

# WHY IS GOD WAITING?

Romans 11:1-11, 25-27

Several years ago we decided to replace our rusted out playground set with a new set. The new set came packed in boxes stuffed with tubes, brackets, chains, swings, plastic parts and bags of nuts and bolts. When I do a project like this I like to lay everything out on the ground in groups so I know where things are and generally how they are going to fit together.

And yes, I do read the instructions.

But before diving into the details, I spent several minutes just looking at the picture of the completed playset. By studying the end goal I saw which parts went together and how they were attached to each other. It helped make sense of which bolts went where and in what direction: some bolts went through a 3 inch tube and the square head of the bolt went into the square hole of the bracket. Looking at the complete picture also helped me understand the order in which the frame, the cross bars and the ladders were to be assembled.

The big picture made sense of the details.

I believe this is true when studying Romans 9-11. This morning we'll look at the big picture of what God is doing today with the nation of Israel. Then, in the next couple weeks we'll look at the details of God's plan for Israel.

Romans 9-11 deals with God's relationship with the nation of Israel. God made four unconditional covenants with Israel promising her the Land (Gen. 12:7; 15:17-20; Deut. 29:1-30:10), the Seed (Gen. 3:15; 17:1-21; 2 Sam. 7:9-17) and the Blessing (Gen. 12:1-3; Jer. 31:31-37; Ezek. 36). In addition, God promised a Messiah-King Who will deliver the nation of Israel from her sin and reign over her and the gentile nations in righteousness (Isa. 11; 12; 53; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 9:9-10; 12; 13) .

But when Jesus the Messiah came the first time, the nation of Israel rejected Him. At the time the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in 57AD, Israel was hardly experiencing the blessings of God. She was still under the boot of Rome. Official Judaism violently opposed Christianity. Thirteen years from the writing of Romans, Israel ceased to exist as a nation.

In the days of Paul and throughout much of church history, it sure looked like God was done with the nation Israel. He certainly hasn't fulfilled His promises to her.

Does that mean God is done with Israel? Has God rejected Israel because Israel rejected Jesus? Is God reneging on His promises because Israel rejected Jesus?

If God will renege on His unconditional promises to Israel, will He renege on His unconditional promises to us? In the strongest terms possible the Apostle Paul declares nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:31-39). God promises that one day we will be liberated from these bodies of sin. He will give us resurrection bodies like Jesus. God promises that those whom He justifies will be glorified.

But how trustworthy are God's promises if national Israel's unbelief prompts God to renege on His promises to her? Will not our doubts and disobedience prompt Him to renege on His promises to us?

These concerns moved the Apostle Paul to explain God's present dealing with national Israel in Romans 9-11.

The Apostle Paul makes clear God is not done with Israel. God will fulfill His promises to national Israel. God's plan for Israel is right on track. National Israel's unbelief is not a surprise to God, but the outworking of His plan for Israel in this Dispensation of Grace. There is a purpose for Israel's unbelief and when that purpose is fulfilled, national Israel will accept Jesus as Messiah and will receive all the promises of God.

What is God doing with Israel now? Turn with me to Romans 11 to get the big picture.

## GOD IS DELAYING THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS PROMISES TO ISRAEL FOR THE SAKE OF GENTILE SALVATION (11:1-11, 25-27)

### Though He Is Not Yet Saving The Entire Nation Of Israel, God Is Saving A Remnant of Jews Out Of Every Generation (11:1-6)

*Romans 11:1-10 (ESV)*

**1** I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2** God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Paul's point is that even though the vast majority of Jews in his day rejected Jesus as Messiah, God has not rejected the nation of Israel whom He sovereignly chose. In fact, throughout Israel's history, seldom if ever did the majority of the Jewish population follow God; it was always a remnant. Paul, himself, is a member of the Remnant chosen by God for salvation. In every generation God has kept for Himself a Remnant of believing Israelites just as He did in the days of Elijah.

*Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? **3** "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." **4** But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." **5** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. **6** But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*

In eternity past, God chose a small number of Jewish men and women to be saved by faith in the blood of Jesus in every generation of this Dispensation of Grace. He chose them purely on the basis of His grace, not on anything these people would do. So, during the two thousand years of this Dispensation of Grace during which the vast majority of Jews have rejected Jesus as Messiah, God has, through His sovereign election, preserved a remnant of believing Jews in every generation. Though God is not yet saving the entire nation of Israel, He is saving a remnant out of every generation.

