

Romans 10:14-11:10 Answers God Has Not Rejected Israel

Introduction: Just like today, most Israelis in Paul's day rejected Jesus as Messiah. This naturally led to several questions: **1) Have God's promises failed? 2) Why did Israel reject Jesus? 3) Has God now rejected Israel?**

- 1)** This section of Romans 9 explains that God's Word has not failed because God's promises were only intended for those descendants of Abraham who also had the faith of Abraham. Thus Paul wrote that not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.
- 2)** As for Israel rejecting Jesus, Romans 9 concerns God's sovereignty in Israel's salvation (unconditional election). Romans 10 concerns Israel's human responsibility. There are human reasons why Israel rejected the righteousness of Christ: they pursued righteousness by law rather than by faith and in so doing stumbled over Christ.
- 3)** Today's lesson, Romans 11, promises God has not rejected Israel because He has always preserved for Himself a faithful remnant.

******How did Isaiah predict Israel would respond to the good news (10:14-17)?** In 1992 Queen Elizabeth's son left his wife, her daughter went through a divorce and Windsor Castle caught fire and was badly damaged. Later, in a speech, the Queen said, "1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure". Similarly when Paul wrote, "not all have obeyed the gospel" (10:16), it was quite an understatement. Isaiah predicted so few Israelis would obey that he in essence asked, "Well then, who *has* believed it?" (10:17).

The point: Israeli rejection of truth is nothing new. 10:14 introduces a series of rhetorical Israeli excuses.

1. What Israeli excuse did Paul anticipate in 10:14? Compare 10:18. Someone might object that the Jews had not been given a fair hearing of the Gospel. Paul repeated this objection in 10:18. Paul's purpose at this point was to show that the Jews had opportunity to call upon the name of the Lord and were therefore without excuse (Cranfield, p. 533).

Secondary Application: How does 10:14-17 show the importance of evangelism? Everyone who believes must have first heard the gospel message.

2. Since predestination is true (Romans 9), why bother to evangelize (10:14-17)? See 2 Timothy 2:10. Some claim that a belief in Calvinism quenches evangelism, yet in Romans 9 Paul taught what we now call Calvinism and in Romans 10 he shows the critical necessity of evangelism. Just as God predestined the end (salvation) He also predestined the means (the preaching of the Gospel). God has chosen to use us in the process of bringing the elect to salvation.

ESV 2 Timothy 2:10 . . . I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Who is it who sends people to preach (10:15)? See *Matthew 9:37-38, Acts 13:2-3*. Both God and the church send people off with the Gospel. Paul's thought seems to be that the first century apostles were sent by God to preach the gospel and were just as legitimate as any Old Testament prophet sent to ancient Israel.

3. Based on 10:16, what results should we sometimes expect when we witness? Not all will believe the gospel, especially if they are Jewish. It is important to have accurate expectations so as not to be unduly disappointed.

4. What is the purpose of the quotation from Isaiah in 10:16? It is an answer to the excuse of 10:18. Ever since Old Testament days Israel had truth from God. They even had the gospel in prototype form. They had no excuse.

******What indictment did Paul have against Israel (10:18-21)?** As far as Paul was concerned, the Israelis had heard truth of the gospel and rejected it. They could not plead ignorance.

What excuse did Paul repeat in 10:18? The excuse is that they did not know any better; they had not heard the truth (it echoes 10:14-16).

5. In what sense had God's voice gone out to the ends of the world (10:18, Ps 19:4)? In its original context, this quote from Psalm 19 was with reference to God's general revelation in creation (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2175). Since this was stated as a fact regarding Israel and the gospel, it obviously is hyperbolic language. Paul's point was that just as the Jews were spread throughout the Roman Empire, so too the gospel had generally gone forth throughout the Roman Empire.

What excuse did Paul raise in 10:19? The excuse is that although Israel heard (10:18), they did not understand and therefore should not be held responsible for its unbelief (Hendriksen, p. 352).

6. How did Paul deal with the excuse offered in 10:19? See *10:19-21*. Paul answered that Israel should have understood because even the Gentiles understand, as predicted by both Moses and Isaiah.

7. Ancient Egypt was a nation, as was Babylonia and Greece. In what sense then were the Gentiles not a nation (10:19-20)? They were not a nation that had a covenant relationship with God as had Israel. The Gentile nations were spiritually ignorant, having no prophets from God nor inspired Scripture.

What has caused Israel to be jealous and angry (10:19)? See *11:11, 11:13-14*. Gospel-believing Gentiles will cause the elect in Israel to be jealous and even angry due to their informed zeal for the true God (through Jesus and the gospel). This outcome is not pie-in-the-sky by-and-by. It was already true when Paul wrote it and it has continued on the 2,000 years since then.

