

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-13-11 PM NOTES
"WHY HAS ISRAEL BEEN SET ASIDE?"
ROMANS 11:11-24
#57 in Series, "Verse by Verse through Romans"

Romans 9:18-21 (NKJV) "18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. 19 You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?' 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"

Ephesians 1:4a (NKJV) "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world..."

Romans 9:23 (NASB) "And *He did* so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory."

"We ought to remember that the Lord may have infinitely wise and gracious motives for the most severe and terrible judgments."
—Robert Haldane

I. God's Purpose in Setting Israel Aside (vv. 11-15)

Romans 11:11a (NIV) "Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?"

Romans 11:8 (NKJV) "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.*'"

A. It Was for Gentile Salvation (v. 11b)

Matthew 21:43 (ESV) "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits."

Myster—That which is unknown until it is revealed by God

Galatians 3:28 (NKJV) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Acts 13:46 (NKJV) "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you [Jews] first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.'"

Acts 18:6 (NKJV) "But when they [Jews] opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, 'Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'"

B. It Was for Jewish Salvation (vv. 11c-15)

Romans 10:19 (NKJV) "But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: '*I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.*'"

Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

1 John 3:14-15 (ESV) “¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

Zechariah 12:10a (NKJV) “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced.”

Zechariah 13:1 (NKJV) “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”

Zechariah 14:9 (ESV) “And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.”

Isaiah 11:6-9 (ESV) “⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. ⁹They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Romans 10:1 (NKJV) “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.”

II. God’s Forewarning (vv. 16-22)

A. The Firstfruit (v. 16a)

B. The Olive Tree (v. 16b)

C. The Warning (vv. 17-22)

III. God’s Plan (vv. 23-24)

Romans 11:26-27 (NKJV) “²⁶And 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; ²⁷for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’*”

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“WHY HAS ISRAEL BEEN SET ASIDE?”
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We are getting close to the conclusion of what many Bible scholars call the most difficult passage in the Bible – Romans 9-11. Here is what we are going to look at in this message. God has a purpose in all that He does. He does nothing arbitrarily. I hasten to add that we often do not and cannot understand His purposes. In fact Paul delivers a strong rebuke to those who think that they have to figure out why God does what He does. To those who question why God would harden Pharaoh’s heart and then hold him responsible, Paul writes in **Romans 9:18-21 (NKJV)** “¹⁸Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ¹⁹You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ ²⁰But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ ²¹Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” Sometimes it seems from our limited perspective that God is arbitrary in what He does. An example is the doctrine of election. This doctrine (clearly taught in Scripture) says that God before He created the world elected or chose some to be saved. **Ephesians 1:4a (NKJV)** “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...” We don’t know why He chose those whom He chose but we know it wasn’t arbitrary as one pulling the petals from a daisy saying, “I love you, I love you not, I love you...” The only thing God gives us in His word as to His purpose in whom He chooses is that it is for His glory. In the context of why God chooses whomever He chooses, we read in **Romans 9:23 (NASB)** “And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory”. In the passage we are examining in this message, we are going to see His purpose in setting the Israel aside, doing His redemptive work through the church and then His purpose for saving the Israelites at His second coming and fulfilling all that He promised to do through the Jews. Here is what we will see from this passage:

- Israel has been set aside for a time as far as being God’s channel through which He reaches a lost world for redemption, but their setting aside is not permanent.
- The setting aside of Israel has a purpose. The Scottish Bible scholar Robert Haldane said, “We ought to remember that the Lord may have infinitely wise and gracious motives for the most severe and terrible judgments” [Quoted in James Boice, *Romans, Volume III*, Page 1320].
- When Israel is saved, it will lead to a time of even greater Gentile blessing.

