

Romans

Bible Study

Israel's Future Hope

Romans 11:1—10

After showing that Israel had been declared, “Not my People,” and emphasizing how this dispensational change has affected the nation of Israel, Paul encourages the Israelites in his audience by stating that the nation of Israel does have a future.

Israel's future (verses 1—2)

It's always important to keep in mind the difference between the nation of Israel and the individual Israelite. God chose the nation of Israel to serve Him, and to reveal Himself to the world. Although the entire nation was called a chosen nation, only a small remnant of Israelites were actually believers. God's prophetic program, which included the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, had the nation of Israel in mind. The call went out to all of Israel so that anyone who believed would become a member of the Little Flock of believers. It is these believers (not the church) who will be ruling in the Millennial Kingdom with Christ sitting on the throne in Jerusalem. As Paul says in Romans 11:26, all Israel will be saved. This is not saying that all Israelites will be saved, but that all those who comprise the nation of true Israel will be saved. It is this group of believers who will be entering the Millennial Kingdom and be wedded to the Lamb. These are called the children of the promise in Romans 9:8. Those who don't understand this will often come to the conclusion that the whole nation of Israel, as we know it today, will ultimately be saved. We understand that this will come true because God will purify the nation of Israel by cutting off those who are unbelievers so that they are no longer a part of the nation, leaving only those who will believe (Exodus 31:14; Psalm 37:22; Zechariah 13:8).

God has not cast away His people, Israel, but He has set them aside temporarily. Israel stumbled when she put Christ on the cross, and fell when she rejected the call of the Holy Spirit through Stephen, but Israel has not been permanently thrown aside with no future to look forward to. Paul shows this to be the case by showing that there is still a remnant of Kingdom believers. If God had thrown the nation away, then these believers would not have anything to believe in. They were waiting for the setting up of the Kingdom, but nothing was happening as they thought it should happen. Peter addresses this problem in 2 Peter 3:8—9. Peter had, in the past, been given the Gospel of the Circumcision and he then recognized that Paul had been given the Gospel of the Uncircumcision (Galatians 2:7). Peter was now ministering to the Little Flock of believers as they watched dispensational changes happening right before their eyes. The prophetic program, that these believers were saved under, was now tabled, and they were now seeing Paul's ministry, of preaching the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, on the increase. These must have been very confusing times, and the reason that Peter found Paul's teachings so hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15—16).

Paul is giving these Israelites encouraging words from his point of view. The nation of Israel does have a future, and they (the Little Flock) are the people who have been faithful to the Lord. He gives the Old Testament story of Elijah to show how God preserves His remnant. While Elijah could only see unfaithful Israel's rejection of the word of the Lord, God pointed out to Him that He reserved a faithful remnant of believers who have not bowed their knee to Baal. Paul tells this Little Flock of believers, who were worshipping in Rome, that God is keeping a remnant of believers for Himself. These Kingdom believers have been looking forward to coming into the Kingdom and reigning with Christ at the Second Coming. Paul assures them that this will happen.

Paul's assurance (1—6)

Paul has been addressing Kingdom believers, the Little Flock, the remnant of believing Israel. These people were saved either before John the Baptist began his ministry, or during the time when the Gospel

of the Kingdom was being preached, beginning with John (Luke 16:16). Those who had believed previous to John the Baptist were guaranteed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, sent from the Father. None would be lost in that transaction (John 6:45; 10:28—29).

Paul now presents himself as a believer and an Israelite who understands how the nation of Israel fits into God's overall plan. In order to show these Kingdom believers that God has always worked with small remnants, he goes back to Elijah in the Old Testament. Elijah had just seen God work powerfully in front of evil King Ahab and Queen Jezebel when He sent fire down from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice (1 Kings 18). Now, Elijah was running for his life, and feeling somewhat sorry for himself, as Queen Jezebel seeks to take his life. Some 40 days later, God comes to Elijah, who though he was the only righteous man in all of Israel, to encourage him by telling him that there remains a remnant of faithful Israelites who have not bowed the knee to Baal. While this was only a very small remnant from the entire nation of Israel, Elijah must have been quite encouraged to know that there were 7,000 believers.

Paul uses this account to encourage these Kingdom believers to not give up hope that God would fulfill His promises concerning the nation of Israel. Paul calls these Kingdom believers the remnant of that current time, comparing them to the faithful in Elijah's time. These are not Gentile believers saved under Paul's ministry, but Kingdom believers saved under the ministry of Jesus Christ and His Disciples' as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and in the early chapters of the book of Acts. These believers understood that it was not their own righteousness that saved them, but it was by God's grace. The unbelievers in Israel thought they were saved by piously obeying the Mosaic Law (Romans 10:1—4). These Kingdom believers understood that it was faith in Christ as their Messiah that leads to eternal life. Those who believed were then responsible to do works to prove their faith (James 2:14—18, 24). The unbelievers thought they could justify themselves by doing the works without a proper faith. If works could save, then God's grace would not be grace, it would be works, something earned, not given.

Chosen and hardened (verses 7—10)

The verses in Romans 11:7—10 are some of the most misunderstood and misapplied verses concerning election. Most churches teach that election is about salvation, and that these verses, and others, show that to be true. When verse 7 is read, it is usually interpreted to say that those who were elect have obtained salvation. They assume that God's election is the driving force behind man's salvation, when the verse is actually saying that those who are in the elect group have obtained eternal life. Election is not why they were saved, but the result of being saved. All those who come to God by faith are the elect. They were elect unto service, not unto salvation. All Paul is saying is that there is a group who has obtained salvation, in contrast to those who were trying to obtain their salvation through their own self-righteousness. He is calling this group the elect.

These verses are sometimes used to prove double predestination, the idea that God has predestined some to eternal life and predestined the rest to eternal damnation. This is a huge theological argument within Calvinistic circles. These arguments would disappear by understanding that election and predestination are all about service and not salvation. We, in the Church, the Body of Christ, are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29), and unto adoption (Ephesians 1:5). Those who are in the Body of Christ are preordained to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). Verses on election and predestination are not focusing on the individual, they concern the group of believers. Anyone can join the group by believing, and when they do, they become part of the elect. Instead of being elect to be saved, we are saved to be part of the elect.

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com