

Romans

Romans Chapter Eleven

Romans 11:25-36

May 22, 2011

This is lesson number 90 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: Israel’s Final Rejection

Perhaps the most serious threat to America in the entire history of our country is from the Islamic terrorists. When America fought nations it was simple to know who was the enemy and when they were defeated. Not so with individual groups of people with an insane religious zeal who are intent on our destruction. These are people who are willing to commit suicide in order to murder people they call infidels.

What has that got to do with the Book of Romans? Listen carefully.

One of the most controversial theological issues in our day is the interpretation of Romans 11:26: “And so all Israel will be saved.”

Who is “all Israel”?

Most people have been taught that “Israel” is national Israel.

Look at the uninspired paragraph headings and marginal notes in your Bible. These are an interpretation and not God’s Word.

My NJKV reads: “*Promise of Israel’s Restoration.*”

In several previous lessons I have taught and given Scriptural support for the interpretation of “all Israel” as being the elect of God. “All Israel” are individual Jews and individual Gentiles, who collectively are, the “Israel of God” [Galatians 6:16]. In biblical context “all Israel” simply cannot be national Israel.

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Now the reason that the correct interpretation of “all Israel” is so important is that a false interpretation of “all Israel” has largely been the cause of the hatred of Americans by the Islamic extremists. That is quite a claim but I believe that I can back it up.

The most popular system of eschatology [last things] in the present time is Dispensationalism, which insists upon a literal restoration of a nation of Jews. Some scholars of this persuasion teach that Jesus cannot return until the Jews are restored to the land that God gave to them according to their interpretation of OT prophecy. Many people of this persuasion are doing everything possible to help establish “Israel.”

The root of their error comes from allowing the OT to interpret the NT instead of the NT interpreting the OT concerning the promise of land to the Jews.

So in their zeal to bring about what they sincerely believe to be OT prophecy yet to be fulfilled, viz., a restored Israel, they have brought great pressure on American presidents and members of Congress to favor modern day Israel over the Palestinian Arabs.

Please do not infer that I am taking sides with the Islamic terrorists or that in any way I support the murderous activities of such monsters as Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and Yasser Arafat.

And I hasten to say that I am in full support of America’s efforts to defeat the terrorists wherever they may be because the very survival of America is at stake.

All I am saying is that the **rationale** of the Islamic extremists for their hatred of America is largely over the question of **land**. American political leaders have for many years favored modern Israel and shorted the Arabs and we are reaping what we have sown. And this is largely because of a false interpretation of “Israel.”

I also know that the problem of the terrorists is more complicated than what I have just said but I believe that a false interpretation of “all Israel”, meaning a restored Jewish nation to the land, is a large part of the problem.

Please turn to Romans 11:25-27

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25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

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."

One thing that I have emphasized in my lessons on Romans Chapters 9, 10, and 11 as well as from the analogy of Scripture, the entire Bible, is that God calls and justifies **individuals** and not nations.

Paul here, is addressing 'brethren' and not nations.
Do not be ignorant of this mystery. **What mystery?**

Dispensationalists teach that the 'mystery' is that there would be the church. But the true church is every born again soul from Adam until the last one of God's elect is called, regenerated, and justified.

The mystery is the **make up of the church into one body**, individual Jews and individual Gentiles together forever "in Christ"!

That is my interpretation of the single olive tree [16-24], with 'wild branches' [individual Gentiles] grafted in and unbelieving branches [individual Jews] broken off is the single olive tree, the church, or the body of the redeemed of the Lord.

Peter describes the **only nation** that God ever grafted into Christ.
Peter is writing to Christians.

1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

The "hardening in part" [25] is about **the number** of Jews who have been cast off due to unbelief, not a reference to time.

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Romans 11:7

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

We have seen that the ‘**until**’ in verse 25 does not mean that when the last Gentile is saved that ‘**then**’ the Jews will be restored. The “until” does not refer to time but to the **process** of bringing Gentiles and Jews together into the church.

“Until” here in verse 25 has the same meaning as “**till**” does Psalm 110:1

**The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."**

Does ‘till’ mean that Jesus ceases to reign as Lord after all of His enemies are made to be His footstool? Of course not! The process of the reign of the Lord continues until the end of the age and then continues forever in the new heaven and the new earth.

So neither does “until in verse 25 mean the end of anything.

When we come to verse 26 we have the summation of Paul’s explanation of how God is saving Gentiles and Jews and putting them into the church typified by the single olive tree and that is **how** “all Israel will be saved” not **when** “all Israel will be saved”.

Paul’s grief as he expressed it in 9:3 and 10:1 is a **strong indication** that God has rejected earthly Israel. Paul’s grief is either genuine or he did not have the Holy Spirit of God as he writes this letter to the church at Rome.

