

## Romans: Verse-by-Verse

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### Romans 11:1-6

#### Study Notes

In Romans chapters 9-11, Paul uses a “Q & A” approach. So far, we have seen six major questions dealing with how people are saved and Israel’s relationship to the Gospel.

Questions on “How Are People Saved?”

- “How can they call on the one they have not believed in?”
- “And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?”
- “And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”
- “And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?”

Questions about Israel’s Standing:

- “Did Israel not hear the message?”
- “Did Israel not understand the message?”

The subject of chapter 11: “The tragic paradox of Israel’s condition, uniquely privileged by God and yet entrenched in unbelief”. - John Stott

#### **The Emphasis of Chapters 9-10:**

- Israel’s unbelief was not due to any failure on God’s part.
- God was not unfaithful or unjust to Israel.

- Israel's unbelief was rooted in her determination to attain righteousness by the Mosaic Code – even after God offered a righteousness through Christ.

The dilemma: Paul's Jewish-Christian readers must have wondered, "Is it all over for Israel?" "Is God done with them?" "Will they remain lost?"

Chapter 11: Paul wants to explain what hope remains for Israel, despite their rejection of righteousness through Christ.

- Two more major questions:

"Did God reject his people?" - v. 1

"Did Israel stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?" - v. 11

Paul's answer is framed in two time periods; the current situation and the future expectation.

### **The Current Situation: vv. 1-10**

Look at verses 1-2: "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. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew."

You'll notice that Paul asks this first question and gives an immediate answer. "Did God reject his people? By no means!"

"By no means" – a response pattern throughout Romans:

- Romans 6:2: "By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"
- Romans 6:15: "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!"
- Romans 7:13: "Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means!"

Paul wastes no time in attacking the premise of the question: God has not rejected his people – even though they rejected him.

Paul quotes Psalms 94:14: “For the LORD will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance.”

Paul’s Four-Part Additional Evidence: “I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.”

### **1. Personal Evidence:**

“I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.” If God has totally rejected Israel, how is it that he has become a Christian and Christ’s chief apologist?

1Timothy 1:13: “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.”

- **Theological Evidence:**

“God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.” See: Jeremiah 33:19-21

**One sense in which Israel has never been rejected:** “Not all Israel is true Israel.” In Romans 9:6-8, Paul wrote:

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.” That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”

Given that fact, God has not broken faith with true Israel ... although many who are genetically Jewish have been excluded.

Paul says, "God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew."

He repeats a phrase from earlier passages when he calls Israel, "those God foreknew". In Romans 8:29 we saw that to "foreknow" was the equivalent of "foreloving" or "to choose". Here, Paul is saying that God's "fore-choosing" Israel is inconsistent with completely rejecting them.

- **Biblical Evidence**

Paul cites the I Kings 19 account of Elijah's battle with Baal's priests.

Elijah told God, "... They have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me." God told Elijah: "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal".

God's words made it clear Israel's national apostasy was not total because God still had this "remnant" of faithful servants.

In Romans 11, Paul is making the same appeal. He rejects the idea that God has totally counted Israel as apostate. He sees yet another faithful remnant in those he has called "True Israel".

**Contemporary Evidence:**

In Elijah's day there was a faithful remnant and the same was true in Paul's own era. In verses 5-6, Paul writes: "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."

Historical evidence of Paul's assertion: On the Day of Pentecost alone, some 3,000 Jews and Gentile proselytes accepted the Gospel and were baptized.

Acts 21:20 we read, "When they heard this, they praised God. Then

they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.”

- **The Stark Divider:**

“So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”

The main divider between the story of Elijah’s remnant and Paul’s generation of saved Israel. This new remnant has been “chosen by grace”.

A dramatic turning point in this discussion of a “remnant”: Law and Grace. Paul has been saying it all along: You cannot have both Law and Grace as the basis of righteousness.

Just as God had a remnant in Elijah’s day, Paul insists he also has a remnant in Paul’s day. While it is true that many are Israelites through genetics alone, God still has a remnant of “True Israel”.

How they have become that “remnant”? It’s totally by grace. Paul’s prior words echo here: “It is by grace through faith that you have been saved, not by works, so no one can boast”.

God has not completely rejected Israel, but the “Israel” Paul sees is not the entire race of Israelites who share a common genetic identification. Instead, a “remnant” of “true Israel” has survived – because they have received a righteousness that comes by grace and faith – not from the Mosaic Law.

We will see how this plays out as we continue with Romans 11.