You need to be aware that many Bible scholars do not agree with this interpretation that seems so clear to me in Romans 9-11. A group of people who are generally called *Amillennialists* believe that God has set the Jews aside forever and has no future plans for Israel as a nation. They teach that the church has inherited all of the promises made to Israel. While I certainly believe that Amillennialists are saved and have sound teaching in many other areas, I cannot understand how anyone could read the Scriptures relating to the covenants God made with Abraham and others, and how they could read the promises made through the prophets relating to the millennial promises made to the nation Israel and wave a magic hermeneutical wand over them and say that they are now for the church. Perhaps the main reason that this faulty interpretation holds such sway today is that it was the view of many if not most of the Protestant Reformers. The reformers were right on so many things that one wonders how they could be so wrong on this issue of God’s purpose for the Jews. Charles Hodge (1797-1878), a professor at Princeton when Princeton still believed the Bible, was in agreement with most everything that the Reformers taught. He produced one of the greatest works of systematic theology ever written. Hodge, who taught that God is not yet through with Israel, gives a good explanation of how the reformers could be so right in most areas and be in error on this area dealing with God’s purpose for the Jews. Hodge says that one reason is that they were likely reacting against some extreme views relating to the millennial reign of Christ by a group

often called the “Millennarians” that had gained some popularity. But sadly there was probably another reason. In the late Middle Ages (which is the background of the Reformation), anti-Semitism (a hatred of the Jews) was wide spread among the church. While the reformers were men of God, they were also flawed vessels who were far from perfect. Many (especially Luther) was influenced by this hatred of the Jews for killing Jesus that it influenced how they interpreted Scripture [From Boice’s Commentary, Page 1361]. I am certainly not saying that today or even in history every person who believes that God has no further plans for the Jews is (was) anti-Semitic. I am saying that many are influenced in their views by the reformers.

Let’s dig into Scripture and see why Israel was set aside and then look at the future for ethnic Israel.

I. God’s Purpose in Setting Israel Aside (V11-15)

The gospel went first to the Jews, but the Jews by and large rejected the gospel. Because the vast majority of the Jews rejected their Messiah and refused His Kingdom, God set them aside and birthed the church. Don’t misunderstand. This rejection did not catch God by surprise. It was prophesied in the Old Testament and we know that God knows every detail about the future because He is above the time dimension and in a sense there is no future with Him. The whole concept of the church was not an emergency plan whipped together when the Jews rejected their Messiah. While the church was not detailed in the Old Testament it is a part of the eternal plan of God.

In verse 11, Paul asks a question that is basically the same one he asked in verse one of chapter 11. I think that the NIV gets at the true meaning of the question: **Romans 11:11a (NIV)** “Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?” Paul answers this question with one of the strongest negatives in the Greek language: “Certainly not!” The HCSB says “Absolutely not!” That first part of verse 11 ought to settle the fact that God is not through with the nation Israel! The condition of Israel is summarized in a quote from the Old Testament in **Romans 11:8 (NKJV)** “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.*’” We are going to see that this condition of the Jews is not permanent. God was not taken aback or by surprise by this rejection and used it to accomplish His purposes. What are those purposes?

A. It Was for Gentile Salvation (V11b)

The Jew’s temporary loss was the Gentiles permanent gain! Jesus Himself told the Jews that this is what was going to happen. **Matthew 21:43 (ESV)** “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.” The “people producing its fruits” in this verse is the church. When Israel fell, God raised up the church. The church did not take over or inherit the promises God made to ethnic Israel, but the church became the channel through which God’s plan of redemption for the nations would be carried out. In Ephesians 3:3, the church is called the “mystery”. A “mystery” in the New testament is something that could never be known until God reveals it. The church was not revealed in the Old Testament; it was a mystery revealed in the New Testament. The church is made up of Gentiles and believing Jews. They are not separate peoples in the church, but all a part of the Body of Christ. In this time when the Jews have been temporarily set aside (often called “the church age), there is no separate plan of salvation for the Jews and the Gentiles. Salvation is for all who come by grace alone through faith alone to Christ alone. When the new birth (regeneration) takes place and a person repents and believes, they become a part of the one body. We see that in the body of Christ, while there are still ethnic differences or role differences, there is no distinction as to worth. **Galatians 3:28 (NKJV)** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

We see this movement to the Gentiles being demonstrated in the book of Acts. On four separate occasions Luke records how the Jews rejected the gospel and it was taken to the Gentiles who accepted it. For instance, look at **Acts 13:46 (NKJV)** “Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you [Jews] first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.” **Acts 18:6 (NKJV)** “But when they [Jews]

opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, ‘Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’”

The purpose in setting Israel aside was first for Gentile salvation.

