

Is God Done with Israel?

Paul's Refutation of Replacement Theology

Romans 11

Introduction

We live today in an age of confusion, because we have sought to reverse the judgment of Babel. "Babel" means confusion.

As I read somewhere, "Homosexuals lecture us on morality. Transgenders lecture us on biology. Abortionists lecture us on human rights. Socialists lecture us on economics. Illegals lecture us on citizenship. And atheists lecture us on Christianity."

1. Three popular present-day misconceptions:
 - a. The Church has replaced Israel—replacement theology = no future for Israel.
 - b. No pre-Tribulation Rapture—rejects 1 Thessalonians 5:10–11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12; Revelation Chapters 4–5; 6–19.
 - c. No Millennial Reign—Rejects Davidic Covenant: 2 Samuel 7:8–13; Jeremiah 33:14–22. Also rejects the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekial 36:24–28.
2. The book of Romans develops the theology of the Apostle Paul. In 1:16–17, Paul introduces his theme: the Gospel message reveals God's power to save all who believe, and that His righteousness is manifested "*from faith to faith.*"
3. The book of Romans can be outlined by the three watchwords of Paul's theology:
 - a. Faith—Chapters 1–8.
 - b. Hope—Chapters 9–11.
 - c. Love—Chapters 12–16.
4. In Romans Chapter 3, Paul asks three rhetorical questions, which are answered in full in Chapters 9–11:
 - a. Romans 3:1–2, "*What advantage has the Jew?*" He says, "*To them were committed the oracles of God.*" This question is answered in Romans 9 (past), especially vv. 4–5.
 - b. Romans 3:3–4, "*Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God of no effect?*" His answer, "*certainly not!*" Romans 10 (Israel's present), answers this, especially in vv. 14–21.
 - c. Romans 3:5–6, "*Is God unjust who inflicts wrath [on Israel]?*" His answer "*certainly not!*" This question is fully answered in Rom.11, especially in v.7–10.

The Key to the Issue: Romans 11:25–27

1. A danger to the Church exposed: Ignorance leading to arrogance.
2. The key to all Church-age truth: The "Mystery."

3. The nature of Israel's judgment: Judicial blindness due to rejection of her Messiah.
4. The time limit of the judgment: "*Until*," one of three given to Israel.
5. The faithfulness of God to His promises: Not one prophetic word shall fail!

The Five Proofs of Paul's Argument for Israel's Future

In the course of his argument, Paul quotes at least 12 Old Testament passages to confirm that his argument is consistent with what God had foreseen and foretold of Israel's future.

1. **A Personal Proof (v. 1).** Paul's conversion, "*a Hebrew of the Hebrews*" (Phil. 3:4–6), is proof God has not cast Israel away.

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me."

Isaiah 49:15–16

- a. In 1 Corinthians 15:8, Paul was "*born out of due time*." The Greek *ektroma* means "a premature birth," the *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* has "that which is incapable of sustaining life on its own." The *Analytical Greek Lexicon* has "an abortion, a fetus prematurely born."
 - b. In 1 Timothy 1:16 he says, "*I obtained mercy, that in me first [not last] Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*"
 - c. Paul's conversion is not a "pattern" of Church-age conversion. But it is a perfect picture of the conversion of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:1–8) who, like Paul, would evangelize the nations (see Rev. 7:9–17).
2. **A Historical Proof (vv. 2–6).** (See 1 Kings 9:10–18)
 - a. The phrase "*whom He foreknew*" implies an intimate relationship before time began (Amos 3:2).
 - b. Elijah thought he was the only one left (sound familiar?). Was Elijah the prophet ignorant of prophecy? Had he never read Deuteronomy Chapters 26–28, or Chapter 32?
 - c. Just as God had reserved a remnant then, Paul says, "*at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace*" (v. 5).
 - d. The "*election of grace*" is simple: Jesus Christ is the "*Elect One*" of God (Isa. 42:1). When we believe in Him, we become "elect" in Him, by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:3–4; 2:8–9). Jesus defines how election takes place in Matthew 22:1–14. Verse 6 makes it clear that grace cannot involve works (Rom. 4:3–5; Eph. 2:9), nor can works involve grace. They are mutually exclusive terms in relation to our salvation.

