

**080113 God Forbid! 23/02 January 13, 2008GG**  
**Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"**

Volume 23, Number 2 January 13, 2008GG

**God Forbid!**

*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying.... ([Ro 11:1-2](#))*

As he moves to the next logical sequence in this section of the Roman letter, Paul asks a pointed question, "Hath God cast away his people?" His answer, two simple words in our English Bible, "God forbid," speaks volumes regarding his inspired thinking. A. T. Robertson explains the intensity with which Paul answers this question.

An indignant negative answer is called for by [see Greek] and emphasized by [see Greek] (God forbid).<sup>125</sup>

"An indignant negative answer..." in other words Paul responded as strongly as he possibly could to the absurdity of the question. For Paul the question is beyond even a remote possibility. God has not—and will not—"...cast away his people which he foreknew." Robertson also offers a notable comment regarding Paul's choice of the term "...which he foreknew."

The same form and sense as in 8:29, which see. Probably the Hebrew sense of choice beforehand. The nation of Israel was God's chosen people and so all the individuals in it could not be cast off. <sup>126</sup>

Robertson, I believe, rightly observes that Paul's use of the term "foreknew" holds the same meaning that he intended in [Ro 8:29](#), though he seems to confuse God's choice of individuals with His choice of the nation of Israel. Most contemporary Bible teachers ignore Paul's teaching in the eighth chapter and make an interpretational "leap" by interpreting the eleventh chapter (some include the ninth chapter as well, attempting to explain God's election in the ninth chapter as nothing more or less than God's Old Testament choice of the nation of Israel) as referring specifically to natural/cultural Jews. They use this interpretational paradigm to justify their belief that God shall restore the supremacy of Jews in God's blessings at some time prior to the Second Coming. Regardless of the merit—or lack thereof—for the idea of Jewish restoration, this chapter does not support the idea. I believe Robertson rightly links Paul's use of "...which he foreknew" in this passage to his use of the term in [Ro 8:29](#). Otherwise why would he so carefully frame the idea in precisely the same language that he used in the eighth chapter? I further believe Robertson correctly interprets "foreknew" in both passages as referring to "...the Hebrew sense of choice." In other words Paul in both passages refers to God's choice of people, not to a supposed deterministic and absolute manipulation of all events that occur.

In a moral universe God does not finitely manipulate or orchestrate all events that occur. For a responsible and moral being to manipulate or orchestrate an event makes that being personally and morally responsible for the action. My generation of Americans witnessed the sad resignation of a sitting president of our country because he was implicated in knowing and giving passive, if not more active, approval to an "orchestrated" burglary of the opposing political party's offices. "Watergate" clearly illustrates the moral effect of a man sitting in a plush office, never picking up a burglary tool, and never personally going near the opposing party's offices, but his being implicated as participating to some extent in the "orchestration" of the event was viewed by a culture with "moral" values as a clear breach of his own moral character, leading to his resignation from the office of president in shame. We cannot claim that God either "orchestrates" all events that occur or patently refuses to

“allow” them to occur, without laying a moral charge against God for His alleged role as the “orchestrator” of the wicked events.

The two interpretational options for this chapter, natural/cultural Jews or “spiritual” Jews, lead one in two quite divergent theological paths. Based on the language at the beginning of the ninth chapter, did Paul forget and/or choose to ignore all that he had written in the first eight chapters, or did he use the first eight chapters of this letter as a foundation on which to further develop the themes that he has already introduced in those chapters?

If in fact Paul retains the foundational truth with which he closed the eighth chapter; there can be no separation of those whom God loved and chose in Christ from His eternal love; then we might rightly expect him to explain and clarify why his claim that God rejected a majority of the Jewish people of his generation does not contradict that core truth. If God’s election and foreknowledge referred to natural or cultural Jews, the contradiction stands, and God has in fact altered His divine promises not to forsake His chosen people. However, if God’s election and foreknowledge refer to a people chosen in Christ out of all nations, races, and cultures, (all true or “spiritual” Jews according to Paul in [Ro 2:28-29](#)), the rejection of the Jews who forsook their God in no way contradicts God’s promise of eternal preservation—no separation from those so chosen in Christ from God’s love. You see, in the closing verses of the eighth chapter Paul framed the clear premise of no separation on our identity with the Lord Jesus Christ, not on a presumed identity with the nation or culture of Israel. Notice the words.

