An Exegesis of Romans 9, 10, and 11

The Remnant of Israel and the Fulfillment of God’s Promise

The discussion on Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 begins by addressing the complexity and frequent misinterpretations of these chapters over time. Many preachers and biblical commentators, particularly those adhering to dispensationalist and futurist perspectives, misunderstand the subjects and people to whom Paul refers. The central aim of this discussion is to clarify these misunderstood passages, primarily by establishing who Paul is addressing in these chapters—specifically, the Israelites, both of the northern and southern houses.

The discussion opens with an acknowledgment that the Apostle Paul, the author of Romans, is an Israelite, a Hebrew, and a Benjamite. It stresses the importance of recognizing that Paul’s mission to the Gentiles refers not to non-covenant peoples, but rather to the dispersed Israelites—those covenant people who had been divorced by the Lord in 721 B.C. due to their sin. This foundational understanding challenges the common notion that Paul is speaking to non-Jews when he refers to Gentiles, positioning these Gentiles as dispersed Israelites instead.

The interpretation proceeds to Romans 9, focusing on the theme of election. Paul expresses his deep sorrow for his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Israelites, and outlines the identification marks of true Israel:

> *“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the*

> *glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." (Romans 9:4-5, KJV)*

The discussion emphasizes that these identifiers apply to the true Israel and set the tone for understanding who Paul is referring to in his letter.

One of the key verses, *"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel"* (Romans 9:6), presents a significant stumbling block for interpreters. The discussion explains that not all who consider themselves Israel or who live among Israelites are part of true Israel. Paul illustrates this point through examples from the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham's offspring, Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael, the son of the flesh, is excluded, while Isaac, the child of promise, is included. This distinction is vital for understanding who constitutes the true seed of Abraham:

> *"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Romans 9:7)*

The pattern continues with Jacob and Esau. Though both were sons of Isaac, God chose Jacob before they were even born, demonstrating that election is based on God's purpose rather than human merit:

> *"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Romans 9:13)*

Thus, Esau, like Ishmael, is excluded from the line of promise. The principle of election by God's sovereign choice runs throughout Paul's argument in these chapters.

As the discussion moves to Romans 9:24-26, it reiterates that

Paul is speaking of two groups: the Judahites and the dispersed Israelites, not Gentiles in the sense of non-covenant peoples. Paul's reference to the Gentiles is explained as applying to the dispersed Israelites, who had been cast off but would eventually be called God's people again:

> *"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." (Romans 9:25)*

This promise from Hosea is applied to the northern house of Israel, which had been divorced by God due to their disobedience. Yet, through Christ and the Gospel, they would be restored.

The discussion then shifts focus to the remnant of Israel, as emphasized in Romans 9:27:

> *"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." (Romans 9:27)*

This narrowing of Israel to a remnant signifies that not all who are descended from Israel will be saved, but only a portion. The rejection of Jesus by Judah in the first century is also highlighted, as Paul contrasts the Judahites' pursuit of righteousness through the law with the righteousness obtained by faith:

> *"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." (Romans 9:31)*

The Judahites sought righteousness through works of the law and stumbled over the stumbling stone, which is Christ:

> *"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and*

> *rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Romans 9:33)*

In Romans 10:1-3, Paul continues to express his desire for Israel's salvation, stating that while they have a zeal for God, they lack knowledge:

> *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Romans 10:3)*

The discussion explains that these verses refer to Judah, whose reliance on works of the law rather than faith in Christ prevented them from attaining right standing with God.

The discussion concludes by focusing on Romans 10:19-21, where Paul quotes Moses and Isaiah to show that God had already foretold the inclusion of the northern house of Israel and the eventual jealousy of Judah. Isaiah's prophecy speaks to the restoration of the northern house, which had been cast off, while Moses speaks of a nation that will provoke Judah to jealousy:

> *"But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Romans 10:21)*

This contrast between the northern and southern houses of Israel runs throughout Paul's argument in Romans 9-11, with the ultimate goal of highlighting the fulfillment of God's promises through election and faith in Christ.