But the other side of the coin is that in every generation God hardens the Jewish majority in their unbelief.

### In Every Generation The Majority of Jews Reject Jesus And God Hardens Them In Their Unbelief (11:7-10)

**7** What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking.

What did national Israel fail to obtain? Righteousness. Why? Because they reject justification by faith. Paul previously explained in Romans 9:30-33:

*Romans 9:30-33 (ESV)*

**30** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; **31** but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. **32** Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, **33** as it is written,

*"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

In every generation since the crucifixion of Jesus, the majority of Jews have failed to obtain a right standing before God because they try to earn that right standing by keeping the law. They reject Jesus and the offer of righteousness based on faith in Him.

But in every generation since the crucifixion of Jesus God has a remnant of Jews who believe and are justified by faith in the blood sacrifice of Jesus. These are the elect who obtain God's righteousness.

**7** What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, **8** as it is written,

*"God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes that would not see*

*and ears that would not hear,  
down to this very day."*

9 And David says,

*"Let their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;  
10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
and bend their backs forever."  
(Ps. 69:22-23)*

The Jewish remnant, the elect, obtain a right standing before God through faith in Jesus.

But *the rest*, the Jewish majority who reject Jesus, are hardened. The term *hardened* means to make hard like a stone, or callous and insensible to the touch. What Paul is saying is that in every generation since the crucifixion, God has hardened the hearts of the Jewish majority in their unbelief. Keep in mind *they do not want to believe*. The two quotes make clear that those who are hardened had first hardened themselves against God. God's hardening is a form of divine punishment.

To summarize, in every generation of Israel since the crucifixion God has chosen and saved a small number of Jews called the *Remnant*. Likewise, in every generation of Israel since the crucifixion God has hardened the hearts of the *rest* of the Jewish majority in their unbelief.

Why is God delaying the fulfillment of His promises to national Israel?

**GOD IS DELAYING THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS PROMISES TO NATIONAL ISRAEL UNTIL ALL THE GENTILES HE HAS CHOSEN FOR SALVATION IN THIS DISPENSATION HAVE BEEN SAVED (11:11, 25-27)**

He tells us in verse 11 and 25-27.

*Romans 11:11 (ESV)*

**11** *So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.*

*Romans 11:25-27 (ESV)*

**25** *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,*

*"The Deliverer will come from Zion,  
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";  
27 "and this will be my covenant with them  
when I take away their sins."*

This season of God's plan for national Israel is primarily for the salvation of Gentiles and to make Israel spiritually jealous. During this Dispensation, the gospel is being preached throughout the world. The delay in fulfilling Israel's promises is for the primary purpose of saving all the Gentiles God has chosen to be saved during the Dispensation of Grace. When the last Gentile is saved completing the full number, then the partial hardening of Israel will end. In that day Israel as a nation will be saved.

Here is the big picture:

1. This is God's plan for national Israel during the Dispensation of Grace. The Dispensation of Grace spans the time between the first coming of Jesus when He was rejected by national Israel and the second coming of Jesus when He is accepted by the nation. The Dispensation of Grace includes the Church Age and the Tribulation.

2. Out of every generation of Israel since the crucifixion, God has chosen and saved a small number of Jews called the *Remnant*.
3. In every generation of Israel since the crucifixion, God has hardened the hearts of the Jewish majority in their rejection of Messiah and justification by faith.
4. During the Dispensation of Grace, God is delaying the fulfillment of His promises to national Israel. He is not reneging on His promises to Israel; He is delaying their fulfillment.
5. The purpose of the delay is for the salvation of Gentiles and to provoke Israel to spiritual jealousy.
6. The delay will end when the full number of Gentiles chosen by God to be saved in this Dispensation come to salvation.
7. When the full number of Gentiles are saved, all Jews living at that time will accept Jesus as Messiah; national Israel will be saved and will begin to receive the fulfillment of God's covenant promises.
8. God's plan for Israel, including the delay, was determined by God before Creation and is proceeding on the basis of His sovereign election.

## CONCLUSION

God is not done with Israel. He will fulfill all His promises to national Israel. God does not break His Word; He keeps His promises.

Because God keeps His promises to Israel, we can be confident God will keep His promises to us. We will be glorified. We will be liberated from these bodies of sin. We will receive resurrection bodies. We will be with Jesus forever.