*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ([Ro 8:38-39](#))*

What is the basis for Paul’s firm allegation of no separation? Does he build his argument on our relationship with the Jewish people, or does he build it on “...the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”? Paul does not leave us to wonder. He clearly assigns the reason for our secure victory and permanent union with God to “...the love of God which is *in Christ Jesus* our Lord.”

This foundational conclusion leads us to the next logical question. When Paul quotes multiple Old Testament passages that predicted both Jewish abdication of their favored status and God’s enlarged blessings upon Gentiles, both here and in the ninth and tenth chapters, did he intend eternal or temporal implications? If we conclude that God’s love for His chosen people, regardless of race or culture, is secure and indissoluble, we must logically conclude that the obvious separation of which Paul writes in these chapters must deal with temporal blessings and judgments, not with eternal separation. Paul has not at all left the primary objective of his Roman letter.

*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. ([Ro 3:1-2](#))*

Notice the basis of God’s favored status to the Jewish people, “...chiefly...the oracles of God.” The primary basis for God’s blessings on Old Testament Jews had to do with His giving them the “holy writings,” the “oracles of God.” If Paul correctly attributes the special status of the Jewish people to God’s holy writings, what we refer to as the Old Testament,<sup>127</sup> what conclusions are we to reach if we discover that first century Jewish people in rather large numbers categorically rejected those writings? They forsook the basis for their special blessing; God did not forsake them! He simply imposed onto them the curses promised in those Holy writings if they forsook Him and His promises as set forth in those Holy writings.

This feature is nothing new in Jewish sacred writings. By his introduction at this point of Elijah’s futile testimony to the northern kingdom, Paul offers a not-so-subtle reminder of a similar mass judgment that God sent upon the nation some eight or nine hundred years earlier. After Rehoboam succeeded his

father Solomon to the throne and heeded bad counsel, Jeroboam led a rebellion in which most of ten tribes broke from the nation and eventually faced God's final judgment that destroyed them as a separate kingdom. If God cannot judge Jews for their forsaking God's judgments, Paul's critics will need to offer a detailed and convincing argument regarding God's judgment against the northern kingdom.

In these three chapters Paul deals at length with the temporal consequences that fell on the Jewish people of the first century because they consciously rejected Jesus as their Messiah, also rejecting the clear prophecies of their own Holy writings. When Jesus concluded His announcement of judgment against that generation of the Jewish people, He affirmed a timeless truth by which any people either enjoy or abandon God's temporal blessings.

*For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Mt 23:39)*

No one, individual or collective people, shall ever "see" the smiling, blessing face of our Lord Jesus Christ apart from a confession of His blessed position as "Lord and Christ," as both God and Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament (Holy writings, "the oracles of God") prophecies. The occasional suggestion that the Jews now living in the geographic region of Israel are secretly rebuilding a replica of Solomon's temple and shall reinstate animal sacrifices is altogether irrelevant to any Biblical truth or prophecy. Jesus is Lord, and He affirmed the exclusive basis for blessing in this passage from Matthew. Jew or non-Jew, the only way anyone shall see the smiling face of God and enjoy His temporal blessings is through their adoring worship and submission to His face and name.

Paul's affirmation, reinforced in the strongest possible words with his "God forbid," is that God's eternal purpose in choosing and saving a people for His glory shall not be altered, clearly sets the stage for our study of the temporal, and grave, consequences that God's people face when they choose to ignore God's "Holy writings" in favor of their own ideas. Let us stand faithfully with Paul.