In Romans chapter 11, Paul opens with a critical question that frames the entire chapter: *"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."* (Romans 11:1, KJV). Paul's

emphatic response affirms that God has not rejected His people. He specifically refers to the remnant of Israel, drawing parallels to the days of Elijah, when God preserved a faithful remnant who did not bow to Baal. This same concept applies in Paul's day, and throughout history, as there is always a remnant chosen by God's grace.

> *"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Romans 11:5, KJV).*

This remnant, both in Elijah's time and in Paul's day, highlights God's sovereign grace in selecting a portion of His people who accept the Gospel, while others remain blinded. Paul explains that the majority of Israel—both the northern and southern houses—did not obtain what they sought, but the elect did. This election is not based on works, but on grace:

> *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." (Romans 11:6, KJV).*

The hardening of Israel, specifically the southern house of Judah in Paul's day, is portrayed as a divine act. God gave them a "spirit of slumber," and their inability to see and hear the truth is a recurring theme throughout these chapters. Paul quotes David, who prayed that their blindness and rebellion would lead them to repentance:

> *"Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway." (Romans 11:10, KJV).*

A key misunderstanding arises in verse 11, where many interpreters claim that Israel's rejection of Christ opened the way for non-Israelite Gentiles to receive salvation. However, the discussion clarifies that Paul is speaking of the dispersed Israelites—the so-called "Gentiles" who were part of the covenant but had been cast off due to their disobedience.

> *“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.” (Romans 11:11, KJV).*

The failure of Israel, particularly the northern house, to remain faithful led to their dispersion in 721 B.C. However, this apparent failure ultimately benefited the world, as their dispersion allowed the Gospel to reach the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” scattered among the nations. Paul’s ministry, directed toward these dispersed Israelites, is seen as an effort to provoke Judah to jealousy, as the remnant of Israel accepted the Gospel while many in Judah did not.

> *“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Romans 11:15, KJV).*

Paul continues the metaphor of the olive tree in verses 17-24. The natural branches represent Israel, and the wild olive branches, the dispersed northern Israelites, were grafted back into the tree through faith in Christ. This grafting back into the Abrahamic covenant signifies the restoration of those who had been cast off:

> *“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches.” (Romans 11:17-18, KJV).*

The wild olive branches were not non-Israelite Gentiles but the dispersed northern house of Israel. Paul emphasizes that there is no place for boasting among those grafted back in, as their restoration is solely by God’s grace. The root—the Abrahamic promises—sustains the entire tree, both natural and grafted branches. Paul warns against arrogance, reminding

Israel that just as some were broken off due to unbelief, others could be restored by faith:

> *"For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Romans 11:24, KJV).*

Paul urges the people not to be ignorant of the "mystery" of Israel's partial blindness, a condition that would remain until the "fullness of the Gentiles" had come in. This fullness refers to the multitude of Israelite nations that would come into the Gospel, particularly those formed in the aftermath of the northern dispersion:

> *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." (Romans 11:25-26, KJV).*

The term "fulness of the Gentiles" echoes the promise given to Ephraim in Genesis 48:19, where his descendants would become a "multitude of nations." As these nations formed, particularly after the Protestant Reformation, the Gospel flourished, leading to the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel.

Paul concludes by highlighting God's unchanging promises to Israel. Even though Israel had experienced unbelief, God's gifts and calling are irrevocable:

> *"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29, KJV).*

Israel's dispersion, far from being a sign of their permanent rejection, was part of God's long-term plan. Through their

fall, the world was reconciled to God, and through the Gospel, Israel is being restored.

Paul ends his discussion with a doxology, praising the depth of God's wisdom in orchestrating His plan for Israel and the world:

> *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33, KJV).*

In Conclusion

The intricate argument laid out in Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 speaks to God's faithfulness to His covenant people, Israel. Despite their failures and dispersion, God's promises endure, and through His sovereign election by grace, both the northern and southern houses of Israel will be restored. The remnant in Paul's day and in subsequent generations testify to the ongoing fulfillment of God's purposes for Israel.