

# The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

## **Restoration: Israel's Reception of God's Righteousness (9:1 - 11:36)**

In this passage of Scripture <sup>v.1-36</sup>, Paul addressed the reasonable question resulting from the previous verses <sup>Romans 10:19-21</sup>: "Has God permanently taken His hand off of Israel for their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah?" His thorough answer completely rejects the perspective of the churches that support the blasphemous concept known as "Replacement Theology".

**11:1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.** Paul started this chapter by immediately posing and answering the question "Did God reject his people? By no means!". His dismissal of the question started with the question's content: "his people". The answer does not result from the actions of Israel (who were often disobedient <sup>Exodus 32:9, Isaiah 30:9, 65:1-5</sup>), but from the character/name of God <sup>1 Samuel 12:22</sup>. When necessary, He has/will judge Israel <sup>Isaiah 54:1-10</sup>, but will never abandon His "people" <sup>1 Kings 6:13, Isaiah 49:15</sup>, nor violate His covenant <sup>Psalm 89:31-37</sup> with the nation of Israel <sup>Exodus 19-24</sup>. Paul concluded by providing an initial support for his emphatic answer to his question by mentioning his heritage as an Israelite <sup>2 Corinthians 11:22</sup>.

The form of Paul's question as he wrote it in the Greek text anticipates a negative answer. However, Paul again <sup>Romans 6:2</sup> used the phrase "By no means!" to convey an emphatic "No!".

Paul admitted he was "a Hebrew of Hebrews" <sup>Philippians 3:3-6</sup> and the "worst" sinner <sup>1 Timothy 1:15</sup>, and yet He was "shown mercy" and saved <sup>1 Timothy 1:16</sup>; therefore, so could the rest of Israel.

**11:2-6 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah – how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.**

Paul reiterated the message: "God did not reject his people" <sup>Psalm 94:14, Isaiah 41:17</sup>, in spite of their disobedience <sup>Isaiah 1:2</sup>. Paul used 2 quotes as a kind of OT dialogue about the Israelites. Elijah cried out to God that all his fellow Israelites had given in to sin <sup>1 Kings 19:10,14</sup>. However, God then rebuked Elijah by letting him know He had "reserved for [Himself] seven thousand" who were remaining faithful to Him <sup>1 Kings 19:18</sup>. Paul used that OT example as an analogy to Jewish disobedience in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. He reminded his readers that even though the Jewish leadership and a majority of individual Jews rejected Jesus as the Christ, there was a

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"remnant" ("thousands") of Israelites who came to faith in Him <sup>Acts 2:41, 4:4, Romans 9:27</sup>  
(there will always be a remnant <sup>Isaiah 10:22</sup>). And, these believers were not credited with  
righteousness because of their heartfelt desire to obey God and follow the Law (works),  
but their conversions were exclusively the result of God's grace <sup>Deuteronomy 7:7-9, 2 Timothy 1:8-10</sup>.  
The Greek word translated "foreknew" is a compound word meaning 'know ahead' <sup>see Romans 8:29</sup>.  
As Paul has emphasized in this letter and elsewhere, human effort (works) and God's grace  
(in response to faith) are mutually exclusive concepts <sup>Romans 3:21-31, 4:1-11, Galatians 2:15-21</sup>.

**11:7-10 What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did.**

**The others were hardened, as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."** Paul had earlier testified about the Israelites' "[religious zeal] for God" <sup>Romans 10:2</sup>; however, they did not gain "God's righteousness", because they "sought to establish their own", self-righteousness <sup>Romans 10:2-3</sup>. Paul combined two OT passages <sup>Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 29:10</sup> into a quote and gave another OT passage <sup>Psalms 69:22-23</sup>. It's apparent Paul was describing two subsets of the people of Israel: (1) the ones who were "hardened" <sup>Romans 11:25</sup>, "could not see and ... not hear" <sup>Ezekiel 12:1-2</sup>, and who "did not obtain" righteousness <sup>Romans 9:30-31</sup> and (2) the "elect" who did gain God's righteousness. Paul equated being "hardened" with being given "a spirit of stupor" and "eyes [that were] darkened", with all three describing a condition <sup>Acts 7:51</sup> that kept faithless Jews from understanding (seeing/hearing) the truth of God's love <sup>Matthew 13:10-17, Ephesians 4:18</sup>. The "hardening" seems to be a purposeful, judicial act of God <sup>Exodus 4:21, 11:10, 14:8, Deuteronomy 2:30</sup>, in response to a person making a decision to harden their own heart <sup>Exodus 8:15, 9:34, Psalm 95:7-11</sup>. In presenting the OT quotes here <sup>v.8-10</sup>, Paul was showing that what he presented concerning the "hardening" of unbelieving Israel in NT times was in agreement with the OT teachings. Many scholars believe the "table" <sup>v.9</sup> was David's way of indicating God's blessings <sup>Psalms 23:5</sup>. Two examples of blessings the Israelites received that should have opened their eyes to the truths from God leading them to a saving faith, but in fact became "a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution" for them, were Scripture <sup>John 5:39-40</sup> and the law <sup>Galatians 3:24</sup>. The phrase "their backs be bent forever" referred to the effect of the weight of their sins.

