the Spirit.

So we have the giving of the law.

Now let's move on to **the service of God**,

Think about this. The Jews were singled out from all other nations to be told **how to serve and worship God**. They were told what pleases God and how to do what pleases Him.

Hebrews 9:1 (NKJV)

1 Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

The writer of Hebrews then goes on to tell us what this divine service consisted of and it was the temple worship. So that is most likely what Paul is talking about. If you look across the world you will find people trying to please God in thousands of different ways. There is a list of major religions that you can count on two hands and all kinds of variations that go into the thousands. Why is that? Well wherever you go you will find religions. Men are born with the need to worship something or someone. If you just watch them you will find them trading their time for something that they think will make them significant, something that will make them happy, something that will satisfy them. Every primitive tribe ever discovered has had some kind of religion. We long for something bigger than us that can give us those things we long for. We are born with a need to worship. In scripture we find an example of that in Acts.

Acts 17:22-31 (NKJV)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

We see here that, with all the Greek gods Athens had, they knew there was a greater God, a creator of all. They thought all the other gods answered to this unknown God. So the people of Athens were worshipping god ignorantly. They didn't know the facts. They did the best they could in their ignorance. But they were still a mile off. They were not given the inside scoop on how to worship God like the Jews had been. They were just making their best effort which would never save them. But Paul does not leave them to wallow in their ignorance. He proclaims the truth to them.

24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

So we see here that Paul had encountered men who served God ignorantly. He eventually told them about Christ- the way to serve God that pleases God. But these people were never given this information like the nation of Israel had been given it.

Next we will see that having been given information on how to serve God didn't always benefit those who heard it. Here we will see men who served God rebelliously.

Numbers 16:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men;

2 and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.

3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

The essence of Korah's rebellion is that he thought any man should be able to serve God however he feels like it. He thought that he was just as qualified to sacrifice sheep and goats as Aaron. He was just as fit to lead the nation as Moses. It was the height of arrogance. He would not humbly submit to what God had initiated. No, he had **as much right** to approach God as anyone else.

Solomon was right. There is nothing new under the sun.

Still today our world considers it fighting words when you tell them that Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. The assumption is that we can all get to God in our own creative way. Our culture believes the devilish lie that God **does not care how He is worshipped**. As long as we have intentions to come to Him, he will receive us no matter how we come.

Let's look at what God did to those who joined Korah's crusade to worship God however they felt like worshipping Him.

Numbers 16:31-35 (NKJV)

31 Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,

32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods.

33 So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

34 Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!"

35 And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

This God who wiped out every false worshipper by splitting the earth and by fire is the Father of Jesus Christ. If he punished all **these people** for ignoring the fine points of His law, what do you expect he has in mind for all those **who refuse to receive His Son**, a much greater covenant than the ones that came before?

God **cares** about how He is worshipped. He provided only **one way** for Him to be worshipped in the **Old** Testament and He provides only **one way** for Him to be worshipped in the **New** Testament. The only reasonable service, the only fit worship is for us to offer up ourselves as living sacrifices to Jesus Christ. Any other way is offensive to God, especially in light of the price that Christ paid for our salvation.

Think about it. If Paul believed there were many ways to get to God, he would have had no need to be so distraught about the plight of his fellow countrymen. He could have thought, they are going their way and I am going mine. But that is not at all what he thought. Because He knew just how picky God is about how He is served. He paid the ultimate price to provide one way, and that is the only way He will ever accept. If God were to accept any other way, first, it would be unjust because the sin would not have experienced its' just wrath. And second it would be a complete dishonor to His Son. If we could get to God some other way, Christ

did not need to die. And if Christ did not NEED to die, what kind of God would send him needlessly to suffer as He did? No, there is only one way to God. If you have not responded to Christ's call on your life, please consider it now. Worship Him in the way He has provided. Don't think that there is some other way. There isn't.

Next we look at **and the promises;**

So what is the difference between **the promises** and **the covenants**?

