

The Israel of God Part 3 – Romans 11

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Wrap It Up*

1. We wrap up the Apostle Paul's 3-ch. *insert* in his Letter to the Church at Rome today.
2. As we've seen in our last 2 studies, in chs. 9-11, Paul takes a time out from the main letter to deal with the question of what the Gospel of Grace means for Israel.
 - a. In ch. 9 he spoke of Israel's *past*.
 - b. In ch. 10, he deals with their *present*.
 - c. Here in ch. 11, he deals with their *future*.

B. *Not Replaced*

1. What we'll look at today is important because it clears up a misunderstanding some have about God's plan.
2. There are some who say God is *done* with Israel, that with *their rejection* of Jesus, *God rejected them*.
3. *Now* the *Church is Israel* & all the promises God made the nation have been handed to the Church.
4. This is called *Replacement* Theology; because the Church has *replaced* the nation of Israel in the plan of God.
5. Well, Paul deals with this here in ch. 11.

II. TEXT

A. *V. 1*

¹ I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

1. This question flows from the previous passage where Paul had gone to great lengths to show that God told the Jews through the prophets salvation would one day be extended to Gentiles.
2. We know from the Book of Acts whenever Paul shared this with his fellows Jews they reacted with great hostility, sometimes even attacking him.
 - a. They thought they had an exclusive arrangement as God's Chosen People.
 - b. They considered Gentiles hopelessly lost.
 - c. But Paul proved from the Scriptures that it was *always* God's intent to save the Gentiles.
3. The question that arose was, "Does that mean then, that God has turned his back on Israel?"
 - a. Paul's response was, "No way!" He points to himself; he was a Jew.
 - b. The Gospel of Grace for all people equally.
 - c. The problem was, *compared* to Gentiles only a *few* Jews responded.
4. But Paul says this wasn't out of the ordinary as far as Israel's *history* went.
5. There was *always* only a *minority* in Israel that constituted *real faith* in God.

B. *Vs. 2-5*

² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

1. *Several* of the prophets made the faithful remnant in Israel a major theme of their message.

- a. Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel & especially Isaiah all warned Israel that being a *descendant of Abraham* wasn't enough.¹
 - b. They told the Jews not to count on their family connections as the basis of their standing in the covenant with God.
 - c. Just as it had been for Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, what mattered was sincere faith in Him.
 - d. They spoke of the *faithful remnant*, the *True spiritual Israel* which was a minority *inside* the larger nation.
2. Paul goes all the way back to the *first* great prophet, Elijah, to illustrate this.
 - a. After his stunning victory over the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, Elijah descended into a deep depression.
 - b. He thought he was the *only one* in Israel who hadn't defected to false gods & asked God to kill him in his loneliness.
 - c. But God told him he *wasn't* alone; there were 7000 who'd refused to bend their knee to an idol.
 3. Then Paul says -
 - ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.**
 4. Just as there *always* had been a minority that kept faith, so there was in Paul's day.
 5. Paul was a part of that remnant that had responded to the gracious call of God to salvation through faith in Christ.

C. V. 6

- ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.**
1. He repeats something he's made clear in the previous chapters – grace & works *cannot* be mixed.
 2. If we're saved by the grace of God, then it's *all* by grace.
 3. The moment we base salvation on what we do, then grace is pushed out of the picture.
 4. It's important we remember v. 6 because there's a large cult that says salvation comes from doing our best, then what's lacking is filled up by grace.
 - a. They say grace is what God *adds* as a last little measure to our efforts to earn eternal life.
 - b. My first trip to Disneyland was a real bummer because I was too short to go on the really fun rides.
 - 1) I didn't quite reach the mark on the sign that stood at the opening to the line.
 - 2) I was about a half-inch short. If I had had a baseball cap I could have worn it & passed inspection.
 - 3) That group says grace is a baseball cap God gives us so we can make it.
 5. Paul says, "Uh-uh! No way." You can't mix grace & works.
 6. Salvation is *all of --&-- only by* → grace.

