

“Paul-ology: The Romans Road to Resurrection”

A Study of Romans 9–11

Romans 9–11 comes in a context; first came Romans 1–8. According to Romans 1:1-6, Jesus the Messiah has come—the Son of God, the Son of David—through whom is grace and apostleship. Now, *in between His comings*, the obedience of faith for the sake of His Name is going to all the gentiles.

Let’s put ourselves in the first century context. Messiah has just come! Surely we are at the door of Israel’s eternal redemption and blessing, and all the nations rejoicing in the God of Israel. No more darkness, no more deception, no more rebellion! For an example of the messianic expectation, see **Psalm 47** and **Psalm 67**.

But, Messiah *has* come, but Israel and the nations are NO WHERE NEAR these realities. **Has God’s Word failed?**

Key question(s) Romans will answer: In view of all of God’s promises, why do we see the things we see in the world? Only a few Israelites believe in Christ, and most of the Gentile world is in darkness. **Is Jesus really the Messiah?** Will He save Israel? Will all nations be blessed in Him? Why are we still wallowing in darkness AFTER Messiah’s initial revelation?

Romans: the mystery-revealed of God’s sovereign work in Israel and the nations in between Messiah’s two comings.

In this context, here are the lessons of Romans 1–8:

1. Sin is more deceptive and the human heart harder than we ever imagined (Rom. 1).
2. The Jewish heart is not automatically soft. In fact, the Jewish heart is at risk of *particular* hardness. Paul would ask, “Is this new information to you?” (Rom. 2:28-29). Point being? There is no distinction: both Jew and Gentile are born under the curse, and imprisoned by the Law.
3. No one is justified by works of the Law. Through the Law comes knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20).
4. Jew and Gentile are under equal condemnation under the curse of the Law equally in need of a Savior. God has provided in Christ! (Rom. 3:21-24)
5. Don’t be deceived—the Law was never meant to produce “fleshly” righteousness. Righteousness has *always* been by grace through faith (Rom. 4:13).
6. Since we’ve been saved by grace through faith, we are not to jettison the Law and go on sinning without reserve. Instead, by grace through faith, we “uphold the Law” of righteousness and bear much spiritual fruit. Yet, we don’t obey the Law *to* earn. We

obey the Law *from* a union with Christ (we've died to sin, now alive to God, Rom. 6:1-2).

7. So, why the Law, then? To teach us that we need a righteousness that is now our own. The Law teach us us both what is good and that we are *not good*. Contrary to first century Jewish thought, God is not interested only in the outside. The Torah's aiming point has *always been* the heart (Rom. 7:7).
8. If we've died to the curse and sin, and now are covered with Jesus's righteousness, there is now, therefore, NO condemnation/cursing for those in Christ Jesus!

Why, then, do those in Christ (no longer under the curse of the Law) still suffer? God works all things together for the good of those who love God, AND, He's working all things toward the completion of this work and the glorification of the saints, for His glory—the One who works all things together in beautiful, redemptive, resurrected tapestry.

Glorious, but we are still troubled. Messiah has come! And, new life in Him is glorious and revelatory. But, according to the prophets, Messiah's primary job is to save Israel (Is. 44:1-5, Hos. 3:4-5).

So, here is a *weighty* Jewish objection to the Truth of Jesus toward Paul: are we really supposed to believe Messiah came, and STILL:

- Israel is still under Roman rule
- Whole *world* is still under pagan Gentile rule
- Majority of Israel apostate in unbelief
- And, Messiah left us and went to heaven?

When Messiah comes, all are supposed to see Him, know Him, and be saved by Him! Yet, the majority of the Jews are still rejecting Him?

These particular-Jewish questions are the context of the Book of Romans that come to a head in, what I would consider, the mountain peak passage of Romans: Romans 9–11

Romans 9–11 is about *Israel*. Romans 9–11, furthermore, is about God's everlasting faithfulness to Israel in Messiah, even through their current and divinely ordained majority status of hard-heartedness.

First, see Paul's anguish over Israel's current hardness, Rom. 9:1-5. Paul, has God failed in His desire to save all Israel in Messiah? Answer: Rom. 9:6-13. Paul's main point: God has selected a Jewish remnant (just like He has always done in Israel's history) to be the contemporary "True Israel." Furthermore, and major point: just as God has softened and preserved a Jewish remnant, **God has also hardened the majority of Israel.**

God's Word has *not* failed. In fact, according to Paul, **God is executing His plan with perfection**. It is all happening (Jewish remnant/hardness) according to His plan.

But, why would God harden majority Israel? Why would He allow it? Paul's answer: Rom. 9:14-18. But, that seems unfair! Paul's answer: Rom. 9:19-24.

We might be tempted to think—God wasn't able to fulfill His Word. All, in all time, were not saved. Paul says, no, the hardened and unsaved of Israel (and, by extension, of the nations, too) *also* serve as His vessels—that His power in wrath may be revealed. And, Israel's current hardness and salvation going to the Gentiles isn't "a new plan." It has been written! Rom. 9:25-29.

