

The Church of the Servant King
Soteriology Series

SO_6_Predestination & Election –
Part 12 – Predestination, Election & Romans Chapters 9-11 – Lesson 2

Introduction

In our previous lesson, we studied the greater context of Romans 9-11. We observed that the fundamental focus of Romans 9-11 is the brighter future of Israel under God's providence. Israel had enjoyed a position of privilege among nations and among the races of people. Paul has set his Jewish listener up for the argument 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.

Also, in our previous lesson, we examined in detail Romans 9:1-5. In these verses, Paul provides a brief summary of the privileges that Israel enjoyed. Paul also mentions his willingness to be cursed in the place of his brethren, the Jews, if by so doing they might be saved. In this lesson, we will continue our analysis of Romans 9-11.

Israel's Rejection and God's Purpose (9:6-13)

Paul uses Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, as an illustration of his point. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Issac. Issac inherited the promises, not Ishmael. The omniscience of God knew all of the decisions of not only Ishmael and Issac, but also all of the decisions of their descendants.¹ God factored that knowledge into His divine decree in eternity past thereby making the choice of Issac a part of His sovereign plan. Also, you may remember that Issac was the child of promise (9:8 cf. Gen 15:4, 6; 17:18-21; 18:10-15; 21:1-7, 12-13) even though he was not the first-born and the promise continued through his progeny. Paul mentions Issac's son Jacob who also was not the first-born, but who was a child born through a miracle performed by God with Rebecca who had been barren (9:10-13).

So what is Paul's point in Romans 9:6-13? Paul is making a case that the "election" (v. 11) of Israel was based upon God's sovereign prerogative. Israel as a corporate entity is in view – not Abraham, Issac or Jacob. These individuals are used by Paul to illustrate a principle. The corporate election of Israel as a people to be set apart from all other nations and peoples was not based upon works of self-righteousness (v. 11) as Jews had come to believe and practice in the 1st Century A.D. Rather, the corporate election of Israel was based upon God's sovereign decision to decree. That sovereign decision was rooted in an omniscient understanding by God of Abraham's faith in God's promise of an heir through barren Sarah.

¹ While Ishmael was possibly a believer (Gen 21:17, 20), God knew the extremes to which the negative volition of his descendants would go (see Gen 16:12). Ishmael's descendants are the Arab peoples and they have often been nomadic and at war (Gen 16:12 phrases "wild man" refers to unsettled and on the move and "his hand shall be against every man" refers to constant conflict). Even though Israel was not much better at times, God still commanded them to destroy all the Philistines (part of the descendants of Ishmael) that inhabited the land – see Deut 9:4-5; Josh 3:10; 8:2, 24-25; 10:16-43 cf. Ge 15:16; Deut 20. Later in history, Satan would use the negative volition of the descendants of Ishmael to introduce a deceptive religion known as Islam. Today, we see the continuance of that negative volition to the point that millions of Arabs are operating and guided by the principles of cosmic #2 thinking in such a way that God's plan for Israel and the Church is being opposed to the point of death.

It is important to realize the significance of this passage in our study of the Doctrines of Election and Predestination. On the surface, the focus of Paul's argument seems to be upon the sovereign right of God to elect specific individuals since Paul names specific individuals. Also, on the surface, the focus seems to be upon God's sovereignty to the exclusion or without the necessity of man's free will, e.g. Jacob was "loved" and Esau "hated" even prior to their births. However, the surface reading is often tainted by the paradigm possessed by the reader prior to any adequate consideration of the greater context having been given.

God is not speaking about the individual Jacob, but about the nation of Jacob, i.e. Israel. In Genesis 25:23 which records the original prediction, Rebekah was told:

And the Lord said to her: "Two *nations* are in your womb, two *peoples* shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

So, the reference here is not to individual election but to the corporate election of a nation which is a distinct issue from their eternal salvation.² Regardless of the corporate election of Israel as a nation, each individual had to accept the Messiah in order to be saved. This is why Paul could state that he wishes he could be cut off on behalf of his people and that they be saved (9:3-4; 10:1). Even though Israel as a nation was elect, each individual had to accept God's grace by "faith" in order to be saved (11:20).

The statement that Paul makes in 9:11-13 regarding Jacob and Esau draws from passages in Genesis and Malachi. For instance, in verse 12, Paul quotes Genesis 25:23 when he writes – "The older shall serve the younger." This prediction was made by God to Rebecca prior to the birth of these two men and is a reflection of the omniscience of God. Then in verse 13, Paul quotes Malachi 1:2-3 when he writes "Jacob have I loved, but Esau I have hated." Here God's "love" for Jacob and "hate" for Esau is not speaking of those men before they were born. Rather, the citation in Romans 9:13 is from Malachi 1:2-3 written circa 400 B.C. long after both men had died. The evil deeds committed by the Edomites (the descendents of Esau) to the Israelites are well documented in the Old Testament (e.g. Num 20). It is because of the unbelief of the Edomites, their hatred for God's purpose in human history through his chosen nation, their involvement in Cosmic #2 thinking and the fact that they allowed themselves to be used of Satan in such a manner that God is said to have hated them as a country. This did not mean that there would be no individuals from that country who would be saved. There were believers from Edom (Amos 9:12) and the neighboring country of Moab (Ruth 1), just as there will be people in heaven from every tribe, kindred, nation, and tongue (Re 7:9).³

The use of the word "hate" here is a source of trouble for many. How can a God of absolute and perfect love ever "hate?" The answer is that the word "hate" is simply an anthropomorphism, i.e. a human emotion or intangible attribute used to describe an infinite God.⁴ God always expresses His love to the same degree to all creatures; however, the receipt of such love by the believer contrasts sharply with the rejection of such love by the unbeliever. The best words to describe such a contrast are "love" and "hate."

² Norman L. Geisler, *Chosen, But Free* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 82.

³ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴ An anthropomorphism is a human body part used to describe God Who has no body, e.g. the "arm of the Lord" or the Lord's eyes see everything.