

The Church of the Servant King
Soteriology Series

SO_6_Predestination & Election –

Part 12 – Predestination, Election & Romans Chapters 9-11 – Lesson 5

Introduction – Romans 11

In Romans 9, Paul argues that God has the sovereign prerogative to temporarily set Israel aside and delay the fulfillment of His covenants with them. Paul quotes from Hosea in Romans 9 to subtly highlight the irony between what happened to the Jew's ancestors in the eighth century B.C. and what was happening to Israel in Paul's day. As Paul quotes from Hosea, he is reminded of the sub-theme in the book that in spite of Hosea's message of impending discipline upon Israel in the 8th Century B.C. (which had parallel with Paul's generation of Jews), the book of Hosea contains several references to the fact that Israel would not be destroyed forever (e.g. 1:10-11; 2:21-23; 14:1-9).

Paul continues his argument in Romans 9:27-29 by quoting from Isaiah. The passages in Isaiah affirm Israel's continuance and future. God was not permanently casting Israel aside (see also 11:1). A remnant of Israel will continue to exist until God can use that remnant in establishing the Messianic kingdom (9:27cf. 11:5).

Prior to continuing the subject of Israel's future in chapter 11, Paul begins an analysis of Israel's present condition in 9:30-10:21. Israel was attempting to maintain and attain good standing with God by her works of righteousness even while rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. However, Paul makes a case in chapter 10 using Old Testament passages (i.e. Lev 18:5; Deut 30:12-14; 32:21; Psa 19:4; Isa 28:16; 52:7; 53:1; 65:1-2; Joel 2:32) that should have been familiar to every Jew. His case from the Old Testament – God's righteousness is by faith to Jew and Gentile alike. The religious "zeal" of Paul's generation of Israel's Jews was misplaced. It was based upon a distorted understanding of God's righteousness. Nevertheless, even though Israel had been given ample opportunity to accept the Gospel and had rejected it, they still had a future and a remnant would be delivered (9:27 cf. 11:5; 11:26).

Romans 11:1-10 – The Principle of the Remnant

In Romans 11:1-2, Paul provides a direct answer to the question that arises from his arguments in chapters 9 and 10. The question - is God finished with Israel or as stated in 11:1 of the New King James Version, "has God cast away His people?" The answer - No! After providing the answer, Paul then explains the contrast between a spiritual remnant within Israel (verses 3-6) and the hardening of the remainder.

Paul deliberately chooses the language of 1 Samuel 12:22 (see Rom 11:1b) in which the Lord had given this promise in a similar situation. Israel had rebelled against the Lord and asked for a king due to their failure to trust Him. While Samuel warns them of judgment to come, he also assures them that they are not rejected. His election of Israel transcends their rebellion.¹

Paul's point in these verses is not that Israel will continue within the Church. Pauline eschatology clearly reflects an understanding of future events involving the Jews as a separate race of people even though Paul's writings are intermittent in nature and reflect only part of his

¹ Steve Motyer, *Israel in the Plan of God* (London, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 129.

thinking on a particular subject as opposed to a “full-orbed statement on his beliefs.”² Therefore, to interpret Romans 11:1-2 as anything but an affirmation that the Jews have a future separate and distinct from the Church would ignore this principle. The context demands that we understand that during this period of the “mystery” (Rom. 11:25), there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile believers (Romans 10:12). However, we cannot overlook the fact that Pauline eschatology clearly recognizes the distinctions that exist in the past Age of Israel and in the dispensations yet future to the Church Age. This understanding must be brought to bear in the interpretation of Romans 11:1-2, especially in the light of Paul’s statements in Romans 9:6-7 and Romans 11:26.