Well in the **covenants** we see the picture of the salvation that God is going to provide. We can see His purpose in providing it. It is the **big picture** of what God is committed to doing.

The promises are the fine print. Martyn Lloyd Jones says that "promises have reference to the blessings and the glories of the age of the Messiah; here you have the detailed blessings which will be given to all who belong to the Messiah and to His Reign."

Only the Jews had this as a nation.

Ephesians 2:11-13 (NKJV)

**11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--
12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

As Gentiles, before Christ came, we were aliens. We were not given the proper way to worship God. We were not given the covenants or the promises. In these verses Paul weaves the two together, covenants and promise. Paul paints a hopeless picture of anyone who does not have God's promises on their behalf. And that was all of us until God reached out to us.

Notice that Paul doesn't say that the gentiles had a way to God but it wasn't as good as the Israelites way. No. We were sheer out of luck. We had no hope and no way to get to God. We may have tried, but it wasn't going to work.

But it is Christ who brought us close to God. Christ was our way in. Not a way of our own invention.

of whom are the fathers

We don't know exactly who Paul is referring to but most likely the list would start with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then maybe Joseph, Moses and David.

And the thing that is most unique about these men is that they had special experiences with God. God had gotten up **close and personal** with these men. That has not happened with all men in history, even many of the faithful kings or judges. Abraham was a **friend** of God. David had a **heart** for God. God singled all these men out to have **a relationship** with them. He came close to them. He loved them. Theirs was not simple doctrine or theology. It was more than that. It was relationship. It was not a system of thought. It was fellowship with their God. And that is very likely the emphasis here. No other nation had this. No one else was hearing from God. As a whole, the gentiles were out of the loop and the Jews were **in** because God came close to the leaders of the Israelites.

from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came,

Do you know what the most important thing the Jews ever did is? Christ came from their bloodline. That is the pinnacle of their accomplishments. The Savior of the world came from this little nation. There have been many outstanding Jewish people. In fact, in terms of accomplishments they probably have a disproportionate record for putting out amazing people. But that pales in comparison to being the line from which Christ was born.

Now notice that it says “according to the flesh”. We have to remember the story of Mary. Jesus did not have an earthly father. So if you want to track his genealogy you can only track it on Mary’s side. But Christ was half Jewish. I wonder what His DNA would have looked like. Scientists would have been baffled by that. But the birth of Christ is the greatest claim to fame that the Jews ever accomplished. And there is no other people in the history of the world that can make such a claim. God chose the Jews to have His Son be born into this world. And it is important to understand that, of all the things that they were given up to this point, the Israelites, the covenants, the adoption, the giving of the law, the service of God, the Fathers, all of these things were given for this primary purpose. To bring birth to the Messiah. And what is it that the Jews missed as a whole? Only the very reason for their existence. Only the climax of their purpose. Only that for which they existed.

Then we end this section with the words:

who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

There has been a lot of debate on this verse. The question is, “who is this referring to?” From what I have read, most of those who do not believe this refers to Christ are those who have an agenda not to. They do not believe in the divinity of Christ. So they make this phrase refer to God the Father. But there is no need to do so. It is perfectly fitting and I think most accurate to say that it is

Christ, Christ who was born through the Jewish blood line, Christ who was rejected by His own people, that is over all, the eternally blessed God. After studying all this I am humbled by it all. You and I were outsiders. We were nobody in the people of God. We had no idea how to worship God. Our best efforts would never have been good enough. But God sent Christ. And He sent Him through His chosen people. He had prepared them for thousands of years. And only as a result of Him coming to our planet do we have the chance now of **Worshipping** God in the way He wants to be Worshipped, of **serv**ing Him in the way He wants to be Served, of **loving** Him in the way He wants to be loved. How sad, how very very sad it is, that a people who have been so very blessed would have rejected the most important work of God that has ever happened. We need to make sure that this never happens to us who have the glorious opportunity to be grafted into God's tree.