How could he express such great sorrow for the Jews if he knew that God would save them anyway?

Paul, in Romans, has often quoted from the prophet Isaiah and what he now quotes is from Isaiah 59:20-21. This quote from Isaiah should put to rest every incorrect interpretation of verse 26 as to who is “all Israel”.

Paul writes “And so all Israel will be saved, **as it is written:**

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Dispensational scholars put a period after “all Israel” and never bother to study how Paul has defined “Israel” in the next two lines from Isaiah.

“**as it is written:**” and what he then quotes defines “Israel”.

It is a common practice for a NT writer to quote only a phrase from an OT passage knowing that his reader would associate the entire Scripture so referenced. So Paul quotes a line or two from Isaiah 59 knowing that his readers would make the association with all of Isaiah 59.

Isaiah 59:20-21

**20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion,
And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,"
Says the LORD.**

21 "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."

Isaiah 59 is about the awful failure of Israel to fulfill its missionary function to be a witness for God. Paul has already quoted from Chapter 59 in Romans Chapter 3 where he quotes verses 7-8 to prove the unqualified guilt of the Jews along with the rest of the human race.

In Isaiah 59:16-19 the prophet says that it is a **marvel of heaven** that this sinful nation shows no sign of repentance.

There is no intercessor for them as a nation [16]!

Isaiah says the Redeemer will **come to Zion** and Paul’s version is the Deliverer will **come out of Zion**. Paul is making an inspired free translation from the Hebrew into the Greek and the expressions are equivalent.

The Redeemer who comes to Zion is the Deliverer who comes out of Zion and in the Bible **Zion is the church**. The Redeemer is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!

And “Jacob” stands for the elect children of God as we saw in Chapter 9.

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It should be obvious to anyone who is not blinded by the false interpretation that “all Israel” means national Israel that verses 26b and 27 define “all Israel”.

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."

“All Israel” are those **covenant people** who are called by God to faith in Jesus Christ and who are born again by the Holy Spirit.

We have dealt with covenants in previous lessons from Chapter 4 where Paul cites Abraham and David to prove justification by faith.

Man has broken all the covenants in the Bible except one. All the covenants that involve man except one were conditional on man’s obedience and they were all broken through unbelief and disobedience.

Only the covenant of grace or the new covenant cannot be broken.

The new covenant cannot be broken because it is not contingent on man’s obedience but on the faithfulness of God!

But read carefully the description of the **covenant** that Paul refers to here in verse 27 as he quotes Isaiah 59:21.

21 "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."

“For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” [11:29]

This is the covenant that Jeremiah calls the ‘new covenant’.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

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33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

John Calvin in his commentary on Jeremiah 31:31ff says:

“... We hence see that this passage necessarily refers to the **kingdom of Christ**, for without Christ nothing could or ought to have been hoped for by the people, superior to the Law; for the Law was a rule of the most perfect doctrine. If then Christ be taken away, it is certain that we must abide in the Law.” ...

“Now, as to the new covenant, it is so called, because it is contrary to the first covenant; for God is never inconsistent with Himself, nor is He unlike Himself. He then who once made a covenant with His chosen people, had not changed His purpose, as though He had forgotten His faithfulness. It then follows that the first covenant was inviolable; besides, He had already made His covenant with Abraham, and the Law was a confirmation of that covenant. As then the Law depended on that covenant which God made with His servant Abraham, it follows that God could never have made a new, that is, a **contrary or different covenant**. For whence do we derive our hope for salvation, except from that blessed Seed promised to Abraham? Further, why are we called the children of Abraham, except on account of the common bond of faith?”

My fellow sinners, Abraham was as much a recipient of the “new” covenant as the most recently saved soul who has been born again in the Year of Our Lord, 2011!

In 2003 Dr. Timothy George, at the Beeson Pastors School, gave an overview to his commentary on the Book of Galatians and referred to the **continuity** of the O.T. & N.T. Dr. George said, “Paul ran a pretty good N.T. church with only the O.T. Scriptures.”

“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.” Romans 4:16

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God's covenant promise that Abraham believed had **three aspects**: Land, a seed, and blessing to all nations.

Back when we covered Chapter 4 we saw that in each of the three aspects that there was a literal fulfillment and a spiritual fulfillment. And that is where the misunderstanding comes in. If you cannot see that the literal fulfillment of land, a seed, and a blessing to all nations has already occurred then you are not allowing the NT to interpret the OT.

However, since the premise of my argument for the hatred of America by the Islamic extremists is based on the land I will remind you of what the Bible says about the promise of land.

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It is a serious error of interpretation to make the promise, especially as it pertains to LAND, apply to only the Jews. But dear friends, that is exactly what Dispensational eschatology teaches.

