

The Church of the Servant King
Soteriology Series

SO_6_Predestination & Election –
Part 12 – Predestination, Election & Romans Chapters 9-11 – Lesson 1

Introduction

As we will see in this study, some have used this passage to support their paradigm regarding the issues of election and predestination. However, I believe that a careful examination of the context using a dispensational hermeneutic will result in a clear understanding of this passage that is consistent with our previous study of the doctrine of election and predestination. Depending upon one's thought paradigm or frame of reference, this passage is usually interpreted in regard to God's sovereignty based upon one or a combination of two or three different approaches. The person of a Calvinist persuasion tends to place such a heavy emphasis upon the sovereignty of God that the free will of man appears to be a secondary result. On the other hand, the Arminian places such a strong emphasis upon the free will of man that the sovereignty of God is minimized.¹ In addition, the covenant theologian denies the distinction between Israel and the Church by so focusing upon the similarities between the two discussed in this passage that the distinctions are overlooked or ignored.²

The fundamental focus of Romans 9-11 is the brighter future of Israel under God's providence. Paul devotes chapter 9 to proving that God's word has not failed and he builds upon this thesis in chapters 10 and 11 to make the case that even though Israel has rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, a remnant of Israel will continue until a time when even "...all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). "Today most interpreters of Romans generally agree that the fundamental theological principle of Romans 9-11 is an affirmative exposition of God's faithfulness to his promises to Israel despite her failure to respond to the gospel."³ However, even though there is general agreement in this regard, there is disagreement regarding other related principles. For instance, some would contend that while Israel has a future as affirmed by this passage, that future is not separate and distinct from the Church.⁴ Consider the following quotes to illustrate the point:

The limitations and peculiarities of Judaism have been done away. They have been done away not for the time being only, but forever. They are never to be restored There is no distinctively Jewish age for the Jew to look forward to.⁵

Origen, who was perhaps the father of the allegorical system of interpretation, seems to be the originator of the idea that the passage teaches only the general

¹ Randall Basinger, "Divine Sovereignty: What Difference Does it Make?," (*Evangelical Journal* 5, Spring 1987), 15.

² Renald E. Showers, *There Really is a Difference*, (Bellmawr, New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990), 19-24.

³ Daniel Jong-Sang Chae, *Paul As Apostle to the Gentiles* (Feltham, England: Paternoster Press, 1997), 215.

⁴ Renald E. Showers, *There Really is a Difference* (Bellmawr, New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990), 21-24.

⁵ Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House, 1945), 258-259.

truth that there will be opposition and blindness in relation to the gospel. This blindness will be gradually overcome, resulting in the end “all Israel,” ...all believers being saved.⁶

The Reformers (e.g. Calvin and Luther) were amillennialists and denied that the passage taught any general future conversion of Israel. Instead, they believed that the passages teach that in spite of the blind condition of Israel, some would still enter the church.⁷

This is an important point relevant to our study of predestination and election. If one denies the distinction between Israel and the Church when approaching Romans 9-11, then one misses the primary purpose of the passage and will be at risk of developing faulty notions regarding predestination and election.

Regarding Romans 9-11, “Paul had ample opportunity to share with his readers that the church had permanently replaced Israel and was now the eternal beneficiary of God’s Old Testament promises. Yet in this crucial passage Paul maintains an ethnic distinction between Israel and the church and announces that God still has a future for Israel.”⁸ Pre-millennialists interpret this passage to relate to the “...postponement of the fulfillment of certain promises to Israel. These promises will one day find their fulfillment in Israel when she is restored as a nation with Christ reigning as king.”⁹

In the following paragraphs, I will present a high-level summary and leave a more detailed exegetical study for another time. However, even in this high-level summary, there should be sufficient detail to support the position that I have presented regarding the subject of predestination and election.

Romans 9:1-5 – Israel’s Rejection of Christ

As we have previously studied, Paul, in Romans 8 (especially verses 28-30), establishes the fact that God has a purpose for believers and that nothing can prevent that purpose from being fulfilled (e.g. verse 35 & 39) because of the love of Christ for His Own. Of course, the body of believers to whom Paul is writing are Church Age believers, a new spiritual body that consists largely of Gentiles at the time of His writing. The purpose for this new spiritual body is that they will “be conformed to the image of His Son [Jesus Christ], that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” But what about the Jewish people? Had God abandoned His purpose for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel? What about His promises to them? Israel as a set apart people and nation seemed to now be excluded from God’s purpose. Therefore, in Romans 9-11, Paul addresses this issue.

In verses 1-5, Paul mentions His “great sorrow and continual grief” (v. 2) over Israel’s rejection of her Messiah. He even goes so far as to indicate that he wishes that he could be cursed in her place because of her rejection (v. 3). This is especially poignant in view of the fact that Paul had suffered the loss of all things in order to gain Christ (Phil 3:8). Regardless of the corporate election of Israel as a nation (vv. 3-4), each individual had to accept the Messiah in

⁶ John F. Walvoord, “Israel’s Blindness,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 102 (July, 1945), 280-90.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master, general editors. Charles C. Ryrie, consulting editor. *Issues in Dispensationalism* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1994), 60.

⁹ Walvoord, “Israel’s Blindness,” 283.

order to be saved.¹⁰ For instance, in Romans 10:1, Paul states that “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved,” but Paul also indicates that “at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” In Romans 11:26, Paul indicates that eventually “all Israel will be saved;” however, “all Israel” in that passage is all believing Jews who enter the Messianic, millennial kingdom after the Tribulation and Second Advent of Jesus.

Among the privileges that had (and still do) belonged to Israel that Paul mentions are:

- The adoption of Israel as sons (9:4 cf. Ex. 4:22 – “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is my son, My firstborn.” ‘ “)
- The divine “glory” (9:4 cf. Ex 16:10 – “the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud”; Ex 24:17 – “the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel”; Ex 40:34 – “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle”; 1 Kings 8:11 – “So that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”
- The covenants (9:4 cf. Abrahamic Covenant – Ge 12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18; 26:2-4; 28:13-14; Palestinian – Deut 30:1-10; Davidic – 2 Sa 7:12-16; 1 Chron 17:11-15; & New – Jer 31:31-34)
- The Law (9:4 cf. Deut 5:1-22 – the Ten Commandments plus many other passages that detail the rituals, ordinances, and observances that Israel was to keep in order to set herself apart).
- The service of God – a reference to the worship that was to occur in the Temple in accordance with the Law.
- The promises (9:4) – all of God’s numerous promises related to Israel to include the coming of the Messiah through her (9:5).

All of these privileges that God had extended to Israel demonstrated the special place Israel had held in God’s plan. With special emphasis, Paul notes that the Jews were in the line of promise from the beginning of the race with Abraham (i.e. “the fathers” – v. 5 cf. Matt 1:1-16; Rom 1:3) to the fulfillment of the promise in Christ as the Messiah. ***In so doing, Paul sets his Jewish listener up for the argument he continues to make that he initially started in chapters 2 & 3, i.e. that Jewish privilege was no basis for self-righteousness and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. Chapters 9-11 of Romans disclose the consequences of that Jewish rejection – the temporary setting aside of Israel as the recipients of God’s covenants and the intercalation of a new chosen (i.e. elect) people, the Church.***

¹⁰ Norman Geisler, *Chosen, But Free* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 82.