3. A Prophetic Proof (vv. 7–10).

- a. Since Israel sought salvation through good works (Rom. 10:1–4), they did not find it.
- b. Instead, they received judicial blindness for their rejection of Christ. He quotes Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10 with Psalm 69:22–23 to show that God had known their hardness of heart from the beginning. In the beginning, Moses warned Israel of their end.
- c. Note that three times in these quotes there is a reference to blindness, unseeing eyes, and darkened sight. This implies a progressive hardening, as we see in Romans 1:18–32 and Ephesians 4:17–19. The phrase “*God gave them up [over]*” (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28) shows that God simply withdrew His restraining grace, allowing them to indulge in their desires.
- d. Isaiah 6:9–13 is another prophecy of their spiritual blindness.

4. A Dispensational Proof (vv. 11–24).

Paul’s point in this section is that, in God’s infinite wisdom, He called out the Church from the Gentiles (Nations), as the ultimate means of bringing Israel back to faith. The spiritual impact of the Church would “*provoke*” Israel (see 10:19) to spiritual zeal (v. 14).

- a. Verse 11 (See Isa. 49:1–7). The phrase “*to provoke them to jealousy*” (see Rom. 10:19; Deut. 32:21; 11:14) reveals the divine genius of God to use the Church to irritate their Jewish pride, in order “*provoke*” —to stir them up for their ultimate salvation.
- b. Verse 12. The “*if*” begins a series of ten “ifs.” In Greek, there are four different classifications or conditions of the word “if.” We only need to understand two in this passage. The first-class condition implies “if, and it is true.” We find these in vv. 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21 and 24. These imply that what follows is assumed to be true. However, in vv. 22–23, we have two third-class condition “ifs,” which indicates a conditional statement. In other words, “if,” and maybe you will, or maybe you won’t. The third-class condition assumes the reality of human volition and choice.
- c. In verses 12 and 15, Paul shows that by Israel’s hardening, the Gospel has come to the Gentiles, and that yet future “*their fullness*” will be “*life from the dead*,” that is, national resurrection through faith.
- d. Verses 16–24. In the analogy of the olive tree (prophesied in Jer. 11:15–16), Paul uses the process of ingrafting, except here “*contrary to nature*” (v. 24), God will use the “wild olive tree” (the Gentile Church) to preserve and give life to the “natural tree” (Israel). These two trees never become the same, nor does one replace the other.
- e. Verses 22–23. The two “ifs” show that the Church must choose to remain faithful, so as to fulfill the provocation, and that Israel must also choose to believe. It is prophetic that the Church will indeed be “*cut off*” at the Rapture, at which time Israel will come to faith in Jesus Christ.
- f. Verse 24. The “*much more*” is a debater’s technique, indicating “with greater certainty,” and implies God’s supernatural working, as in Romans 5:9, 10, 15, 17, and 20.

The Parenthesis (vv. 25–27)

Amazingly, in this parenthesis we see things already beginning to take root in the Church.

1. The danger is that of ignorance of Scripture, leading to arrogance on the part of the Church toward Israel.
2. The ignorance that blinds many in the Church is due to not understanding the “Mystery.” This term is used for truth not previously revealed in the Old Testament. (Eph. 3:1–10; Col. 1:24–27). While there are 12 “mysteries” mentioned in the New Testament, the main point is that they relate to understanding the “Church Age,” which Paul calls “the **dispensation of the gospel**” (1 Cor 9:17), “the **dispensation of the fullness of times**” (Eph. 1:10), “the **dispensation of the grace of God**” (Eph. 3:2), and “the **dispensation (or stewardship) from God**” (Col. 1:25). It was the revelation of the “Mystery” by Paul that moved the Church from not knowing the “*times and seasons*” (Acts. 1:7), to knowing them full well (1 Thess. 5:1–2). By the way, “times and seasons” is biblical talk for “dispensations,” the words implying a “chronology” of “ages” (Greek *chronos*—a series of ages + *Kairos*—a single age).
3. Neither John Darby nor C.I. Scofield invented the idea of dispensations—God did! The word “dispensation” comes from *oikonomia*, from which we get the word “economy.” Literally, it means the “law/administration of a household,” thus, the importance of the “steward.” In Hebrews 3:1–6, Paul makes it clear that the “household” of Israel (Moses being the steward), and the “household” of the Church (Christ is the Son over the house; Paul is the steward) are not the same. The Church is not a replacement of Israel. Rather, they are different “dispensations.” Anyone who speaks of “Old Testament” versus “New Testament,” whether they realize it or not, are speaking “dispensationally.”
4. The “*until*” in v. 25 is a time limit, indicating an end to Israel’s blindness. It is one of three “*untils*” given to Israel:
 - a. “*Until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD’*” (Matt. 23:39). His point is that when Israel says this, He will return.
 - b. “*Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24). The times of the Gentiles go from Nebuchadnezzar to the Antichrist.
 - c. “*Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*” (Rom. 11:25). This is a reference to the *harpazo*—the Rapture of the Church (John 14:1–3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:13–18). The word “*fullness*” was originally used of a complete harvest, or of a sea vessel that was fully manned.