What is God teaching Israel and the nations through this season of Messiah-to-nations/Israel-in-blindness? Rom. 9:30-33. Just like God humbled the Gentiles in past generations by allowing them to wallow in paganism, now, God is humbling the Jew by setting a trap before him/her... Messiah, the Stumbling Stone. God is taking the Jew to a place of deep breaking and humbling. But, first, they will experience a *lengthy* hardness of heart and exile.

Back to Paul's pure heart of passion, Rom. 10:1-4. Paul is saying that the Torah's very teaching is to create a longing in us for a righteousness that is not our own! See Romans 10:5-13.

Well, wait, if God softens, and God hardens, why is Israel culpable? How can they call on Messiah if they didn't see Him with their own eyes? Think Jews in diaspora, here. Paul asks that question! Rom. 10:13-17.

So, Paul asks, Israel isn't accountable to Someone they haven't seen or heard about, right? Rom. 10:18. Well, it's a *mystery*, so Israel would be "off the hook" if they didn't understand, right?

Their lack of understanding was of their own hard-volition, Rom. 10:19-21. Wait, was it their own hard-hearted volition, or did God harden their hearts? Yes.

So, now, we're in a tough spot. Gentiles are believing, but the vast majority of Israel has, now, officially rejected Messiah (the very ones Messiah is to save). **Has God failed? Has He rejected His people? Will this last forever?**

Rom. 11:1-6. **God is in control of the hardness. He is—hold on tight—*preserving* the hardness of Israel**, Rom. 11:7-10.

God is preserving their hardness **so that YOU and OTHERS may be saved in the nations!** Rom. 11:11-12. Paul is bringing the climactic truth of cosmic redemption together: if

Israel's rejection meant a remnant of Gentiles are saved (through 2000+ years), *what will their full inclusion mean?* **Answer: RESURRECTION!** Paul now makes very clear the *intertwining of the Hope of Israel and the Hope of the Saints*, Rom. 11:13-16. Now, you Gentiles, don't dare become arrogant in your belief/Israel's hardness, Rom. 11:17-24.

All of this isn't God simply reading to belief/unbelief. All of this *has been planned from eternity past*. Messiah's coming, Jewish rejection, Gentile salvation, THEN the Day of the LORD has an eternal *telos* and glory!

The Mystery of Israel's salvation on that great Day, and our part in it:

How important is knowledge of this mystery to Paul? Rom. 11:25. Again, what practical purpose does the church in the nations serve in Israel's salvation? Rom. 11:11. God, then, is preserving Israel's hardness until "the fullness of the Gentiles" comes in. "Fullness" is a number, for sure. But, think of "fullness" more so as a "radiance," Eph. 4:13-14. THAT body will prick the heart of the Jew, just like Stephen pricked Saul's heart.

Our radiant testimony—the *fullness*—will prepare the Jew for the Day of the LORD, Rom. 11:26-27.

Now, saints, we are invited into a mystery of spiritual wrestling, Rom. 11:28-29. They are His covenant people, yet the majority is *still* in rejection toward Him. We were *not His people*, but now are grafted into a pre-existing covenant with a people. So, we love them and understand their calling according to the Spirit, meanwhile knowing their rebellion against God...and their disdain towards us. How do we engage in an issue that is not shallow and simplistic? First, see the wisdom of God in the whole story, Rom. 11:30-32.

God has, through the ages, made plain to both Gentile and Jew that they are imprisoned under sin and the curse. All need the Savior!

What can we walk away with? There are heavy, spiritual, relevant, and eternally significant issues for us to wrestle with...NOW!

1. God is completely sovereign, even when it seems like He's lost control, or things aren't going according to our understanding of His plan. Just like God softens the remnant of Israel, and hardens the corporate nation, He works the same way amongst us. You are saved by grace through faith! Those, then, who have rejected the gospel have been hardened by God. Yet, in the same spiritual breath, we would ask, "are they culpable for their sin if God softens and hardens?" Yes, they are guilty of "hardening" their hearts against God!
2. Don't be deceived: Romans 9–11 is not about God abandoning in His covenantal promises to His whole nation. It is the opposite—these chapters answer a Jewish

objections to Jesus as Messiah in view of God's promises to the whole nation—
“How could Jesus be Messiah if we are still troubled?” Paul's answer: Not only has
God's Word not failed, but Israel's hardness to Christ for a season *is actually God's
plan*.

3. Just as Paul saw His own salvation as a “down-payment” or “guarantee” of the
fullness of Jewish salvation to come, so is your salvation a down-payment of the
fullness of Salvation to come to the *goyim* when Jesus returns. Your salvation is
proof that God is true to His Word. And, if He is true to His Word, He will make what
is true in you true of His whole creation.
4. Wrestle with the mystery of Israel's salvation. How do Christians love Israel and
honor them as the covenant people, even in their blind rebellion?
5. Give yourselves to the mystery of cosmic redemption, in Jesus's first and second
comings; from Israel to the saints to the nations; the plan to unite heaven and earth
in the heaven-earth God-Man, Christ Jesus.
6. In your meditation of His glorious plan, let it take you to worship, Rom. 11:33-36.