

Romans 9:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Analysis

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children—being sperma (σπέρμα, 'seed') doesn't make one tekna (τέκνα, 'children'). Biological descent ≠ covenant membership. Paul quotes Genesis 21:12: **In Isaac shall thy seed be called** (en Isaak klēthēsetai soi sperma, ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα). God chose Isaac over Ishmael, though Abraham fathered both. The verb kaleō (καλέω, 'to call') introduces the theme of divine calling/election that dominates this chapter.

The choice wasn't based on Isaac's merit—he wasn't yet born when God made the promise (Genesis 17:19). Nor was it arbitrary cruelty—God's purposes in history required a specific lineage for Messiah. Election serves redemptive purposes, not divine whim. Ishmael received promises too (Genesis 17:20), but Isaac bore the covenant line. God's sovereignty operates in history to accomplish salvation.

Historical Context

Genesis 16-21 records the Ishmael/Isaac narrative. Abraham attempted to fulfill God's promise through Hagar (human effort), but God insisted on Sarah (divine provision). This typologically contrasts works-righteousness vs. faith—a point Paul develops in Galatians 4:21-31.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's choice of Isaac over Ishmael illustrate grace rather than human merit?
2. What 'Ishmaels' (self-produced religious efforts) do we present to God instead of trusting his promised 'Isaac'?
3. How does divine election in history serve God's redemptive purposes rather than arbitrary preference?

Interlinear Text

οὐδ' ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ πάντες τέκνα ἀλλ'
Neither because they are seed of Abraham are they all children but
G3761 G3754 G1526 G4690 G11 G3956 G5043 G235

'Εν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα
In Isaac be called thy seed
G1722 G2464 G2564 G4671 G4690

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 21:12 (References Abraham): And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Hebrews 11:18 (Parallel theme): Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Galatians 4:23 (Parallel theme): But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

