

Has God Rejected Israel?

Romans 11:1-10

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Introduction: Paul is arguing with invisible critics. They were not present, but their assertions were and still are in our day. Many of the same questions and conclusions have surfaced again.... some have never really gone away. Here is a sample:

- The prophets were simply wrong. The promises were never intended to go to Israel or else Israel and her leaders would have embraced Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:6 ⁶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed.

But God says that being genetic or national Israel cannot save them. God promised descendants, but they are those who have the same trusting faith of Abraham who.... "believed God and it was counted as righteousness."

Romans 9:8 ⁸ 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.

- God has definitively or permanently rejected Israel because of their sin and replaced them with the Gentile church.

Again, not true! Paul quotes Hosea as he spoke about Israel and not Gentiles. Israel had rejected God and were therefore no longer His People. Israel had lived like pagans and had become pagans. Because God was not their God, they were not God will restore them in the very geographical place where they rejected Him....In their ancient homeland.

Romans 9:25-26 ²⁵ As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" ²⁶ "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

- If God still has a purpose for Israel how could they have rejected Christ?

Romans 10:3-4 ³ For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Romans 10:12-13 ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³ for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

This brings us to our text this morning. Let's read it together:

Romans 11:1-10 I say then, 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. ² 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? ³ "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." ⁴ But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." ⁵ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. ⁷ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸ 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." ⁹ And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. ¹⁰ "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

Chapter 11 answers three questions. Has God Permanently Rejected Israel? Has Israel Permanently Rejected God? Will God Still Save and Restore Israel? We have time to look at one this morning. Has God Permanently rejected Israel? Here God tells us three things God believes you should know about Israel. Don't say, "this is not important" or "I don't really care about this!" God wrote three chapters in the middle of the most important book in the Bible on salvation. This is important!

- God has NOT rejected Israel when they sinned in the past [1-4]
- God did NOT reject Israel when they sinned in the present [5-7]
- God's grace is the only source of salvation [8-10]

God has NOT rejected Israel when they sinned in the past [1-4]

I say then, 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. [1]: Paul begins with a sort of personal testimony. A first hand proof that God has not rejected Israel. He offers his conversion of proof that God has not rejected His people. The word "reject" means "to push them away." After having received them has he now forced them away?

The answer...."in no way!" "Absolutely not!" If God was pushing away Israel He would not have drawn me to Himself and saved me....and Paul had bonified. He was a direct descendent of Abraham through one of the two faithful tribes...Benjamin.

God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. [2a]: This is the positive assertion that God has absolutely not rejected His people. "Foreknew" carries the idea of intimate knowledge. Like a husband and wife! Pertaining to loving and being loved. God knew you that way before He created the world. He knew His Son that way....

Acts 2:23 ²³ this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

Romans 8:29 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

God has not rejected His people whom he has intimately set His affection on in eternity past. But.... wait a minute. It looks like there is rejection going on here. Messiah has come. He fulfilled every prophecy about Himself....an impossible task by the way! He claimed to be God and to have come from the presence of the Father and then did things that only God could ever do....up to and including His own resurrection. And yet Israel rejected Him. They pushed Him away and even murdered Him.

Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?* [2b]: If you think, Paul will argue, that just because men reject God, that God rejects them, then you have not heard much of what I have said so far. Salvation is not a quid pro quo! It is entirely one sided and that side is God's side. Paul is saying that if we think this way we might be ignorant of a pretty well-known story in the Bible. Ahab and Jezebel have pretty much got Elijah on the run. One word from this woman has him whining...and this right after his total victory over the prophets of Baal.

"Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." [3]: Have you ever just been overcome with fear and you don't even know why? This happens! Elijah is being threatened by the Monarchs so he actually has a reason, but God has delivered him from 850 false prophets. He prevailed over all of them and now he is in hiding from one evil woman. "Israel is a mess!", he laments. "I'm the only one left who loves you and they are coming after me."