ESV **Romans 11:11** . . . through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

ESV **Romans 11:13-14** . . . Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

8. What was Paul's purpose in quoting Moses' and Isaiah's prophecy in 10:19-20 (Dt 32:21, Isa 65:1)? These prophecies came true in the church, which has been predominantly Gentile since its inception. Paul's purpose in quoting these passages was to make the point that if even Gentiles had come to know God, then it cannot be supposed that Israel has not known the truth.

ESV **Luke 20:15-16a** . . . they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants [the Jews] and give the vineyard to others [Gentiles].

It also shows that Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Cranfield, p. 539-541).

9. How did Isaiah describe Israel's spiritual condition in 10:21? They are a disobedient and contrary people. Israel is fully responsible for the divine judgment pronounced against them (Hendriksen, p. 353). Here we see human responsibility operating parallel with God's sovereignty.

ESV **Matthew 23:37-38** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate.

Application: If one Saturday you see a man walking down the sidewalk wearing a yamaka on his way to synagogue, you should not automatically think "There is one of God's chosen people." Instead you should think, "There walks is a disobedient and contrary person" (spiritually). This is because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. (Of course, apart from grace all Gentiles are also disobedient and contrary persons.)

******Even though most Israelis reject the Gospel, what proves God has not rejected the Israelis (11:1-6)?** God has not rejected them in the sense that He kept for Himself a remnant, chosen by grace. There are still elect among the Jews who do believe the Gospel, such as Paul himself.

ESV **Romans 9:6** . . . it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel . . .

To what does the word “then” refer (11:1)? The “then” links 11:1 back to the conclusion of Romans 10, that Israel did indeed hear and did indeed know and therefore was without excuse. They proved themselves to be a disobedient and obstinate people. Since that was true, it raised the question of God’s rejection of Israel.

Big Picture: The overall point of Romans 11 is that God has not rejected His people Israel.

What was Paul’s pedigree (11:1)? He was an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and from the tribe of Benjamin. (Most people we today call Jews are descended from only one of three tribes: Judah, Benjamin or Levi. The other 10 tribes have been lost to history).

10. What does Paul’s pedigree have to do with the truth that God has not rejected His people (11:1)? The fact that Paul, an Israelite, believed the Gospel was proof that God has not rejected His Old Testament people. Paul was a case in point. Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel; Paul belonged to Israel. If Paul believed, others did/would also

What truth did Paul repeat in 11:2a? Paul repeated the truth that God has not rejected His people. In light of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah, it would be easy to erroneously conclude God had totally rejected them. For example, the Canaanites and Philistines are as ancient as the Israelis, but there are no more Canaanites or Philistines (or Mohicans!). It is only because God has not rejected them that the Israelis still exist today. They are the world’s indestructible race.

What important qualification did Paul add in 11:2 concerning the Israelis who were not rejected by God? *Compare 8:29-30.* God did not reject those Israelis whom He foreknew, that is, the elect among Israel.

ESV **Romans 8:29** . . . those whom he foreknew he also predestined . . .

11. What does it mean to be foreknown by God (11:2)? For God to foreknow certain people means God, in eternity past, purposed to have a relationship with them. It means He fore-loved them; He fore-chose them. In 11:2, it is not what God foreknew, but who: people. The Bible says **Adam knew** Eve (Ge 4:17). Adam did not simply know *about* Eve. Adam did not merely know her name or who she was. It means he had a relationship with her. Similarly, God said that **Israel** was the only nation He had known (Am 3:2). This did not mean God was unaware that Egypt and Babylon existed. It means Israel was the only nation He had a covenant relationship with.

ESV **Amos 3:2** You only have I known of all the families of the earth . . .

ESV **Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

ESV **Matthew 7:23** . . . then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

12. Who was Elijah (11:22)? He was a prophet to the apostate northern kingdom of Israel during the period of the divided kingdoms. The ten northern tribes had rejected true worship of Jehovah God en masse. They established a rival temple and priesthood. King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel were ruling during his ministry.

When Elijah appealed to God against Israel (11:2-3), how did God reply (11:4)? Scared, tired and on the run, Elijah had gotten myopic and thought he was the lone prophet left alive in Israel. However, unknown to Elijah, God had kept for Himself 7,000 other men who were true believers.