D. V. 7

- ⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.**
1. Israel had not attained salvation because of all Paul has already explained in the preceding chs.
 2. The Jews were seeking to become righteous by their own efforts, by keeping the Law.
 3. But the righteousness God requires is *perfect* righteousness, it's *His righteousness*, which He *gives* those who trust in Christ, *not themselves*.

¹Amos 9:8–10 Micah 2:12; 5:3 Zephaniah 3:12, 13 Jeremiah 23:3 Ezekiel 14:14, 20, 22 Isaiah 7:3; 8:2, 18; 9:12; 6:9–13

4. While a tiny remnant of Israel had come to faith in Christ, the *majority* continued in their rejection of the Gospel. They *insisted* on their favored status as God’s chosen people because of their ancestry & confidence in the Law.
5. Their *misuse* of the Law was bad enough *before* Jesus came, but their stubborn rejection of the Gospel *after He died & rose again* was *doubly* bad.
6. And it had resulted in – as Paul says here – a profound spiritual blindness.
 - a. Actually, the word is better translated “*hardening*.”
 - b. It was used of the *thick calluses* that come from repeated wear.
 - c. It referred to the hardness that develops when a bone heals from *recurring* breaks.
 - d. These calluses are the body’s mechanisms to avoid further hurt.
 - e. The problem is, *sensation is lost* in the callus – you lose the ability to feel anything there.
7. That’s what happens when someone hears the Gospel & knows conviction of sin.
 - a. The Spirit *rubs* against their conscience, He *breaks* thru their pride.
 - b. But every time they resist that conviction & reject the grace of God, they get a bit harder.
 - c. A spiritual callus forms & with each subsequent rejection it gets thicker until they lose the ability to feel any conviction at all.
8. I dare say there are some listening today who stand in danger of becoming hardened to the offer of forgiveness.
9. You have resisted so often it’s become *easy* now.
10. It could be that very soon you pass the point of no return.
11. If you feel ANYTHING, any sense of not being right with God – then do the right & reasonable thing – Surrender to Him.

E. The Elect

1. Paul’s mention of *the elect* here needs some explaining.
2. Election is a doctrine that’s cause a lot of debate.
3. Historically, people have lined up behind 2 labels: Calvinism & Arminianism.
4. These 2 camps have dominated the discussion.
5. That’s unfortunate because I believe both groups err in that instead of letting Scripture shape their belief,
 - a. They *begin* with an idea (presupposition),
 - b. Then read the Bible with that filter already in place,
 - c. Instead of letting the Scriptures provide their 1st ideas.
6. If we come to the subject of election *without* the arguments of Calvinism & Arminianism *already* in place—if we seek for a true *Biblicism*, here’s what we discover about election –
 - a. In the Bible, “the elect” is *always plural*; it always speaks of a *group*.
 - b. As we saw a few weeks ago in ch. 9, in Isa 42:1 the Elect One is Jesus,
 - c. If we’re *in Him* by an abiding faith, then we too are elect.
7. But any time the Bible refers to “the elect” it’s *plural* & refers to that group of people that’s the focus of God’s redemptive work at that point in history.
8. Now, let me say this—we do occasionally see *individuals* in Scripture who are singled out & called “elect” – but not to salvation.
 - a. Whenever election is individual, it’s always to a *task* or *office*.
 - b. Someone is called to be a *king* or elected to be a *prophet*.
 - c. Another is elected to fashion the tabernacle.
 - d. In ch. 9, *Pharaoh* was raised up to be the agent by which God’s power & glory would be made known to the world.

