

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Lesson 25, Chapters 10 and 11

We'll complete Romans chapter 10 and get started on chapter 11 today.

When we left off, Paul's straw man had just asked a series of 4 questions. These questions are in the form of objections to what Paul has been claiming about Israel, the Messiah, and salvation. We find these questions in chapter 10 verses 14 and 15.

Romans 10:14-15 CJB

¹⁴ But how can they call on someone if they haven't trusted in him? And how can they trust in someone if they haven't heard about him? And how can they hear about someone if no one is proclaiming him?

¹⁵ And how can people proclaim him unless God sends them?- as the Tanakh puts it, "How beautiful are the feet of those announcing good news about good things!"

Let's understand the purpose of Paul's straw man. Since Paul is not present in Rome and instead is writing the congregation of Rome a letter (Paul is probably writing this letter in Corinth); and since Paul is a highly trained religious specialist who has been taught a specific discipline and method on how to interpret Scripture, he understands the need for debate as part of any intellectually honest dialogue about discerning Biblical truth. But of course a letter is not a dialogue (two people conversing) it is a one-way street. A letter is by nature a monologue (one person making a series of statements). So in order to make it a debate (which by definition requires at least two different viewpoints, usually by two different people), Paul creates a non-existent debate opponent: a straw man. So it is Paul who puts the contrary words into the mouth of his make-believe opponent; words that Paul sees as representative of how his learned Jewish opponents might respond to his teaching.

Therefore we have Paul make a statement, and then the straw man responds by opposing it. Paul refutes what the straw man says and then makes another statement, and again the straw man opposes it. Paul refutes the straw man's objection.....and so on, and so on. Each time Paul quotes Scripture to make his case (meaning, of course, the Old Testament since a New Testament would not exist for another 150 years after Paul's death). But in the matter of this series of 4 opposing responses of the straw man, the straw man quotes Scripture right back at Paul when he says: ***"How beautiful are the feet of those announcing good news about good things."***

Starting at verse 16, Paul makes his defense against the 4 assertions of the straw man. Paul will continue using this back and forth method in his letter to portray a lively debate. He is NOT trying to fool the recipients of his letter; this is simply a well known rabbinic style of his time. Before we read Paul's response I want to sum-up the straw man's series of objections. It is

this: first, Paul claims that the only way for Jews to be right with God is to call upon the name of Paul's Messiah. But how can a Jew call upon Paul's Messiah if they don't trust in that Messiah as Messiah? Second, how can Jews be expected to trust in a Messiah that they'd never heard about? Third, how can Israel ever hear about the Messiah if no one proclaims this Messiah to them? And fourth, since a Messiah is by definition God-sent, then one would expect that it would be God who would send a messenger to announce him. So if God hasn't assigned someone to the task (and there is no evidence or public knowledge that He did), then knowledge of a Messiah is impossible. Conclusion: if Israel really has rejected the true Messiah then Israel can't be held accountable for it; God is at fault.

OK. So now Paul fires back at the straw man.

RE-READ ROMANS CHAPTER 10:16 – end

In verse 16 Paul says that Israel has heard the Good News but they haven't paid any attention to it. And to back up his statement he uses Isaiah 53. In truth, what he quotes is a paraphrase and not an actual quote of Isaiah 53:1. Nonetheless, as usual, the expectation is that his listeners will know the Scripture passage and understand the context. So as good Bible students, we are going to read the passage from Isaiah to understand Paul's intent. Be aware that what we are about to read directly relates to the Messiah. Modern Judaism refuses to accept Isaiah 53 as about a person and rather the claim is that the suffering servant we'll read about (that is the subject of the chapter) is not the Messiah but rather it is the nation of Israel.

