

ROMANS 11:2-10 "God Did Not Reject His People, Whom He Foreknew"

Chapter eleven of Romans is dedicated to the Jews. Paul has addressed the Jews in other parts of this letter, but here in chapter eleven he explains why the Jews still have a part in God's plan of salvation, despite their rejection of the Messiah.

Last week we ended with the beginning of chapter eleven where Paul assures his listeners that the Jews were not totally rejected by God in that He still calls out many Jews to faith in the Messiah. In fact, as you might remember Paul uses himself in verse one, as an example of how God couldn't have rejected the Jews wholesale, because he was a Christian and he was also a Jew.

It's important to realize some things about our own relationship with Christ as we look at the relationship, or lack thereof, of Israel to God.

What we'll see in this chapter is that despite how unfaithful men are when it comes to their Creator, God will always be true to His word, and though His judgment cannot be halted regarding sin, He is always working in the lives of people to turn their eyes away from self to God to escape that judgment for the penalty of sin.

Whether Jew or Gentile it's comforting to know that God is actively involved in the lives of people and that He has no intention of any total abandonment of this world.

God's word is very specific in that the covenant relationship He established with the Jews through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the other patriarchs, He would keep as an everlasting covenant. But as we saw last week that everlasting covenant is fulfilled in Jesus Christ whose everlasting Kingdom is made up of both Jew and Gentile as there is only one people of God.

**Ephesians 2:13-16** <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

And so, there is only one people of God, not two or three but one. This one people has been around since Adam and Eve rebelled against a holy God and the Lord sought them out in the garden to bring them back into fellowship through the seed of the woman who would save His people from their sin.

And thousands of years after that first sin, God was true to His promise.

**Matthew 1:21-23** <sup>21</sup> "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for *He will save His people from their sins.*" <sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

Well, who are His people? If we limit it to the Jews or even Israel the nation, then Abraham, the father of the Jews, gets left in the cold as well as Abel, Seth and every other believer who trusted in the promise of the coming Redeemer found in Christ.

No. The phrase, "His people", is the one people Paul addresses in Ephesians, and the same people addressed in Isaiah of which Matthew quotes.

**Isaiah 9:6-7** <sup>6</sup> For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

This everlasting Kingdom is the same Kingdom that Jesus Himself speaks of continually and the same Kingdom over which He will rule. And this is the message that was given to Mary before she was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 1:30-35** <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; <sup>33</sup> and *He will reign over the house of Jacob forever*, and

His kingdom will have no end." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The *House of Jacob* is the House of Israel and it is this house over which Christ will rule, not just one people from one nation, but all peoples from every corner of the earth.

The prophet Daniel testifies to this.

**Daniel 7:13-14** <sup>13</sup> "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. <sup>14</sup> "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Daniel was speaking to the physical descendants of Abraham, those Jews who were taken into captivity because of their rebellion, but here he tells us that the son of man will receive a kingdom that is everlasting and will not pass away and includes all people.

Of course this kingdom is the one depicted in the book of Revelation, the counter part of Daniel.

**Revelation 5:8-10** <sup>8</sup> When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. <sup>10</sup> "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

And the final expression of this eternal kingdom will be found when Christ comes back for His people on the last day to establish this kingdom that we find in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Revelation.

**Revelation 21:1-5** <sup>NAU</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming

down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, <sup>4</sup> and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

This was the promise given to the Jews during the days of Moses and during the days of the apostle Paul. The promise has never changed from when it was first given to Adam in the garden after his rebellion.

And this is the point Paul is making in our text when he addresses the Jews as recipients of this promise.

**Romans 11:2-6** <sup>2</sup> God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? <sup>3</sup> "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." <sup>4</sup> But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." <sup>5</sup> In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Here the issue is not about identifying the nation of Israel as the recipient of the kingdom of God on earth in the time frame of a thousand years, but rather a smaller group whom He foreknew, called "His people" in verse 2. And then he uses the argument that Elijah used when he concluded that the nation of Israel had departed from God to the degree that only one man remained and believed the promises of God.

But notice God's response. "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

What God is saying to Elijah is that despite what Elijah sees with his eyes regarding the entire nation of Israel rejecting God, our

Lord assures him that what he doesn't see is God's sovereign hand saving a remnant out of the entire nation of 7,000.

By the way, I don't believe the number 7, or its multiples as found in 7,000 is just some random number that God uses, but is a number often associated with the completed will of God as found in our creator resting on the seventh day as all was accomplished in His creation, or commanding Israel to rest on that same day.