B. It Was for Jewish Salvation (V11c-15)

The construction of this sentence is a purpose clause. It is literally, “for the purpose of provoking the Jews to jealousy”. We saw the same thing back in **Romans 10:19 (NKJV)** “But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: ‘*I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.*’” Though we think of jealousy being negative, it is used in a good sense here. It is used in the sense of the Jews seeing what they have missed because of their rejection of the Messiah and desire to have it. What is it that provokes the Jews to jealousy? It is the transformed, unexplainable, supernatural life of Gentile believers. The Jews who have rejected the Messiah are spiritually bankrupt and the Gentiles who have received Christ have been blessed as we are told in **Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)** “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ”. After the cross and the resurrection, all of the shadows and types of the ceremonial law were fulfilled. An example is the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) was all a picture of Christ and the shedding of His blood as atonement for sins and the resulting forgiveness. Now in Judaism, it is nothing but a time of confessing one’s sin and feeling remorse for it. It is an empty ritual when for the church it is a reality. It should be the desire of every Christian to manifest a transformed, Christ filled, life that would serve to draw unsaved Gentiles, but especially unsaved Jews to receive their Messiah. When they see Gentiles who profess to be Christians who are liars, dishonest, immoral and anti-Semitic, instead of provoking the Jews to jealousy, they are just provoked! It is sad that most of the white supremacist groups claim to be Christian and yet hate people of color and especially Jews. We know that they are not genuine Christians because **1 John 3:14-15 (ESV)** “¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” One of the purposes of God saving the Gentiles is that the Jews would see the transformation Christ makes in a life and be drawn to know this Messiah they have rejected. Every Jewish person who gets to know us should be envious of us.

VERSE 12 - Here is a reference to the future restoration of the Jews. This is called an a fortiori argument. That is it argues from the lesser to the greater. If Israel’s rejection of the Messiah and their being set aside has been such a blessing in the Gentiles coming to Christ, how much greater will be the blessing when Israel turns to Christ! We see some of this blessing described in **Zechariah 12:10a (NKJV)** “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced.” He goes on to say in **Zechariah 13:1 (NKJV)** “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” We read in **Zechariah 14:9 (ESV)** “And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.” Oh the blessings of that time when Israel turns to Christ. We are told in the book of Revelation that Satan will be bound, the curse will be lifted on the earth and as is described in **Isaiah 11:6-9 (ESV)** “⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” That is only a sample of the amazing and wonderful days that come after Israel turns to the Messiah they pierced and receive Him.

VERSE 13, 14 – Paul wants the Gentiles to understand that he has been called of God to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, but because of his burden for his people the Jews, he is rejoicing in the fact that God is saving the Gentiles to bring about the salvation of the Jews. He said earlier in **Romans 10:1 (NKJV)** “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” Paul cared deeply

about the salvation of the Gentiles, but it was the salvation of the Jews that consumed his desires and prayers. He directly associated the salvation of the Gentiles with the salvation of the Jews.

VERSE 15 – This is very similar to the argument of verse 12. Paul is not speaking of bodily resurrection here. He is speaking of Israel as a spiritually dead people (with the exception of those who have been saved and become part of the church) who will be made spiritually alive through faith in their Messiah that they will recognize and be saved. What is true of individual Jews at that time is also true of the nation Israel as there is a mass turning to the messiah and the nation is given spiritual life.

We see God's purpose in setting Israel aside.

