The Book of Romans

Chapter 11

 Paul has given a history lesson to the Jewish Christians in Chapter 9 regarding their nation's rise and fall and how God had dealt with them going from Abraham through Moses then the Law and how the nation collapsed from its greatness to being a vassal state. In Chapter 10 Paul has given the Jewish Christians a lesson on the state of Israel in their present time. Their rejection of their own prophets and their misinterpreting of the Law. Paul quotes many passages from the Tanakh in explanation of both the prophecies and the interpretation of the Law.

 Now that we are into the later meat of this letter, do we truly begin to comprehend what Paul is saying and meaning regarding believing in Jesus the Messiah? Do we see that the gist of this letter is actually aimed at the Jewish Christians because of their clinging to the letter of the Law and also because they struggle with Faith? This is not leaving the Gentile Christians off to the side but does include them as Paul explains the relationship of Jesus to the fulfilling of the Law. What is happening is, the reset of mankind's relationship with God, through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and the resurrection from death unto life for all who BELIEVE. There are new tenets and doctrine, to understand. Therefore, we looked at the Jewish people in their present time.

So, now, where does that leave the Jewish nation and people? Are they lost? This chapter will look at the Jewish people and their future.

 A] Romans 11: 1 through 10; (read)

 1] "*I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."*

 So, we have seen the history of Israel, then the present time of Israel and now Paul looks toward the future of Israel. This question is still bandied about even today. Has God forsaken His own people? Paul states absolutely not, because as he is a true Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, he then can state that God has not cast away or abandoned His people. God does not make promises and then break them. He has not made His covenants with His people and disregard them. That would make any promise God makes null and void, if He can break them at any time. Do we follow this?

 2] "*God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "Lord they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life (1 Kings 19:10)"*

 Okay, friends we'll be careful with this. I found many ancient scholars put a limit on the term 'foreknew' (Gr:Proegno) But we do know this one thing. God covers all of time and God had purposed well beforehand the selection of a people He would call His. He established them through Abraham by covenant, established them as a nation through Moses through both the Law and the covenant and if a covenant or contract is forever binding, it then stands to reason God will not renege on His own contract.

 Paul then uses an illustration from the 1 Kings 19 where the people had killed the prophets and were after Elijah. If you remember that story, it was Jezebel convincing Ahab to rid her of the Reminders of God in His prophets. After Elijah had shown up the 450 prophets of Baal and had his men kill all of them. The ensuing issue was the revenge of Jezebel, so Elijah, in his fear and anger calls on God to wipe out the Israelites.

 3] "*But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."*

 So, what is this response? "we may clean house but there will always be a group of them who have remained true and righteous, so as long as there are folks like that Israel will always remain." You see the point? God will never break His contract, mankind will, that seems to be their nature, but God won't. And we can see that throughout the old Testament as well as the new.

 4] "*Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."*

 Now we are going to come to a explanation of 'Grace' versus 'Work's. Again, what is ‘grace’? The general definition is: ‘God’s unmerited favor’. That is a gift that we can by no means, earn, and by no means, deserve. Paul says that as there were a remnant then of His people, there are a remnant now. And this is because of Grace not works. What does he mean by this? When God established His people and then established them as a nation, He gave them the rules for living.

 Now let’s understand something here; God always has wanted people to believe on Him, to accept Him, not because of what He has done, but because of Who He is. The Law was never meant to replace Faith, was it? All the Law was to do was to set standards for living and give people the ability to formally atone for their wrongdoings. But their relationship with God was or should have been based on Faith, not works, not fear as engendered by the Law.

 So now we are seeing that the nation will not be dissolved, but not all will be saved either. Here is where that 'election' comes in. There will be those who believe in Jesus and God has already foreknown this and they are the elect by Grace. Do we get this?

 5] "*And if by Grace then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace; but if it is of works it is no longer Grace, otherwise works is no longer works."*

 Are we seeing the difference here? Works and Grace are two diametrically opposite things here. Works means I do not believe in God's largess, that I have to work for it, wherein Grace means I do believe in God's largess, I have faith. Where the Jew was under the Law and no longer depended on God to see him through the day but depended on himself to 'DO' the right thing under the Law. Another point to make is Grace is God's free gift, God saves whom He will save and there are no works, nothing I can do, will change that. All I can do is believe.

 Now Jesus IS God, yet the people do not believe, but have kept themselves under the Law, so they negate anything that God has done for them even to the promises God gave then through His Word. Jesus was that Atoning sacrifice according to the Law, THEIR OWN LAW! And that all one has to do, is just BELIEVE, but they, as a people, disregard that.