9. But *whenever* election refers to salvation, every time -- it refers to that *group* which is the focus of God's redemptive work.
10. **AND**, there's always a way for individuals to become *a part* of that elect group.
 - a. In the OT, the elect was Israel.
 - 1) Gentiles could become a part of Israel by renouncing their past & putting their faith in Yahweh alone.
 - 2) There was a ritual they went thru to signify their entrance into the covenant Israel had with God.
 - b. In the NT, the elect are the Church, the community of believers.
 - 1) Unbelievers can become a part of the elect thru repentance & faith.
 - 2) And there's a ritual they go thru to signify their entrance into the New Covenant – it's called baptism.
11. Now, here's the thing—the prophets came again & again to Israel & warned them that being a physical descendant of Abraham wasn't enough; they must live by a sincere faith in God.
 - a. Earthly Israel wasn't to be confused with the true, spiritual Israel.
 - 1) There were lots of Jews by birth, but only a remnant shared Abraham's faith in God.
 - 2) There was a *spiritual Israel of God* INSIDE the *nation of Israel on Earth*.
 - b. In the same way today—not everyone who goes to church is saved.
 - 1) The elect are not everyone who calls themselves a Christian.
 - 2) The elect are those who *abide in Christ*.
12. You see, it's always been about faith, even in the OT.
13. Of Abraham it was said that he *believed* in God & based on that, God declared him righteous.
14. In both the Old & New Testaments, the elect are those who trust in God, not themselves.

F. Vs. 8-10

⁸ Just as it is written: “God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.”⁹ And David says: “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them.”¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.”

1. Paul again returns to the Scriptures to show that Israel's rejection of the Gospel & subsequent hardening had been foretold by both David & Isaiah.
2. Some people are disturbed by these verses because it troubles them God would take a hand in *causing* people's spiritual insensitivity.
3. But Paul is clear here – God doesn't harden people *against their will*.
4. It's the precise opposite – He *accepts* their foolish decision to reject Him *after* He's patiently wooed & convinced them.
5. Frankly, knowing just how much God loves the lost, & the extravagant lengths He goes to, to win them, what we *ought to wonder* is why He doesn't ignore their rejection & open their eyes *anyway*!
6. No friends, the great surprise is knowing how passionately God longs for the salvation of the lost, He honors their unreasoned rejection & gives them what they've chosen time & again – to be spiritually blind & insensitive.

G. Vs. 11-16

^{11a} I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!

1. In other words – is Israel's present rejection of the Gospel *fatal*?
2. No – it's a temporary condition – a *stumbling* from which they *will recover*.
3. And God, who wastes nothing has used Israel's temporary stumbling to an advantage. Look . . .

^{11b} But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

4. “Fall” here is a different word than the previous. It speaks of a mis-step, as in a race when a runner loses their rhythm & drops out of the pack for a time.
5. While Israel had *stumbled* in rejecting Christ, the Gentiles had rushed in to take her place.
6. When stumbling Israel saw multitudes of Gentiles enjoying the fruits of faith in Israel’s God, it would provoke Israel to re-examine the Gospel.
- ¹² Now if their fall [Israel’s] is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!**
7. If Israel’s rejection of the Gospel provided an opening for Gentiles, imagine what benefit Israel’s *turning* to Christ would bring!
- ¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶ For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.**
8. At the time Paul wrote this, while a few Jews were being won, it was mostly Gentiles.
9. But at first the Church was almost *totally* Jewish.
 - a. Jesus was a Jew, as were the Apostles, & most of the Early Church Leaders. The *Scriptures* were Jewish.
 - b. Sure it was just a tiny remnant of Israel – but look at what great blessing came to the world from these Jewish *firstfruits*, from this Jewish *root*.

10. I want to pause here & say how important it is that we Gentile believers recognize & honor the Jewish roots of our faith.
 - a. For long ages the Church has taken a harsh stand toward the Jews.
 - b. There are some dark chapters in our history when the Church was one of the most virulent persecutors of the Jews.
 - c. It’s hard to understand how that could be when we have passages like this.
 - d. But it only goes to show what happens when you take the Word of God away from people & tell them they can only learn from a priest –
 - e. And that salvation comes from doing what the authorities say.
11. Over the last 30, many Evangelical leaders have made their aim to love the Jewish people & to support Israel.
 - a. There’s a deep distrust on the part of many Jews toward the Church since they’ve suffered horribly by it.
 - b. But in many places, the Jewish Community is coming to see that there’s a large segment of Christians who really do love & respect them & honor their roots in Judaism.
 - c. I shared a few weeks ago about how the Messianic movement in Israel is growing.
 - 1) What prompted that movement was Gentile believers who moved to Israel years ago to just live there & do exactly what Paul says here –
 - 2) Provoke Jews to jealousy by the excellence of their faithful lifestyle.
 - 3) Many of these Gentiles showed an interest in exactly what Paul says here – discovering the roots of their faith.
 - 4) That willingness to humbly learn & lovingly serve won over a few Jews, who in turn won over more & now the Messianic movement has become remarkable in Israel.