But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." [4]: This is a voice from heaven....like an oracle. Notice how it is in quotes. The quote is here for some very specific reasons. Let's recap for a minute.

The arguments are as follows: God has rejected Israel because Israel has rejected God. This is the foundational argument of replacement theology. Israel has been replaced by the gentile church in the plans and purposes of God. The words of the prophets are fulfilled in Christ and in the gentile church and there is not a future for Israel. Paul sums up this sentiment by saying... **"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"**

Let's look at verse 4 now. Paul has emphatically denied that God has rejected Israel because they have rejected Him. He does this in two ways. First by pointing out himself. He was the quintessential rejecting Jew. He killed Christians and was no doubt totally in favor of Christ's crucifixion. He was a blasphemer he says....and God saved me.

Secondly he reminds them that in the past....the distant past....in Israel's darkest hour God was still keeping His promises to Israel. God did not say to Elijah, "there are still 7,000 people who are righteous and faithful to me." He says "I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF 7,000 men. What is the point? God is faithful to Israel. Then have never been

faithful to Him. This is a chapter about God and His faithfulness. IT is not about Israel and her faithfulness or the gentile church and its faithfulness. God is a promise keeping God. That is the only kind of God He can be. If He does not keep His promises to Israel you cannot trust Him to keep His promises to you. Let me tell you why! Because we are no better. We are saved by Grace when we were dead in our sins. We are kept by grace or we would all have spun into the ground already.

Jude 1:1-2 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

God did NOT reject Israel when they sinned in the present [5-7]

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. [5]: God has not rejected Israel. Just as He kept 7,000 for Himself in Elijah's day He was keeping and saving Jews in Paul's day.

Acts 2:41 ⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Acts 4:4 ⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The rejection of national Israel is temporary. Scripture insists that God has not rejected them at all...in the sense that He has spurned them or pushed them away from His heart. Israel was NEVER saved because she was Israel. She was saved by God's grace and mercy through faith in Him. God was constantly sending a prophet to them and they were constantly rejecting God. Jesus was the final prophet to arrive, but He was more. He was the Son of their God! He was their Messiah...the vineyard owners Son of whom they said, "Let us kill Him and the inheritance will be ours."

Israel is clearly in a very dark place. Jesus described her this way during His final week on earth...

Matthew 23:32-39 ³² "Fill up, then, the measure *of the guilt* of your fathers. ³³ "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? ³⁴ "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵ so that upon you may fall *the guilt of* all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. ³⁷ "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. ³⁸ "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! ³⁹ "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

But this does not equivocate to the teaching that God has permanently rejected Israel and replaced her with the gentile church! It does not mean and cannot mean that Israel, who was always and only saved by God's mercy and grace, had finally placed the straw that broke the camel's back. Paul shows that the prophets always knew about this rejection. God always knew and although he brought them under bondage when they sinned and even sent them out of the land into captivity he never ever rejected them. God is a promise keeping God. Listen to what God said to them in captivity through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 ³¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 31:35-37 ³⁵ Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: ³⁶ "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." ³⁷ Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. [6]: How did God ever put up with these people? Can people who murder their own God ever be saved? What could they ever do to make up for something like that? These are the questions that form the basis for the notion that God is through with Israel. That He will not keep His promises to them. They are just to evil!

But what about the gentiles? What about tribesmen in Ecuador that kill innocent missionaries and leave their bodies to float down the river...but then are gloriously converted to Jesus. What about the church in North Korea or in Iran. How did they come to faith. What did the nations of the world ever, ever do to deserve to be saved. Paul describes us all this way....

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Romans 3:10-18 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³ "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴ "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵ "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT

TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." ¹⁸ "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

Romans 5:6-8 ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I never cease to be amazed that some of the greatest preachers of Grace and believers in the doctrines of Grace are willing to imagine that God has totally withdrawn His grace from Israel. That God was taken aback by their rejection and murder of His Son. That He suddenly decided that all the things He said through His prophets would not be honored by Him. In trying to explain Israel's desperate spiritual condition, Scripture puts them on the exact same footing as gentiles. In the shadow of the Cross all men are exactly the same.