**11:11-12 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the**

**Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!** Paul again asked and passionately

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answered a question about the severity of the results from Israel's rejection of Jesus. He then shared God's plan for the sin of Israel <sup>Romans 8:28</sup>: the Lord sent Paul to the Gentiles <sup>Acts 22:21</sup> to offer salvation <sup>Isaiah 49:6, Matthew 21:43</sup>, which "[made] Israel envious" <sup>Deuteronomy 32:21, Acts 13:45</sup> and would draw them back to God eventually <sup>v.25-27</sup>. The "riches" <sup>Isaiah 33:6</sup> are the truths of salvation that come through the "Lord Jesus Christ" <sup>2 Corinthians 8:9</sup> for the entire world <sup>John 3:16</sup>. As a result of Israel rejecting Jesus as the Messiah <sup>Mark 8:31</sup>, the rest of the world ("Gentiles") will enjoy the "riches". However, the future spiritual renewal of the Jews will create an incredible "fullness" of the riches of God's salvation <sup>Zechariah 8:23, 12:10, 13:1, Revelation 7:4-8</sup>.

The phrase "not at all" <sup>v.11</sup> ("by no means" <sup>v.1</sup>) is the last of 10 times in Romans that Paul wrote the Greek words *ginomai mē*. In every case, his purpose was to convey an emphatic "No!".

Paul's question <sup>v.11</sup> could be read: "Has Israel committed the unforgivable sin?" <sup>Matthew 12:31-32</sup>.

**11:13-16 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.** Even though the Lord sent Paul to the Gentiles as a messenger of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" <sup>Acts 22:21, Ephesians 3:8</sup>, because of his love for the Jews, he went to them first <sup>Acts 13:5,14</sup>, but when they rejected his preaching he rebuked them and began his ministry to the Gentiles <sup>Acts 13:46, 18:5-6</sup>. However, throughout his life, Paul retained a heart for "[his] brothers" <sup>Romans 9:3</sup>, the "people of Israel". Paul reiterated God's plan to use the sin of Israel and their "envy" of the Gentiles to draw the Jews to a "[spiritual] life from the dead" <sup>Ezekiel 37:1-14, John 5:24-25</sup>, saving "some" (the remnant). Whether the "firstfruits" mentioned are produce from the "land" <sup>Leviticus 27:30</sup>, from the "herd and flock" <sup>Leviticus 27:32</sup> or are precious metals from the spoils of war <sup>Joshua 6:19</sup>, they are "holy" because they are presented and dedicated to the Lord <sup>Numbers 15:17-21</sup>. When the firstfruits of any activity are obediently dedicated to the Lord, then the remainder of whatever is produced will also be "holy" <sup>Leviticus 19:23-25</sup>. Furthermore, in this passage, Paul implied that because the "firstfruits" are ("part of the dough" is) "holy"; therefore, all of the commodity ("the whole batch") is "holy". This unclear phrase seems to be explained by the next phrase. Paul's references to the "root" and "branches" <sup>v.16</sup> are apparently symbolic of the Israelite patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and their spiritual descendants, respectively.

Abraham has two types of offspring: (1) physical offspring: Jewish descendants of Abraham, who have no guarantee of salvation <sup>Luke 3:7-9</sup> and (2) spiritual offspring: Jews and Gentiles who have placed their faith/trust in Jesus <sup>Galatians 3:7</sup>, and who are "guaranteed" grace <sup>Romans 14:16</sup>.