In verses 3-4, Paul provides an example from Hebrew Scripture (i.e. the Old Testament) in which an Old Testament prophet (Elijah) thought that he was the only righteous man left in Israel. Yet, God responded that there were 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal. Elijah’s situation was very similar to the situation that Paul faced, nevertheless Paul knew that there were many Jews who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah and that in spite of the fact that the nation was on the verge of undergoing divinely allowed discipline, there would always be a remnant. This was due to the fact that Israel as a nation and the Jews as a race were “elect” or chosen to be the recipients of God’s promises. However, the receipt of the blessings of the kingdom would not occur on the basis of works (v. 6) as the Jewish unbelievers of Paul’s day had come to believe. The basis of Israel’s blessing would be by grace. The remnant in Elijah’s day was proof that God had not cast off His people and the remnant in Paul’s day was continuing proof of His faithfulness.

In verses 7-10, Paul illustrates the principle that he has previously taught (9:30-33). The principle – the righteousness that Israel seeks is obtained by grace through faith, not by works. The spiritually elect (v. 7) have appropriated this righteousness. To Paul, although Israel was elect as a nation, it was the spiritually elect within that nation that would inherit the promises (Rom 9:6-13 cf. 11:26). Paul quotes from Isaiah (11:8) and David (11:9-10) to show that Israel’s spiritual indifference was a continual pattern in Israel’s history.

Romans 11:11-36 – Israel’s Rejection is Not Final

In these verses Paul provides the climax to his thesis that God has not failed with an exhortation to the Gentiles to not become arrogant as did the Jews and with a reaffirmation that at a future day, the Jews would be saved en masse. Paul uses an analogy from nature to illustrate the relationship of the Gentile believers as the elect of God to the Jews. Gentile believers are pictured as wild olive branches having been grafted into the olive tree to replace the branches that had been broken off because of unbelief. The blindness and unbelief of Israel that will continue until “the times of the Gentiles” is fulfilled is called a mystery by Paul in verse 25.

Paul then states that all Israel will be saved as prophesied in Isaiah 27:9 and 59:20-21.³ This fact is contrasted with the present relationship between the unbelieving Jews and the believing Gentiles in verse 28. Paul states that in regard to the gospel, the unbelieving Jews are enemies, yet in regard to the election, they are beloved for the sake of the Jewish fathers. Just as the Gentiles had once been disobedient to God and had now obtained mercy through the disobedience of the Jews, so would the Jews be shown mercy through the Gentiles. Even if all were to be disobedient, God desires to show mercy to all. Finally, Paul ends the chapter in praise to God for His unparalleled wisdom and methods in bringing glory to Himself.

² C. Marvin Pate, *The End of the Age Has Come, The Theology of Paul* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1995), 217.

³ All Israel will be saved or delivered at the time of the 2nd Advent of the Messiah Jesus because only believers within Israel will be left alive on earth to inhabit the Messianic kingdom after the forces of the Anti-Christ are destroyed (Matt 24:29-31 cf. Re 6:12-14; 19:17-20:6).

There is perhaps no clearer verse in Romans 9-11 than 11:28 that distinguishes the “election” of the Jews through Abraham as a race and the fact that those same “elect” Jews in a racial sense would be “enemies” of the gospel. Verse 28 clearly distinguishes between those who are related to the Abrahamic Covenant and those who are believers in Christ in the Church Age. Church Age believers do not replace Israel in regard to the irrevocable (verse 29) covenants made by God toward the Jews. These covenants will find their ultimate fulfillment at the Second Advent in the Messianic reign of Christ when “all Israel will be saved” (verse 26).

Even so, there is still a sense in which the Gentiles have replaced the Jews as recipients of God’s blessings. This principle is the subject of the grafting into the olive tree analogy Paul explains in verses 16-24. The Gentile believers of the mystery dispensation do replace the unbelieving branches of the olive tree which have been broken off because of their unbelief. It is now the Gentiles who have a vital connection to the root (Jesus Christ) in order to be the branch through which the world may be blessed spiritually. The olive tree analogy does not equate to a fulfillment of any of God’s covenant’s with Israel. This passage is clear that this change does not diminish Israel’s future. In addition, Paul’s argument in support of the faithfulness of God to the Jews in these three chapters is intended to provide believers (Gentile or Jew) with assurance that God is totally reliable and that nothing can in fact separate him from the love of God through Christ as stated in 8:35-39.⁴

⁴ Chae, 222-3.