H. Vs. 17-24

¹⁷ And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the

olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.* ¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. ²² Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

1. Olives were a major crop throughout the Mediterranean world so Paul uses an illustration all would have understood.
2. Olive trees can live to be very old, hundreds, even thousands of years old.
3. But over time, the branches become so old & thick they stop producing a good harvest.
4. Since the root & trunk are still healthy, the olive farmer will cut off the old branches that aren't producing fruit, and graft in branches from a younger tree.
5. Israel was an ancient olive tree that failed to bear fruit, so God lopped off the unproductive branches & grafted in fruit-bearing Gentiles.
6. Paul warns them – “Don't get uppity, thinking you're special”
 - a. “And certainly don't boast about being better than Jews!”
 - b. “God did not remove them to make room for you because you're better.”
 - c. “He removed them because of their failure to abide in faith.”
 - d. “If you do what they did – God will do the same to you!”
7. “And not only that,” Paul says, “Remember, they've only *stumbled*, they haven't completely fallen.”
8. “If they repent & return, God will take them back.”
9. In fact – it's more than an “If” = **They will return!**

I. Vs. 25-27

²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “*The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*” ²⁷ For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

1. A mystery is something hidden from us that can only be known by the revelation of God.
2. What Paul means here is that everything that had happened was a part of God's plan & that plan was still being unfolded.
3. God was ***NOT done*** with the ***nation*** of Israel.
4. The spiritual stupor & blindness that marked the majority of Israel was ***temporary***.
5. When God has culled into the elect the number of Gentiles He's chosen, ***then*** He'll ***return*** His redemptive focus to the Nation of Israel.
6. Now, since God has promised to never leave nor forsake believers, this means He will first Rapture us.
7. And this is another reason why we believe the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation - because it is referred to as the “Time of Jacobs' (Israel's) Trouble.”
8. If God's redemptive focus is back on Israel during that time, it means He's removed the Church.
9. Prophecy tells us in the last days God will reveal Himself in a special way to the Nation of Israel.

- a. While only a remnant of Israel believes in Jesus now,
- b. In those days, the *Majority will believe*. [Zech 12 & 13]

J. Vs. 28-29

²⁸ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

1. Though unbelieving Jews had made themselves fierce opponents of the Gospel in Paul's day & as many of them continue to be to this day –
2. Still, God has made them many promises which He will keep because He *always* keeps His promises.
3. This is one of the reasons we can *reject* Replacement Theology – because there are promises God made to the nation of Israel that have yet to be fulfilled
 - a. If God rejected Israel & the Church has taken over the promises God made Israel –
 - b. Then we're forced into bizarre interpretations of those promises.
 - c. They only make sense if they're for the nation & people of Israel, as a real geo-political entity.
 - d. They deal with borders & land, & other concrete things that simply find not relevance if their for the Church.

K. Vs. 30-32

³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

1. The translators have a hard time with the way Paul constructs this.
2. Just as Israel's rejection of the Gospel opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles, so the Gentiles' salvation would ultimately lead to the salvation of Israel.
3. Jew & Gentile alike begin in sin – but grace saves both!

III. CONCLUSION

A. Vs. 33-36

1. Paul comes to the end of his excursion into God's plan for Israel & is overwhelmed by God's wisdom.
2. So there's nothing for it but to praise -

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

3. He quotes the prophets & Job -

³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"

³⁵ "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?"

³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

4. Listen, though Paul knew as he penned this he was being moved by God,
5. He realized his words had not come near plumbing the depths of God's majesty.
6. Though what he'd written was true – there was so much more.
7. The reality of the immensity of God overwhelmed him.
8. There was only one appropriate response = *Worship*

B. [After Prayer – Provoke to Jealousy → For us!]