5. Paul's whole argument hinges on the "*until*," after which he affirms that "*all Israel will be saved*" when "*The Deliverer will come out of Zion*" (vv. 26–27). "All Israel" here refers to those alive at the Second Advent of Christ. The prophet Zechariah tells us that will be but one third of the nation (Zech. 13:7–9). The other two-thirds will die in the Tribulation. This is twice the number/percentage of Jews who died in the Holocaust (about one out of three).
6. In vv. 26–27, Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20–21, 27:9, and Jeremiah 31:33–34.

Old Testament Figures of the Rapture

1. Enoch (Gen. 5:24)
2. Noah's Ark (Gen. 6–7)
3. Lot's deliverance (Gen. 19:22). The angel could not destroy Sodom until Lot was safe.
4. Isaiah 26:19–20, "*Your dead shall live; together with my dead body ... Come My people, enter your chambers ... for a little moment ... For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity ...*"

Three New Testament examples

Each of these use the Greek word *harpazo*, "caught up" used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

1. Philip (Acts 8:39)
2. Paul (2 Cor. 12:2–4)
3. Jesus (Rev. 12:5)

5. The Theological Proof (vv. 29–32).

The issue in these verses is that God is faithful, and He will fulfill all His promises literally, not figuratively. All who deny that Israel has a prophetic future call God a liar, and impugn His faithfulness, as well as Scripture's accuracy.

- a. The "*gifts and calling*" (v. 29) in this context, do not refer to Church-age gifts specifically, but rather to those given to Israel (Rom. 9:4–5).
- b. Note the emphasis on "*mercy*" (v. 30). Whereas grace gives us what we do not deserve, mercy withholds from us what we do deserve.
- c. Just as we received mercy from their disobedience, they will receive mercy by the mercy God has shown us (v. 31). Neither the Church nor Israel deserve the unfathomable riches God has given to us.
- d. God committed all mankind under sin, that He might have mercy on all (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 6:23).

The Doxology (vv. 33–36)

Here, Paul composes a doxology, a short hymn of praise, as he exults in the infinite wisdom of God, “*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!*” The word “*unsearchable*” means “unable to be traced or tracked.” It occurs only here and Ephesians 3:8. In vv. 34–35, he quotes Isaiah 40:13 and Job 41:11. For other doxologies, see Romans 16:25–27, Ephesians 3:20–21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24, 1 Timothy 6:15–16, Hebrews 13:20–21, and Jude 24–25.

Summary

1. Romans 12:1–2 should be our response to Romans Chapters 9–11, where “*mercy*” first occurs in the book (nine times). “*I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God ...*”
2. If we fulfill these two verses, we will aid in “provoking” the ultimate salvation of Israel.
3. We need to beware of the current trend of hostility toward Israel. Remember that in the “*Sheep and Goat*” judgment (Matt. 25:31–46), men are judged based on how they treat “*the least of these My brethren,*” the Jews.
4. This does not mean we give blanket approval to all Israel does. It means we leave them to the judgment of God, who alone has all the facts.
5. There is no doubt that those who teach that the Church replaces Israel will lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Matt. 7:1–5; Rom. 14:4, 10–13).