A few years ago I had a passionate encounter with a preacher that I met at the Southern Baptists Founders Conference. He was of the Dispensational eschatological persuasion and his primary assurance of the truth of that system hung on the fact of the present existence of the nation in the middle east that calls itself Israel.

To him, the fact of a modern Israel proved that God's promise to restore Israel to the land was being fulfilled before our very eyes. He was as convinced of his position as I am of mine.

We are two men, both of whom believe the Bible is inerrant and sufficient. The reason we have such very different interpretations of Scripture is due to our principles of interpretation.

Does the OT interpret the NT or does the NT interpret the OT?

Is there a nation in the middle east which calls itself "Israel?"

Of course! In May of 1948, following WWII and the Holocaust, a nation was constituted in the middle east and named itself "Israel."

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Every day the news media carry stories of the ongoing conflict between the Arabs and the Jews.

Are we to understand that this nation is the fulfillment of the promise by God to restore Israel to the land?

Many will answer, "yes!" The majority of Christians, in fact, would answer in the affirmative. Presidents and Congress have been convinced that the answer is "yes".

But I want to remind you that everywhere in Scripture the promise of land is contingent on obedience. The overthrow of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria and later the capture of the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylon was as a direct result of idolatry and disobedience.

The return of the Jews from the exile in Babylon {which by the way included only a small number of those who were then in Babylon} was a fulfillment of specific prophecy, and it too had limitations.

Joshua 21:43-45

43 So the LORD gave to Israel **all the land of which He had sworn to give** to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. 44 The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 **Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.**

So the question for those of the Dispensational persuasion to deal with is what is left regarding the land that is yet to be fulfilled when Joshua says that God has already given the land: So the LORD gave to Israel **all the land of which He had sworn to give** to their fathers, and "All came to pass."

Israel was given the land and they were exiled. A few of them returned from Babylon and continued in unbelief. Isaiah prophesied of their final rejection and Paul uses Isaiah to say that Israel has been rejected.

God is faithful to keep His word, and in my understanding, He does not have anything yet to do regarding a literal restoration of the Jews to the land.

I will remind you that there is not the slightest hint of a future restoration of national Israel in Romans. The only thing we have in Romans is the election of

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grace and the calling and justification of individual Gentiles and individual Jews who make up Zion which is the church.

But there is yet a future fulfillment regarding LAND.

Hebrews 11:8-19

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; **10** for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. **11** By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. **12** Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. **13** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. **14** For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. **15** And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. **17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, **18** of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," **19** concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

As for me, I am eager for the holy city, New Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven. Read Revelation 21, which describes the new heaven and the new earth after the first heaven and the first earth have passed away.

Go back to Romans 4:3 and read that Abraham is "the heir of the world" and not only a portion of land in the middle east.

Go back to Romans 8:22-23 and read about the restoration of the "whole creation" and not about an imagined restored Israel.

Psalm 37:9 *"For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth."*

And Jesus in Matthew 5:5

"Blessed are the meek{teachable}, for they shall inherit the earth."

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It seems to me that God has kept His promise to Abraham in natural ways and the ultimate fulfillment of the promise is sure in Jesus Christ and in the church.

Verses 28-32 continues to describe the condition of the unbelievers in national Israel as enemies of the gospel. But the election has obtained what Israel sought but did not obtain [11:7].

Paul is not talking about the future but the present time for Paul.

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

The nation as a whole is against you on account of the Gospel. But within that nation is a chosen people to whom you are grafted.

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

God cannot go back on His word. The true descendants of Abraham are not an earthly people but a people united to Christ by faith.

30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,

Gentile believers were once alienated from God but through the disobedience of the Jews and their rejection as a nation has led to their salvation.

31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.

But within earthly Israel some who were once unbelievers have seen the mercy shown to the Gentiles and have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

So in the church there are two groups each owing something to the other and becoming a single olive tree. And it is all through mercy! No one is superior to another. It is God who saves!

In Romans Chapters 9, 10, and 11 the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul has taken us into the secret council of God and has shown to those who can receive it

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how God has chosen a people from before the foundation of the world and how God calls His children into being through the Gospel.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" 35' Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Make this your doxology. God is answerable to no one! He does as He pleases. If you are a Christian, you too were once in unbelief and God has given to you all the blessings that are in Christ Jesus.

We will know the correct interpretation of "All Israel" when we get to heaven.

But will you be in heaven? What makes you think you will be in heaven?

Only redeemed sinners will go to heaven. Sinners in heaven are those people who have been convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sin and guilt of breaking the holy and just and good law of God. The same Holy Spirit has shown those guilty sinners the complete satisfaction of the requirements of the law by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you personally placed your trust in Jesus?
Have you traded your sins for the blood of Jesus?