

32. Learning How God Has a Remnant in Israel Who Believe

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the Gospel of Christ to others. We saw that because the Jews have rejected that Gospel, God has set them aside for the present and given the church the privilege of taking that message to the world. However, the fact that God has set aside the Jews in the present does not mean that God has forgotten the Jews. In Romans 11, we are going to see that God has a great future for both the Jews and the church. That will be the focus of this topic and the next two topics.

Romans 11:1-4 says, “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. 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, ‘LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life’? 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.’” Here, we are reminded again of the concern that Paul had for the Jews even though he was the apostle to the Gentiles. This is a reminder of the concern that we should all have for our own people. Paul was a part of the nation of Israel. He was a descendent of Abraham. He was from the tribe of Benjamin.

Paul makes it very clear that God has not forgotten the Jews. The word that is translated “foreknew” means *to have knowledge beforehand or to foreknow those God has chosen to salvation*. This word was used in Romans 8:29 where we read, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” In this verse, we see that God knew each of us as Christians before He created the world and determined in advance to conform us to the image of Christ. God knew the nation of Israel beforehand and chose them to be the nation that would experience His blessing. However, that did not mean that every person in that nation would be saved but rather that the nation would enjoy blessings and privileges as the nation God chose through which Christ would come.

In fact, in the time of Elijah, he thought he was the only one left in the nation of Israel that still served the Lord. God had to explain to Elijah that he did not recognize that there was still a group of people in Israel that followed the Lord. Elijah said in 1 Kings 19:10, “So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.’” God answered Elijah in 1 Kings 19:18, “‘Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.’” God knew those who were still faithful to the Lord even though Elijah did not. Throughout the years, God has always had at least a small group of Jews who are faithful to the Lord, even during the times when most of the Jews turned away from the Lord.

Romans 11:5-6 goes on to say, “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 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.” Paul also explained why God has always caused at least a small group of Jews to be faithful to the Lord.

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Paul said that at the time he was living that there was a group of Jews faithful to the Lord according to the election of grace. The word translated “election” means *those who have been chosen by the act of God*. God has chosen each person that comes to Him by His grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Here, we see that God gives each person who places their faith in Christ that faith so that they are able to be saved by faith.

God wanted to make it clear that no one can be saved by works. If a person could be saved by works, then grace would be unnecessary. If a person could be saved by his or her own works, then grace would mean nothing. However, our works could never save us. Titus 3:3-7 says, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” It was the grace and mercy of God that makes it possible for each person to be saved.

Paul went on to describe the condition of most of the people of Israel at the time that he was living. Romans 11:7-10 says, “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 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.’ And David says: ‘Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.’” In the time of Paul, most of the Jews had not placed their faith in Christ. Instead, only those Jews that God had chosen had received faith and placed their faith in Christ. God said that the rest had been blinded. They had physical sight but they lacked spiritual sight. Paul quoted two Old Testament passages written by Isaiah and David to show the blinding of the nation of Israel.

Isaiah said in Isaiah 29:10, “For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, *namely*, the seers.” Here, we see that in the time of Isaiah, he said that God had given Israel a spirit of deep sleep. Their eyes had become closed. Deuteronomy 29:4 says, “Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this *very* day.” Here, we see that Isaiah wrote about something that had already happened in the time of Moses. In the time of Moses, the people had already closed both their eyes and their ears. They did not want to see the works of God and they did not want to hear the Word of God. Spiritual blindness will continue in every person until God gives spiritual sight and spiritual understanding.

David also spoke of this spiritual blindness when he wrote in Psalm 69:22-23, “Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually.” Because of sin, people are in rebellion against God. As a result, they are spiritually blind and cannot see. God said through David, as well as many other Old Testament writers, that the people of Israel could not see or understand spiritual

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truth. As a result of this lack of spiritual eyesight, their lives were filled with fear.

However, Paul went on to point out the fact that the spiritual blindness that God had brought on the people of Israel would not be permanent. Romans 11:11-12 says, “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles. Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!” Here, we see that God said through Paul that the Jews had not stumbled so that they would permanently fall.

When someone stumbles, they are able to get up again. However, when a person falls completely, they are not able to recover from that fall. Here, we see that instead of a person that Paul was speaking about the people of the nation of Israel. Paul said that their stumbling certainly did not mean that they had fallen completely so that they would not be able to have their eyes opened by the Lord in the future. In fact, that future when Israel will again experience the blessing of God is foretold in this very chapter. Romans 11:26 says, “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.’” Here, we see that God promises that the day will come in the future that the entire nation of Israel will turn to God.

We also see that God explained the reason why Israel has stumbled. God said that He allowed Israel to be blinded and stumble so that salvation could come to the Gentiles. God also said that salvation for many Gentiles would provoke the Jews to jealousy. In Isaiah 49:6, we read, “‘Indeed He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”” We see that God said He would use His Servant (Christ) to minister to both the Jews and the Gentiles. God said Christ would raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved ones in Israel. This was a promise of future salvation for the Jews. Then, they will become a witness to the world.

God went on to say that the temporary fall of the Jews would allow the Gentiles to receive the riches of God. However, God also said that when the Jews are given spiritual sight and go out to share the Gospel to the ends of the earth, their fullness will mean even greater blessing on both the Jews and the Gentiles. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that when God opens the eyes of many Jews and also many Gentiles, the people will receive even greater blessing. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the way that God is working to bring blessing to both Jews and Gentiles, even though only a remnant of Jews believe today.