

ROMANS 9:1-11:36 | GOD'S WORK FULFILLED THROUGH ISRAEL

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 38

ROMANS 11:1-36 | GOD'S CURRENT PROGRAM: AN OVERLAP

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 43

ROMANS 11:1-6 | A REMNANT

VERSE 1 - BLACK

After presenting his argument that Israel is in danger of becoming "no people," a natural question arises: "**Hath God cast away his people?**" Paul responds with a definitive "**God forbid**" and provides evidence in the form of the remnant that God promised.

When Paul states that he is "**an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, OF the tribe of Benjamin,**" it is difficult to determine whether he is claiming to be part of the remnant he is about to describe or simply acknowledging that God still has promises for Israel since it still exists. I prefer the latter interpretation, viewing it as Paul re-emphasizing his Jewish heritage to show his genuine concern for his own people and to demonstrate that God's dealings with Israel are not abstract theological issues for him but personal and heartfelt ones.

VERSES 2-4 - BLACK

After responding with "**God forbid**" (v. 1), Paul emphasizes his point by restating, "**God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.**" The phrase "**which he foreknew**" is significant, as it establishes a key interpretive rule: **THE NATION OF ISRAEL IS THE FOREKNOWN**. This position is supported by 1 Peter 1:1-2. Additionally, in Ephesians 1:4, Paul speaks of those "**chosen...in him before the foundation of the world,**" which can be interpreted based on this verse. Israel was "**foreknown,**" existing in God's mind and heart "**before the foundation of the world.**"

In the Scriptures, 'foreknowledge' is often associated with specific covenants and promises made by God. For instance, the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) was not just a present act but contained a divine foreknowledge of Israel as a nation. God's interactions with the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all point to His special relationship with and foreknowledge of Israel.

The New Testament continues to affirm this exclusive foreknowledge. In Romans 9:4-5, Paul lists the unique privileges of the Israelites, including the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. And in Acts 3:18, Peter explains that God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, signifying Israel's unique place in God's foreknowledge.

This specificity and continuity argue against extending the foreknowledge to other groups without explicit scriptural support. The foreknown people in Romans 8:29, for example, must be understood in the same vein: as referring to the Israelites, who were in the plan of God from the beginning. The identity of the foreknown cannot be expanded to include the body of Christ or the Gentiles without clear and unambiguous biblical evidence.

Any interpretation of the body of Christ or other Gentiles as foreknown would require another passage of Scripture proving this to be the case, and there simply is not one. The Bible explicitly declares Israel as the nation "**which he foreknew.**" Many theologies are built on the speculative assumption that God also foreknew others. However, these are based more on theological speculation than textual evidence.

Paul reminds his Jewish readers that they are not the first to feel abandoned by God. He mentions Elijah's words from 1 Kings 19:10 (repeated in verse 14), recalling the "secret" 7,000 that only God knew existed.

VERSE 5 - BLACK

Just as God had a remnant preserved in the past, "**Even so,**" Paul argues, there continues to be one in his day - presumably in ours as well. This remnant is "**according to the election of grace.**"

👉 The remnant of Israel is the Israel that will ultimately receive the promises of God to the nation through Abraham. In every age there is, by grace, a remainder of Israel to whom God can deliver His promises in full.

Most people assume that the phrase "**election of grace**" refers to, or at least includes, those saved during the age of grace. However, in my view, this assumption is influenced by the prevalent Calvinist stream of theological thought, rather than by exegesis of Scripture.

For example, in Romans 4:1-5, Paul argues that the Abrahamic election was by grace: "**For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath WHEREOF to glory**" (Rom. 4:2), and "**to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt**" (Rom. 4:4). If the Abrahamic covenant was presented as a covenant of grace, then why would the "**election of grace**" in Romans 11:5 be referring to something else? After all, no other "election" has been presented in Romans.

One must come to terms with the fact that election, which is clearly mentioned in the Bible, and free-will, which is also clearly mentioned in the Bible, are mutually exclusive. However, we can reconcile them by attributing election to Israel and free-will to the body of Christ, particularly in relation to Salvation. Free-will is connected to the age of grace, while election is connected to dispensations related to Israel. Additionally, Paul contends that even though Israel has rejected God's offers at present, the election of Abraham and his descendants as God's chosen people has not ceased (for it was by grace, not works).