It was seven days after Noah entered the ark that God completed His plan of judgment on the world with a flood. The Passover was instituted by God with the words:

**Exodus 13:6** <sup>6</sup> "For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD.

It was the fulfillment of this act that Israel left Egypt after the killing of the first born. There are many other examples of God fulfilling His plans using the number 7 and its multiples, but the point that God was making to Elijah was that God had a perfect number of people called out from among the sons of Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

And it is this exact story of God choosing a particular people out from among the rebels of Israel where Paul makes the exact same analogy of the present day Israel of his day who had rejected the Messiah by saying this in verse 5.

**Romans 11:5** <sup>5</sup> In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.

What remnant is Paul talking about? The same remnant that God spoke of to Elijah; a remnant of Jews from among the nation of Israel who will not bow the knee to the world.

This is exactly what Paul said earlier as he quoted Isaiah.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Romans 9:27** Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;

In other words, it is not simply the physical descendants of Abraham who are given the promises as though their ethnicity alone determines that God must grant the nation of Israel the promises. And this is why Paul made the case earlier.

**Romans 9:6-8** For *they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel*; <sup>7</sup> nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." <sup>8</sup> That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

The remnant, that is the one's chosen by God before the foundations of the world to represent Him before the world, are the one's who are bestowed with His grace to have their eyes opened to the things of God as the Holy Spirit regenerates dead hearts to life, thereby giving them eyes to see and ears to hear.

It is all grace as it is all God. And this is the point Paul continues to make in our text.

**Romans 11:6-10** <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. <sup>7</sup> What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; <sup>8</sup> just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." <sup>9</sup> And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. <sup>10</sup> "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

The nation of Israel rejected their God and Messiah and the Lord had long ago given them a writ of divorce.

**Jeremiah 3:8** <sup>8</sup> "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.

The nation of Israel has long forgotten her God and God has long ago judged her for that and has cut her off from the covenant as the people who would represent Him in His eternal kingdom.

And Jesus made this clear when He made a pronouncement to Israel regarding her standing before God.

**Matthew 23:37-38** <sup>37</sup> "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks

under her wings, and you were unwilling. <sup>38</sup> "Behold, *your house is being left to you desolate!*

By the way, this was not a new statement from God but a continuing pronouncement of the same promise many years before as the Lord made clear.

**1 Kings 9:6-7** <sup>6</sup> "But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, <sup>7</sup> then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

All of this has taken place just as the prophets foretold of whom Paul quotes in our text.

**Romans 11:8-10** <sup>8</sup> just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." <sup>9</sup> And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. <sup>10</sup> "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

So, the natural question would be, well if God has hardened the hearts of Israel and has darkened their eyes and they cannot see or hear the things of God, then who in Israel can be saved? It must be utter destruction.

**Romans 11:11** <sup>11</sup> I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!

God has not abandoned His people, but His people are no longer identified as national Israel but a remnant chosen out of Israel to represent Him. And this is precisely how Paul started this section.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Romans 11:1** .... God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God has rejected the nation of Israel as they are left desolate, but God has not rejected those Jews He has chosen from among the nation to carry His name, even as Paul, a Jew, carries the name of Jesus Christ.

But in rejecting the nation, (though not all of its people), God still had a plan for further driving home the nature of the promise given to Israel and we'll expand on this next week but let me just touch on it now.

**Romans 11:11** But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

So, in rejecting the nation of Israel, His plan was to turn His attention to the other part of the promise given to Abraham as he was to be the father of many nations, with the spiritual implication being that all nations will one day share in the blessing of Abraham, the man of faith.

Therefore, no one nation can lay claim to the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who promises to send the seed of the woman to crush the head of satan.

In going to the Gentiles God actually plans to use this as the means to make the nation of Israel jealous.

That's an interesting statement and many would assume that this jealousy is designed by God to lead the nation of Israel back to the Lord. But that is not what it says. In fact, as we'll see next time Paul continues to go back to the theme that though God has rejected the nation of Israel He has not rejected the Jews as many of them are chosen by God to share in the eternal inheritance found in Christ and this is what we see in verse 14.

**Romans 11:14** <sup>14</sup> if somehow I might move to jealousy *my fellow countrymen and save some of them.*

Paul knew that when he went into the Synagogues to share the good news of the Messiah, Jesus, most of the Jews would reject him, but he knew that as many Gentiles were embracing this Jewish Messiah, there would be some Jews whom God would touch who would want to know more of this Jesus, and these are the individuals within the larger nation that Paul prays for and desires to see come into the Kingdom made up of both Jew and Gentile.