READ ISAIAH CHAPTER 53 all

Paul's rebuttal to the straw man is that the problem was not that Israel didn't know about the Good News. The Good News was delivered to Israel but they paid no attention to it. This couldn't be more highlighted than the Scripture passage Paul chose: Isaiah 53. How Judaism could deny that the subject of Isaiah 53 is the Messiah (no matter who that Messiah might be), and instead to claim that this chapter is a description of the nation of Israel is a mystery. But the mystery starts to dissipate when we understand that just as Christianity's goal for centuries has been to turn the Bible on its head and insist that gentiles have replaced Hebrews as God's chosen people, no matter how emphatic and clear the Scriptures are to the contrary (OT and NT), so it is for Jews with Isaiah 53. No matter how obvious and self-evident this chapter in Isaiah might be to any non-partial reader that it speaks about a person (a Messiah) and not a nation, and how astonishingly detailed it gets about this person and how it precisely fits the character and experiences of Yeshua of Nazareth, Jews since Paul's day have refused to accept it for what it is and have taken preposterous positions to deflect its reality. Why? Because just as institutional Christianity wants no Jew to be part of the Christian faith, so Jews don't want to hold any sort of similar view about a Messiah with gentile Christians. And there is no length to which either side won't go to achieve their agendas. Distorting God's Word has become a pawn in a game of one up-man-ship for both sides. It has both disturbed me and energized me for the past 2 decades to do something about it, no matter how unpopular it might be from both sides of the fence. This situation is why Seed of Abraham Ministries exists.

In verse 17 Paul deals with an intermediate step between the Good News being spoken and it

being believed. That is, the message must also be heard. We need to think of the term “heard” in its Hebrew sense. The Hebrew word for heard is **shema**. **Shema** means to listen and do what you hear. So faith in Yeshua comes about by hearing the message of the Gospel and doing it; and the hearing of the Gospel comes through Messiah’s Word brought to people by God’s messengers. Who are God’s messengers? His Believers. Once again this points up one of the primary tasks that all worshippers of Yeshua have; to tell others about the Good News.

So now in verse 18 the straw man responds to Paul’s last comment and insists that part of the problem of Israel not accepting Yeshua is that Israel didn’t hear the message. To which Paul responds: no....they DID hear. And he backs up his statement with a passage from Psalm 19. But as always, we get so much more from what Paul intends to impart when we do what the Jews would have done: they remember the entire Scripture passage and not just the short reference verse that the writer gives them.

READ PSALM 19 all

Notice something important about Paul’s choice of Scripture. He is saying that Israel DID hear the Gospel, and they heard it through the awesome reality of God’s Creation. But even more they also heard it more specifically in God’s Torah. Therefore they had the Good News about a Messiah delivered to them by two entirely different avenues: by the Heavens themselves and by means of Moses, the first Mediator. Israel is without excuse and the straw man’s accusation is once again proved wrong. Notice that the final words of the final verse in this Psalm are: ***May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable in your presence, ADONAI, my Rock and Redeemer.*** So here this Psalm ends with speaking of God as the Redeemer, which of course is the entire subject of the Gospel. It all ties together.

However, the straw man still isn’t convinced so in verse 19 he concedes that perhaps Israel did hear; so the problem was that they didn’t understand what they heard. Paul responds only with Scripture: Deuteronomy 32 and then Isaiah 65. It is interesting that the context of the Deuteronomy passage is the Song of Moses. Moses spoke this to the entire congregation of Israel a short time before he died. Here is some of his speech; just the pertinent section:

Deuteronomy 32:18-31 CJB

¹⁸ ***You ignored the Rock who fathered you, you forgot God, who gave you birth.***

¹⁹ ***"ADONAI saw and was filled with scorn at his sons' and daughters' provocation.***

²⁰ ***He said, 'I will hide my face from them and see what will become of them; for they are a perverse generation, untrustworthy children. ²¹ They aroused my jealousy with a non-god and provoked me with their vanities; I will arouse their jealousy with a non-people and provoke them with a vile nation. ²² "For my anger has been fired up. It burns to the depths of Sh'ol, devouring the earth and its crops, kindling the very roots of the hills. ²³ I will heap disasters on them and use up all my arrows against them.***

²⁴ "Fatigued by hunger, they will be consumed by fever and bitter defeat; I will send them the fangs of wild beasts, and the poison of reptiles crawling in the dust.

²⁵ Outside, the sword makes parents childless; inside, there is panic, as young men and girls alike are slain, sucklings and graybeards together. ²⁶ "I considered putting an end to them, erasing their memory from the human race; ²⁷ but I feared the insolence of their enemy, feared that their foes would mistakenly think, "We ourselves accomplished this; ADONAI had nothing to do with it."