What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened [7]: Israel was seeking her own righteousness. She was fully persuaded that she did not need God to save her. She was after all, His chosen people. She among all the nations of the earth had His written law and His ordained priesthood and His prescribed sacrifices and rituals. She bore His name and lived in the land that He gave her. And she loved all those gifts. She loved them way more than she loved the giver. Isaiah the prophet spoke of it and Jesus quoted him...

Isaiah 29:13 ¹³ Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,

What Israel like many in the church today seek is their own justification. They are good people or at least good enough. They do not see their sin as their eternal condemnation. I hope you do because it is. Those who seek righteousness will never obtain it. They become hard in the process and they spurn grace. God has to act to strip away the veil of men's blindness and bring them into the glorious light of Christ. It is our spiritual resurrection from the dead.

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

This is NOT closed to Israel. What God closed was their temple, their priesthood, their sacrifices and until 1948 their land. God made it impossible for them to pursue their own righteousness by taking away every means they used to do so. He is not through with Israel. He has set them aside as a nation for His purpose.

Romans 11:11 ¹¹ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

God's grace is the only source of salvation [8-10]

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." [8]: Here Paul describes the hardening that comes upon men as a judgment. This is NOT God deciding to make it impossible for some men to believe. It is God judging the unbelief and rejection of men with an indifference that comes upon them.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I'd rather go to hell anyway! That is where all the fun is and where all my friends are." That is a spirit of stupor. Death is all around them but they cannot see it's finality. The love of Christ is lived and preached within ear shout but they cannot hear it.

When Israel stood at Kadesh Barnea....at the entry to the promised land.....God sent 12 spies into the land.

Numbers 13:26-31 and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ "Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ "Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan." ³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it." ³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us."

They were suddenly unable to see everything God had put before their eyes. They had hardened their own hearts and God had returned the favor. Now they wanted to return to Egypt. They forgot the plagues, the exodus, the pillar of fire and smoke, the Red Sea, The Manna and the water from the rock. It all disappeared. Don't let this happen to you...Hebrews warns. Don't forget the grace and mercy of God and start trusting in yourselves. Even we who have come to Christ by faith alone can try to be perfected by our works. The rest of God is in Faith Alone in Christ Alone.

Hebrews 4:7-16 ⁷ He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. ⁹ So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. ¹¹ Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. ¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let

us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. [9]: David spoke prophetically of Christ death at the hands of national Israel. A table is a place of safety and comfort. It is dinner with friends. We feel happy there....but God has given Israel a burden that reaches down to their intimate private life.

"LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER." [10]: Again...this is a judicial hardening. It is punishment on those who have refused to see or hear their Messiah. God is not unjust to do this. Listen to the people who had listened to Jesus and witnessed His miracles and mercy.

Matthew 27:23-25 ²³ And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" ²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see *to that* yourselves." ²⁵ And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

CONCLUSION: So is Israel in favor with God today? Hardly! She has rejected her God and killed His Son. Before that she killed the prophets and rejected what they had to say. During the time of Elijah she became so pagan that God said they were not His people. During the time of Daniel and Ezekiel they became so stubborn that God had to throw them out of the land and into captivity by a foreign nation. But...through all of that... Scripture says....NOT ME! And not pre-millennial theology! Scripture says.....

Romans 11:2 ² God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.

Romans 11:25-27 ²⁵ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery-- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶ and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." ²⁷ "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

In the meantime, God is saving Jewish men and women exactly like He does gentiles. There are 150 congregations with 20,000 in Israel and 300,000 Jewish Christians or 2% worldwide. The Gospel is the power of God and Jesus Christ is the Gospel Good News!

Romans 1:16.....I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.