

25. ROMANS SERIES: God's Plan of Salvation - Part 5

Romans 11:1-10

The previous chapter concluded with the inclusion of the Gentiles into the true Israel of God, and the exclusion in a general sense of the physical nation of Israel. Has God therefore rejected the nation of Israel completely? Is there now no place for the Jews in the Israel of God? This is the question that Paul now seeks to answer. He answers this question by drawing attention to what has become known as the '*remnant theology*' of the Old Testament.

Please Read Romans 11:1-10

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: Is there then no room for the Jews in the Israel of God? Explain.

Verse 1: In this verse Paul anticipates an objection to his teaching of chapter 10. If the nation of Israel on the whole has been rejected through unbelief (10:16-21), has God then rejected His people? Has God finished striving with the Jewish people?

Paul's answer is certainly not, for this is not what he has been saying (1 Sam 12:22; Ps 94:14). How could that be the case? Paul himself was a Christian, therefore God could not have cast of all Jewry. The inclusion of Paul is evidence enough that God has not completely rejected Israel, for he too was a Jew (Philip 3:5).

Verse 2: Paul states clearly that God has not cast away His people, for all who are His will come to Him (Jn 6:35-40). Not all within the physical nation of Israel are God's people, yet among physical Israel are those upon whom He has set His love from before the foundation of the world, and these would all be glorified (8:29). All these whom He has foreordained unto glory will indeed be glorified, and will not be cast off. Among these Jews is Paul himself. These elect Jews have been included in the true Israel of God, therefore not all of physical Israel have been cast off (11:5,7; 8:29; 9:6-8; Jn 8:27,28).

What Paul is actually saying though, is that physical Israel is not to be equated with

spiritual Israel, which is the Israel of God. Though physical Israel has indeed been cast off, the true Israel of God has not been cast off, it being made up of those whom God has loved beforehand and determined to save. The people of God in Rome should really have known this doctrine from the Old Testament story of Elijah, for his story further establishes this truth (1 Kings 19:1-18).

Verses 3,4: This quote from 1 Kings 19:10 deals with the persecution of Elijah by Ahab. It is quoted in order to show that being a member of physical Israel doesn't guarantee membership of spiritual Israel. Elijah at the time believed himself to be the only one still in a right relationship with God, and that the entire nation was therefore seeking to kill him. Here is proof that not all in physical Israel were truly of spiritual Israel, for a multitude sought to kill the prophet.

Paul then quotes God's response to the despairing prayer of Elijah, as found in 1 Kings 19:18. Even though it appeared as though all had rebelled, God had yet reserved for Himself a significant remnant that He had chosen to set aside as His own. Clearly God had not cast off all physical Israel during that time of mass rebellion and rejection, as is consistent with God's purpose in salvation.

Verse 5: As in the time of Elijah there was a significant remnant, so in the time of the apostle Paul there remained a faithful remnant, thereby confirming that Israel was not totally rejected by God. This remnant remained solely because of God's sovereign good pleasure in election (9:11; 11:21,24), and not one chosen would be cast off (Jn 6:35-40).

Verse 6: Because the election of a remnant within Israel was of grace, salvation cannot be founded upon the merit of the remnant, for the very essence of grace is unmerited favour (4:4). If this remnant was saved by merit, it could not possibly be a salvation by grace. If the salvation of the remnant was based upon grace, then clearly there is no room for human merit. Grace and works are incongruous, for one cannot include the other (4:4; Eph 2:8,9).

Verse 7: This verse presents something of a conclusion to the preceding argument. Israel on the whole has not gained what it continues to earnestly seek after, that of a right standing before God (9:30,31; 10:3). However, the elect within the nation of Israel have (9:6) obtained it. Those who are not part of the elect have not obtained acceptance with God, but have been hardened in their rejection as a punishment for their rebellion and unbelief.

Verses 8-10: These verses inform us that it is God who has hardened the majority of the physical nation of Israel in its rebellion. The verses quoted by Paul are from Deuteronomy 29:4 and Psalm 69:22,23. The Deuteronomy passage (cf Is 6:9) speaks of a mental and moral dullness, or if you like of a deep sleep in which the nation is insensitive to the message of God (Is 29:10). This has occurred right up until the time of Paul and beyond.

The quote from Psalm 60:22,23, speaks of the Israelite lifestyle being their own undoing,

for they brought upon themselves the punishment that they deserved. Instead of receiving the blessings which all the privileges and advantages should have brought, they became morally and spiritually blind, and continually grieved. The prophecies declared by David have come true says Paul, for this is what Israel on the whole had become.

Therefore the answer to Romans 11:1 is that the elect within Israel are being saved, and the rest of the nation is being hardened in its unbelief as a punishment for sin.

QUESTION: What does the 'remnant theology' teach believers today? Explain.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

Who are the '*all Israel*' of Romans 11:26? Explain.

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