13. How did Paul apply Elijah's situation to his own day (11:5)? Wholesale Jewish rejection of the Lord was nothing new. Christians sing "These are days of Elijah . . ." The days of Elijah were not good spiritually. In a sense the days of Elijah had returned; unbelief was rampant (Hendriksen, p. 361). However, just as in the days of the apostate northern kingdom of Israel, God had in Paul's day kept a group of Israelis for Himself.

How did Paul describe the number of first century believing Israelis (11:5)? He described them as a remnant. Paul was part of that remnant.

ESV Romans 9:27 Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved . . .

14. How many is a remnant (11:5)? It is not many. It is the residue, the dregs, the leftovers.

In the days of Noah, all perished except a remnant. In Sodom and Gomorrah, all perished except a remnant. In the days of Elijah, all perished except a remnant. Isaiah uses the word to refer to the small group survivors after the Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-Pileser. It is what is left of a community after it undergoes catastrophe. In Paul's day all perished except a remnant.

ESV Romans 9:6 . . . not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel . . .

15. Based on 11:5, how did a person become part of the remnant? See 9:15-16. To be in the remnant a person had to be "chosen" by God according to God's grace. Those chosen had nothing to do with being chosen.

ESV Romans 9:15-16 "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

What point did Paul make about grace in 11:6? Compare 9:30-32. In essence, Paul said that grace and works are mutually exclusive. Israel's problem was seeking righteousness by the works of the law.

******Why did Israel fail to obtain what it was seeking (11:7-10)?** See 9:30-10:4. Humanly speaking it was because they pursued righteousness by works rather than by faith, stumbling over Christ in the process (9:30-10:4). Divinely speaking, it was because they, like Pharaoh, were hardened, given a spirit of stupor and darkened eyes.

16. According to 11:7, which Israelis actually obtained righteousness? The elect Israelis obtained it. When governments hold elections, citizens choose (elect) from among various candidates running for public office. Similarly, God elected (chose) certain people to be His own, based not on anything they did, but purely according to God's grace (11:5-6).

17. What does it mean for God to harden someone (11:7)? R.C. Sproul's Ligonier website stated this about God hardening people: "When God hardens the heart, all He does is step away and stop striving with us. For example, the first time I commit a particular sin, my conscience bothers me. In His grace, God is convicting me of that evil. God is intruding into my life, trying to persuade me to stop this wickedness. If He wants to harden me, all He has to do is to stop rebuking me, stop nudging me, and just give me enough rope to hang myself. We see in Scripture that when God hardens hearts, He does not force people to sin; rather, He gives them their freedom to exercise the evil of their own desires" (www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/avoiding-hardened-conscience. Accessed 11/12/14).

18. Did Israel reject Jesus because God hardened them, or did God harden them because they rejected Jesus (11:7-10)? 11:7 makes it clear the Israelis were actively seeking righteousness by law (9:30-31). Consequently, they stumbled over Christ. Like Pharaoh, they hardened their own hearts first. God then hardened them in their sin by leaving them alone.

19. In 11:8, Paul quoted from Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4. Why is it significant that the Old Testament predicts God's hardening of Israel? Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah is according to God's plan since it was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

What ancient prayer by King David (Ps 69:22-23) did Paul invoke as his own against the unbelieving Israelis of his day (11:9-10)? This is in essence an imprecatory prayer of judgment. The general idea is a wish that even the good things these enemies enjoy may prove to be a cause of disaster to them (Cranfield, p. 551). The implication here is that the non-elect are beyond repentance; they will never be anything other than God's enemies.

20. How should 11:9-10 impact your prayer life?

21. How does 11:9-10 fit in with Paul's prayer of 10:1?

So What?

22. What did we learn about evangelism, sin, salvation and God's authority from 10:14-11:10?

23. What truths about Jews can you walk away with from 10:14-11:10? Don't expect many Jews to respond to the Gospel. A preacher once complained to Spurgeon that not many people were getting saved under his ministry. Spurgeon said, "You don't expect people to be saved every time you preach, do you?" The preacher said, "No, of course not." Spurgeon said, "Well then, that's your problem!" However, those with a ministry of evangelism to Jews truly can expect only a remnant to be saved.

Paul quoted a number of Old Testament writers. What negative statements did these Old Testament writers have concerning Israel's acceptance of the gospel? 10:16, 10:21, 11:8. The prophets described Israel as not believing what they heard from God and as being a disobedient and contrary people.

What penalty befell Israel for their lack of faith (11:7-9)? God hardened them.

ESV Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

24. What argument did Paul use to prove that God has not rejected His Old Testament people? 11:1-7. God elected a remnant, like Paul, who would have the faith of Abraham and obtain righteousness by believing in Jesus.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

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