²⁸ "They are a nation without common sense, utterly lacking in discernment. ²⁹ If they were wise they could figure it out and understand their destiny. ³⁰ After all, how can one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to rout, unless their Rock sells them to their enemies, unless ADONAI hands them over?

³¹ For our enemies have no rock like our Rock- even they can see that!

This is a Messianic passage; notice how it begins speaking about The Rock, and ends with speaking about the Rock. The Rock, of course, is a biblical word that has to do with the Redeemer and redemption. In the middle verses of this passage is Paul's central point; it is that because Israel has rebelled, God will eventually go to a non-people (meaning not Hebrews.....gentiles) with His message and these gentiles who have historically not been God's elect will make Israel jealous because they now have the Word from Israel's God.

Paul follows that up in Romans chapter 10 verses 20 and 21 with a passage from Isaiah 65. The expanded passage Paul is referring to reads:

Isaiah 65:1-7 CJB

^{CJB} Isaiah 65:1 "I made myself accessible to those who didn't ask for me, I let myself be found by those who didn't seek me. I said, 'Here I am! Here I am!' to a nation not called by my name.

² I spread out my hands all day long to a rebellious people who live in a way that is not good, who follow their own inclinations; ³ a people who provoke me to my face all the time, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense on bricks. ⁴ They sit among the graves and spend the night in caverns; they eat pig meat and their pots hold soup made from disgusting things. ⁵ They say, 'Keep your distance, don't come near me, because I am holier than you.' These are smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all day!

⁶ See, it is written before me; I will not be silent until I repay them; I will repay them to the full,

⁷ your own crimes and those of your ancestors together," says ADONAI. "They offered incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. First I will measure out their wages and then repay them in full."

God is essentially saying: My People knew, but they chose to be disobedient. They made themselves unclean by going into grave yards and by eating non-kosher food (pig meat). They told God not to come near to them, because they were holier than He. But the Lord says there will be a consequence for their disobedience; and the consequence is that He will allow the gentiles (a nation not called by His Name) to know Him too.

Bottom line: Israel is guilty, guilty, guilty. They knew the Lord and His Word by any number of means. The Lord, in His mercy, nonetheless kept holding his arms and hands out and open to embracing Israel. They rejected Him; He didn't reject them.

This chapter closes with an unanswered question that any reasonable person would ask: if Israel is so guilty, and God is so angry with them that He is within an eyelash of simply destroying them such that in response to their apostasy He has made Himself known to other people (gentiles), then what else can this mean but that God has closed the book on the Hebrews and moved on by taking an entire new group as His chosen: gentile Believers in Christ? And if chapter 10 ended Paul's Letter to the Romans, this would be a very reasonable conclusion for the Church to make. But this doesn't end the letter; there is much more to go.

So let's see what more Paul has to say on this devastating indictment against Israel and the Jewish people. Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 11. I don't mind saying that for a number of reasons **this** is the chapter that I have been yearning to teach you. In fact, this is why I elected to teach Romans in the first place. If all I had time to teach in the Book of Romans was one chapter, this would be the one. But fortunately we have had the time to go carefully, deeply, slowly into these inspired words; so now we have an extensive background for what Paul is about to say and no excuse to misunderstand. If over the centuries the Church had only heard and believed Paul in Romans 11, we would be a very different, more spiritually powerful and effective body today.

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 11 all

I said at the end of chapter 10 that the large unanswered question was left lingering. But it only has the feel of lingering because of the eventual inclusions of chapter and verse markers, since the opening words of chapter 11 ask the \$64,000 question: ***"In that case, I say, isn't it that God has repudiated His people?"*** The KJV asks the question this way: ***"I say then, hath God cast away His people?"*** And in the much more widespread manner it is translated in such Bibles as the RSV and the NIV: ***"I say then, has God not rejected His people?"*** I have no bone to pick with any of these translations because they all put across the same sentiment, which is: it is unfathomable to imagine that because Israel has had a long history of rebelliousness that God didn't finally, once and for all, walk away from them and move His election to someone else. The good rabbi, Paul, says to this suggestion: "Heaven forbid". I'll reword this so that there can be no mistake: Paul says that God did NOT reject His people.