II. God's Forewarning (V16-22)

In these verses, Paul uses two illustrations of what has happened and will happen to Israel and gives a warning to the Gentiles about being proud of this salvation they have been given that has passed by most of Israel. What actually has happened is that many Gentiles instead of seeing their incredible gift of salvation as being by God's grace to provoke Israel to envy or jealousy, they began to do the same thing Israel did and become prideful over their blessing and look down on the Israelites whose rejection made their offer of salvation possible.

A. The Firstfruit (V16a)

This section is not talking about individuals so much as it is Israel nationally and the Gentiles collectively. The principle in verse 16 is pulled from Numbers 15:17-21. When God accepts the first part, He sanctifies the whole. Because God accepted Abraham, the first Israelite, and made a covenant with him, He has sanctified the nation (descendants of Abraham) as well. That is not teaching that every individual Israelite will be saved; it is teaching that the nation will not be discarded or set aside permanently.

B. The Olive Tree (V16b)

If the root is holy (set apart to the Lord), then so are the branches. The root, like the firstfruit, pictures Abraham and the covenant God made with him. In Jeremiah 11:16-17 and in Hosea 4:4-6, the olive tree is a symbol of the nation Israel. The branches are the physical descendants of Abraham. The God who has declared the root holy (set apart to Him) cannot finally forsake the tree. Both illustrations are saying that God cannot be a covenant keeping God, a true to His word God if he totally and finally rejects the nation Israel. That is why Paul answered the question of verse 11 so adamantly.

C. The Warning (V17-22)

The Apostle here is using the horticultural illustration of grafting one variety of branches into a tree of another variety. Olive trees can live for hundreds of years, but after a certain age, they tend to not be as productive. In order to restore productivity, branches from younger trees were grafted into the old tree. The Israelites who did not believe are pictured as old branches that are broken off. I stress that nowhere does the Bible teach that every individual Israelite will be saved. Those Jews who have died without Christ are separated from God forever in Hell. Instead of the unfaithful, unproductive branches of unbelieving Israel, the branches of a wild olive tree were grafted into the tree. These wild branches represent believing Gentiles. Notice that not all of the old branches were broken off. There has always been a believing remnant and that remnant today is in the church.

Next, Paul gives a warning to the grafted in branches – the believing Gentiles. He warns them to not be prideful of your blessings as were many of the Jews. The only reason that Gentiles have been grafted in is because of the grace of God who has granted us repentance and faith. We have nothing of which to boast. If the Gentiles become haughty, God can remove them as he removed the Jews. That is not speaking of individuals losing their salvation, but of the Gentiles losing their privileged place of being grafted into the tree and its roots. If God cut off apostate Israel for their unbelief, He can certainly cut off an apostate pride filled church. Church history is full of examples of churches who have not heeded this warning. One example is the church of Asia Minor that was in what we call today Turkey. This was the first major area of the Gentile world to be evangelized primarily from Paul's missionary journeys. The church in Asia Minor began to multiply and by the 4th Century the great defenders of the faith were from Asia Minor.

But sadly that church began to move toward apostasy and today in Turkey less than 2% of the population is Christian.

A second example is the church in North Africa. Many of the early church fathers were from North Africa. Augustine, the greatest theologian of the early church was from North Africa (Carthage), and yet today the church is almost non-existent. Pride and unbelief are dangerous. If we ever become arrogant and forget that all we have is by God's grace, we too could experience the severity of God and be cut off as a church.

III. God's Plan (V23-24)

Simply put, God's plan is to restore the natural branches. When the Messiah returns, those Jews alive will see Him for who He is and there will be a mass turning to Him. Verses 26-27 speak of this mass turning to Christ when He returns. **Romans 11:26-27 (NKJV)** “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.’*”

CONCLUSION

The one message that is pounded in over and over in Romans 9-11 is that God is faithful to keep His promises. The primary evidence of His faithfulness is the Jews. (3566)