

Exegetical Notes - Romans 11:1-10

**“Was Israel Rejected”**

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**Romans 11:1-10**

**Verses 1-6**

***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. <sup>2</sup> 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: <sup>3</sup> “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? <sup>4</sup> And what was God's answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” <sup>5</sup> So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.***

- In Romans 10, Paul expressed his concern for the people of Israel. He said that he desired for all Israel to be saved. But, he acknowledged that salvation comes through faith and not by works of the law. He concluded that only those who “confessed with their mouths that Jesus was Lord” and “believed in their hearts that God raised him from the dead” could be saved. He concluded that only those Israelites who believed in Jesus would be saved. Paul called upon the Church to preach this to the Jews so that they could hear about Jesus and believe.
- Given that, Paul now asks if Israel has been rejected by God as a whole. His answer is a resounding “NO.” He points out that he was a Jew. He recalls the story of Elijah (see 1 Kings 19). Elijah felt that Israel had turned against God and that God had forsaken/rejected Israel; that he alone remained faithful to YHWH. God pointed out that, despite the way it seemed to Elijah, there were still 7,000 prophets in Israel who were faithful to God.
- Paul's point was that God never rejects his people. He always calls out a remnant of faithful people who remain loyal to him and to his word. This is an act of God's grace and proves His faithfulness.

## Verses 7-10

***What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened,<sup>8</sup> as it is written:***

***“God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes that could not see  
and ears that could not hear,  
to this very day.”***

***<sup>9</sup> And David says:***

***“May their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.***

***<sup>10</sup> May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,  
and their backs be bent forever.”***

- What Israel sought was favor, righteous standing, before God. They sought it earnestly but the majority of them missed it because they did not understand the method of receiving God’s favor. They thought they earned God’s favor by keeping the law and refused to believe that receiving God’s favor was not earned by what they did. God’s favor came when they confessed with their mouths that Jesus was Lord and believed in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead.
- God knew who would choose Jesus from among the Jews. These are the “elect.” Those who would not receive Jesus and chose to reject Him became increasingly set against Jesus (see Isaiah 6:8-10). Until this day, the Jews reject him.
- The second Old Testament passage that Paul quotes is from Psalm 69:22-23. David prays this curse upon his enemies. Paul quotes it not as a prayer to curse the Jews for not believing in Jesus, but as an explanation of what happens to those who willfully reject Jesus. They cannot be saved except through Him. This verse says that they are lost without Him.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Was Israel Rejected*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)