Proof of this fact is that Paul himself is an Israelite who is a seed of Abraham; specifically his heritage is from the tribe of Benjamin. In the sense Paul is using the term "seed of Abraham" it has a double (a **Remez**) meaning. That is, it has the plain sense meaning and a deeper meaning. On one level it is to say that he is the spiritual seed of Abraham who is

representative of the covenant promise of salvation. On another level it is to make the point that he is a flesh and blood Hebrew; he is not a converted gentile (that is, his ancestry is not of a gentile family who at some point in the past joined Israel). He is an actual blood descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore Paul is living proof that God has not cast off His people. He is a hereditary member of Israel, but he is also part of the "true" Israel (true Israel is the spiritual seed). Thus since Christ certainly would not have chosen a cast-off and divinely rejected Jew (a rejected physical seed) to be His special envoy to the gentile world, this is tangible proof that Israel has not been cast off as God's chosen people.

The core subject of this ongoing debate between Paul and his straw man is crucial for our theology and it affects Believers in the most profound and practical way. Because if God has indeed rejected His people, Israel, due to their unfaithfulness, then God has broken His promises to them. The consequences of God doing such a thing are so far-reaching that they are almost too dreadful to contemplate. Let's look at a few places in the Bible where God promised Israel that such a thing as Him breaking His promises to them would never happen.

CJB 1 Samuel 12:22 *For the sake of his great reputation, ADONAI will not abandon his people; because it has pleased ADONAI to make you a people for himself.*

CJB Psalm 94:14 *For ADONAI will not desert his people, he will not abandon his heritage.*

Jeremiah 33:23-26 CJB ²³ *This word of ADONAI came to Yirmeyahu:* ²⁴ *"Haven't you noticed that these people are saying, 'ADONAI has rejected the two families he chose'? Hence they despise my people and no longer look at them as a nation.* ²⁵ *Here is what ADONAI says: 'If I have not established my covenant with day and night and fixed the laws for sky and earth,*

²⁶ *then I will also reject the descendants of Ya'akov and of my servant David, not choosing from his descendants people to rule over the descendants of Avraham, Yis'chak and Ya'akov. For I will cause their captives to come back, and I will show them compassion.'"*

I will again make the argument that I think Paul would have made had he envisioned a day in the future when the bulk of the Christian world would enthusiastically and naively declare that the Torah and the Law of Moses are abolished, and the Jewish people are abandoned as God's chosen right along with the Old Testament. To put it another way: that God has taken away the covenants He made with the Hebrews and transferred them to gentiles. The argument I make is this: if God would make what seems to be an ironclad, unconditional promise to the Hebrews over the ages....one He repeats time and again.... that He will NEVER forsake His people; will NEVER abandon His heritage, Israel; and then suddenly He does..... then why would gentile Christians feel confident and secure that God would not find a reason to abandon us despite His many promises? Remember what Paul said back in Romans chapter 8?

Romans 8:35-39 CJB

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of the Messiah? Trouble? Hardship? Persecution? Hunger? Poverty? Danger? War? ³⁶ As the Tanakh puts it, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long, we are considered sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are superconquerors, through the one who has loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers, neither what exists nor what is coming, ³⁹ neither powers above nor powers below, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which comes to us through the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord.

Before quoting this NT passage I quoted to you very similar Old Testament promises to Israel that much of the Church says God has backed away from. So why should we rely so heavily, and sleep peacefully, based on what Paul said in Romans 8? Can we be so arrogant as to believe that gentile Christians are better people and perhaps have more merit than the Israelites had? Or that God's promise to gentiles is somehow more secure than His promise to Israel? Or that we could never be as rebellious or unfaithful as His "former" chosen? Or that we will have our salvation judged as a group of people and not as individuals? What do I say that? Because as Christians are fond to assert as a foundational doctrine, God rejected the Jews as an entire group because the Jews (as an entire group) rejected their Messiah. And yet the Bible is clear that not all Jews as a group rejected Yeshua. We read in Acts of thousands upon thousands of Jews being the very first to accept the salvation offered by Christ. So if we are going to assume that God accepts or rejects people for salvation based upon the majority action of the entire group that we belong to, then gentiles (as a group) are in a very precarious position because certainly not all gentiles have accepted Christ, have they? In fact throughout history the vast majority of gentiles have rejected the Messiah. So what makes gentiles (as a group) any less liable to being rejected by God than the Jews if the standard is that however the majority of the group chooses to deal with Christ will decide the eternal fate of all?