We whom God foreknew, both Jew and Gentile, are chosen to be part of His Kingdom and nothing will deter God from His plan of bringing us to Himself. I love Christ's words to us.



Joh 6:37-39 "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."

Why can we trust in those words? Because those are the words of our covenant keeping God who never goes back on His word. Last week we celebrated the Lord's Supper and one of the passages we always quote is found in Mat 26:28 "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

In Christ we still have a covenant relationship which cannot be broken, short of unbelief. And if we are truly His by faith, He will even sustain our faith. How do we know that?

Heb 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, *the author and perfecter of our faith...*"

God will never leave Himself without witnesses to His covenant grace and truth. You and I are those witnesses along with any Jew or Gentile who will place his or her faith in Christ. But as His witnesses we need to be willing, as was Elijah, to stand for Christ even if the rest of the world rejects Him and even if "Christians" do not follow Him according to His word.

Our primary motivation for loving and serving Christ should never be, 'what are other Christians doing?' but rather, 'what has Christ done for me and what does He desire of me?'

It's all grace, it's all God

As hard as Israel tried to earn their salvation, through the keeping of the law, God says they didn't arrive at that Promised Land. But there were some who did. Those of Israel who were chosen embraced the truth. And the writer of Hebrews gives us a rundown of just a small number of those in Hebrews eleven, who were saved by grace through faith.

Those who wanted to do it their own way and hardened their hearts to the truth we're told, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." (Rom 11:8)

This "very day" was Paul's day, but to a large extent it does include this very day of ours. The blinders are still on the nation of Israel. They have chosen to remain blind, but God has taken their hardness of heart and solidified it.

And yet we know that the Lord has kept for Himself myriads of Jews through the ages who have not bowed the knee to gods other than the One true God, by placing their faith in Christ.

But of those who reject Christ Paul writes and quotes David the psalmist.

Rom 11:9-10 "And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. 10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever." [Psalm 69:22,23]

All of this is the judgment for the rejection of the Messiah. In fact in Psalm 69, where Paul quotes here in Romans, is where we find a Messianic message. It points to Jesus the Messiah and how He has been rejected and His response.

Psa 69:19-21 "You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before you. 20 Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. 21 They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst."

This spoke of Jesus the Messiah being taunted and dishonored while in the very process of redeeming His people.

Mat 27:34 "There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it."

Joh 19:29 "A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips."

A number of things are taught in these passages, which we don't have time to go into this morning, but the point Paul is making is that in prophecy Jesus is the One fulfilling this. And the Jews were fulfilling what God said they would do in their rejection of the Messiah.

Their table has become a snare and a trap. What they thought was the way to God actually was a self-imposed trap to keep them from God. You might remember that Satan did the same thing with Eve. In tempting Eve, with what was a smorgasbord of promises to

eternal life and bliss, being like God. It turned out to be the very thing which would separate man from God.

Israel sat down to a table which they prepared for themselves thinking that God would be pleased. God says, 'unless you come to the table which I prepare for you, you cannot have life.' The prophet Isaiah reminded Israel of this problem.

Isa 65:11-13 "But as for you who forsake the LORD and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, 12 I will destine you for the sword, and you will all bend down for the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." 13 Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame."

Also the prophet Malachi. Mal 1:7-8 "You place defiled food on my altar. "But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' "By saying that the LORD'S table is contemptible. 8 When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty."

Israel not only rejected God's provision of grace and salvation, but they had the nerve to give Him their left overs and then say, 'accept our sacrifice of love.' God says, 'take it to your governor and let him have it if he'll accept it.'

We Christians, be we Gentile or Jew, need also to be careful not to give God our left overs, which we wouldn't give to anyone else, but expect God to bless. He has set a table for us in Christ and invites us to come to the banquet. And when we arrive we are placed at the head of the table as the guest of honor. We sit next to the King.

It's an honored position. Let's never insult our God by trying to set a table next to His and call it wonderful. Israel tried this and failed miserably to this day. Praise God, however, that they too are still invited to the banquet.

If we've tasted of the heavenly food found in Christ, who is the Bread of life, then let's never go back to the waste of the world which can never satisfy. May we always move forward with

Christ by faith, honoring Him with our lives and giving Him our best, by the grace of God working in us.

We have no righteousness in ourselves to offer God. It's only the righteousness of Christ in which we can boast. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. In the power of His Spirit let's go out into this world and invite all to come to the King's banquet that they too may taste and see that the Lord is good and the giver of all good gifts, not the least of which is eternal life.