VERSE 6 - BLACK

The language used in this verse bears a close resemblance to the phrasing of Romans 4:2-5, which discusses the Abrahamic covenant. This similarity lends weight to the argument that the term "election of grace" mentioned in this verse is, in fact, an allusion to the Abrahamic election.

Paul's principal argument is that, similar to Abraham, the remnant was selected based on grace, not by their deeds or works. In addition, this declaration of grace provides an added level of assurance - that which is given by grace cannot be lost due to insufficient works or deeds. For if it could be lost through insufficient works, then it was never truly given by grace in the first place. This further emphasizes Paul's point that the selection of the remnant, like the selection of Abraham, is a matter of God's unmerited favor, not human achievement.

ROMANS 11:7-10 | ISRAEL BLINDED TODAY

VERSE 7 - BLACK

The language in this passage can be complex, and if misinterpreted, it can lead to replacement theology, a perspective that undermines God's faithfulness to His promises and the trustworthiness of the Bible¹. Nonetheless, the essential message of this passage is quite straightforward. It mirrors the sentiment expressed in Romans 9:6, "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." This means that simply being a physical descendant of Israel does not guarantee that the individual is part of "**the election.**" Instead, it is only those who are truly "**of Israel**" in a spiritual sense - the elect - who receive the fulfillment of God's promises to establish His Kingdom among His chosen people. Thus, Romans 11:7 underscores that the elect obtain what was promised, while not every single Jewish individual does. The rest of Israel is "**blinded**" to this spiritual reality.

👉 The verbs "**hath obtained**" and "**were blinded**" are written in the aorist tense. The aorist is a tense which refers to a singular, definitive action or state, which is not specifically located in the past, present, or future. Therefore, depending on the context, it can be understood to refer to past (as in this case), present (obtains/is blinded), or future (will obtain/will be blinded) events. Determining the exact timing of the action or state requires more than grammatical cues; it also needs a careful consideration of the context.

¹ Replacement Theology, also known as Supersessionism, is a theological view that asserts the church today has replaced Israel in God's plans and promises. According to this perspective, the Jewish people no longer have a unique or ongoing covenantal relationship with God, and the promises, covenants, and blessings ascribed to Israel in the Bible have been transferred to the church. This belief is often used to interpret prophecies and covenants mentioned in the Old Testament as being fulfilled in the church, rather than in Israel.

VERSE 8 - BLACK

Paul draws from the book of Isaiah, specifically Isaiah 29:10, to provide a scriptural foundation for the notion of Israel being blinded.

The phrase “unto this day” brings to a close the thought that commenced in verse 7, “the rest were blinded...unto this day.” It underlines the ongoing nature of this condition, which started at an indeterminate point in the past and continues to the present.

When contrasting the King James Version (KJV) with modern translations, such as the New King James Version (NKJV), one observes that the modern versions often employ quotation marks to designate the starting and ending points of the quotations. It's important to note, however, that such marks are interpretative and are not included in the original text. In this particular instance, all prominent modern versions seem to include the words “unto this day” as part of the quotation, even though there's no evidence of such words or the implied sentiment in the context of Isaiah 29:10. This highlights a key reason to opt for translations that empower the reader to interpret the text instead of having the interpretation predetermined.

👉 The "blindness" of Israel, as Paul describes it here, refers to the spiritual inability to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Paul sees in this a divine judgment that serves to delay the complete fulfillment of God's promises until the appropriate time.

VERSES 9-10 - BLACK

Next, Paul quotes Psalm 69:9-10 as further Biblical proof of Israel's blindness. Psalm 69 is a Messianic Psalm, and the words of verses 9-10 are prophetic of the Messiah's words. In the context of Psalm 69 they are spoken of those who crucify Him, but Paul takes this naturally farther to the entirety of the nation. In doing so, Paul connects the rejection of the Messiah with the entirety of the nation.