Thanks be to God we can be confident of our salvation because God did NOT renege on His promise to His original elect, Israel, nor did He create a new and different elect, the gentile Church. And we can be certain that the opportunity for salvation is not offered or held back according to what group we belong to (Jews or gentiles) or how others within our group might choose.

I want to inject something here that while it might sound trivial (perhaps even a bit confusing), it is most important for us as worshippers of Yeshua to understand and to combat, and it is especially so for us living in this age when Messiah's return seems to be so near. When speaking of Believers in Christ as opposed to followers of Judaism, the usual terminology is Christians on the one side and Jews on the other. And yet, many Jews are Believers in Christ. Often I'll hear informed Believers say: the Bible says that Jews were the first Christians. And yet, since the 2nd century A.D., the term Jewish Christian is seen an oxymoron. That is, Jewishness and Christianity are no longer seen as compatible within the same person; it would be like calling someone a Muslim Christian. Thus even though we don't realize it, subconsciously what we MEAN and what we mentally picture when we use the terms Christians and Jews is a group of gentiles who follow Christ versus the Jewish people in general. It is just further proof that despite many Christians denying it, Christianity is indeed seen in the eyes of the Church itself, and most definitely of Jews and other religions of the

world, as a religion of, by, and for gentiles. And thus should a Jewish person want to follow Christ (they want to be a “Christian”) then quite naturally they have to give up their Jewishness and identify more as gentiles.....since Christ followers (Christians) are seen by most of the world as gentiles. Nothing has done more to help keep Jews from accepting their Messiah than this perception.

You see, the natural opposite of Jews is NOT Christians; it is gentiles. The term Jews doesn't necessarily indicate a devotion to the religion of Judaism anymore than the term gentiles indicate a devotion to the religion of Christianity; and it never has. It is only because of the slanderous Church doctrine created by some of the early Church Fathers (all gentiles of course) that God has rejected and abandoned Israel (the Jews) and instead has elected and embraced Christians (gentiles according to the Church) that this divisive mindset even exists. It is a wrong mindset that Paul has been concerned about and is fighting against it as false theology; trying to nip it in the bud before it could take root. Paul would be aghast if he was suddenly resurrected and plopped down into the 21st century and saw it in action; he'd probably take it as a personal failure.

The entire Book of Romans has Paul refuting a division of Jews from Christians, and a division between Jewish Believers and gentile Believers. And now as we study Romans Chapter 11, Paul is going to great lengths to help us understand what God's view is of Jews and gentiles as regards redemption, and especially of those from among those two groups who, by faith, have chosen to put their trust in Messiah Yeshua. It is ironic that for centuries Christianity has pictured a Jew who accepts Christ as one who naturally jumps from being a Jew to being a gentile. In fact, the infamous Spanish Inquisition sought to ferret out those Jews who had not made that required jump. But now in modern times a new false doctrine has arisen; some among the Jewish Roots movement picture a gentile who accepts Christ as one who of course jumps from being a gentile to being a Jew. However such a position is not biblically sound as Paul says over and over again: in Christ, there is no difference between Jew and gentile. But, because we are all human beings, when a gentile Christian hears Paul say that, he or she thinks: “Good; now that Jew is going to be more like us gentiles!” But when a Jewish Believer hears Paul say it, he or she thinks: “Good; now that gentile is going to be more like us Jews!”

So as we continue in Romans 11, think hard about the English terms that are used, what they mean to your mind, and then do your best to shut down those mental filters that cause us to make assumptions that aren't true and conjure up mental pictures that give us false impressions of biblical intent and reality. In many cases Paul is not so much trying to give us new information; he is trying to get us to unlearn wrong assumptions and doctrine in order to relearn right doctrine. However as is evident in Paul's missionary journeys, unlearning is a much harder thing for people to do and many can be passionately resistant to it. Unlearning also requires much explanation, definition of terms, and patience. So as we go through Romans 11, much explanation will be presented to you. We have much unlearning yet ahead of us. So be open and be patient. God has a lot to teach us in this chapter.

We'll continue with Romans 11 next time.