 6] "*What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it and the rest were blinded."*

 For all those thousands of years, what was Israel seeking? Their Messiah! Yet when He came, they did not know Him. They literally rejected Him. Now there were some who did believe in Him and did accept Him, and these people are the elect aren’t they? I understand, this is a hard lesson to accept. People have, since Paul brought up this concept, argued over the term ‘elect’ and we will study on it.

 7] "*Just as it is written; "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear to this very day." (Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10) (Both say essentially the same thing) And David says; "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened so that they do not see, and bow down their backs always." (Psalm 69:22-23)*

 When we have driven long distances, we can get a sort of road weariness or a stupor and when we concentrate for an extended period of time we too can get into that same stupor. Just listening to a boring speaker can make our eyes glaze over and this is about what the writer is saying here. The study of the Law and the rewrite and addendums of the Law have made the Israelites blind, deaf and dumb to the real promises of Scripture. The stupor as it were. Many folks today become bogged down in minutia of Scripture and not get a lick of sense from it.

 Now what is the one thing the Jewish people observe over all things in the Scripture? Their feasts! Because it satisfies their belly. I mean friends what is the main holidays we Christians as well as the pagan world loves to observe??? Any holiday where the banquet table is set. So Paul notes that King David made mention to this feasting and it becomes the stumbling block because, do they really know what the feasts are all about, anymore?

 B] Romans 11: 11 through 18; (read)

 1] "*I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."*

 Was there a reason to the fall of Israel? Did they do this on purpose? Paul answers his own question, but through God's divine will Israel can now watch as the Gentiles are receiving the Salvation meant for them, and do so with envy.

 2] "*Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure, riches for the gentiles , how much more their fullness?"*

 Anybody figure this one out yet? Israel, through their unbelief and obstinance is falling, then God is bringing the world back under His aegis. Remember God never reneges on His promises and contracts, but the people do. Israel will fall but a remnant will remain, and they will add to the Saved in Christ. This is a prophecy. Do you see it? We will see that Israel will not be destroyed, there will always be that chosen who will remain under the covenants. We are seeing this today as Israel is under constant threat, yet she remains.

 3] "*For I speak to you Gentiles; in as much as I am an Apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them."*

 Now he explains to the Gentile believers what he is meaning by this set of verses. He IS the Apostle to the Gentile and being so, he hopes that the Jews will look on with envy, and by that they may hear, may understand and may be saved.

 4] "*For if their being castaway is the reconciliation of the world what will their acceptance be, but life from the dead?"*

 Now remember, he is now speaking to the Gentiles regarding the reasons the gospel now comes to them. Because of the Jews rejection of this gospel (good news) the gospel can now come to them but there is a future time when the Jewish remnant will receive this gospel and it offers them life.

 5] "*For if the first fruit is Holy, the lump is also holy and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you being a wild olive tree , being grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches; but if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root , but the root supports you."*

 WOW!!! The first fruit here is the beginning of God's covenant with Abraham and the singling out of a people. These are God’s people set apart, (holy) and If, because the people from Abraham's time are the beginning of the people of God, therefore, all those who follow after, are the people of God and they are set apart (holy). Do we understand this?

 Now friends, the Gentile believers will be the graft onto the tree of God, and because the root of this tree IS God, and we being the graft, are now a part of that tree, no better or no worse than the branches already there, then what is there to boast about? Paul is telling the Gentiles that just because he scolds the Jewish people, they have no cause to feel superior because of the plight of the Jew. Being all the same, we are now on the same plant, and we are one.

 C] Romans 11: 19 through 24; (read)

 1] "*You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I may be grafted in." Well said because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith, do not be haughty , but fear."*

 Are we seeing the picture Paul is using here? Jesus used a similar picture with the grapevine, "I am the vine and you are the branches." Paul is using the olive tree. It is amazing that the people of that time had learned that much about horticulture and the science of grafting. So Paul offers a question surmising what the Gentiles may ask, that, God pruned the tree so the Gentile branch may be grafted in? "Well, yes" he answers his own question, that God prunes the tree and if a branch does not bear fruit, should it remain on the tree? That the Gentile should be very careful, and mindful lest the unfruitful of them also be trimmed.

 2] “*For God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell: severity. But toward you: Goodness, if you continue in His goodness, otherwise you will also be cut off."*

 As long as you remain faithful, bearing fruit, God will tend His garden faithfully, and nurture you. The gardener does not prune out good bearing branches, does He. But be wise in understanding, when or if you cease to be fruit bearing, or you grow wild, not aiding in the overall growth of the tree, or hindering in the growth of other branches, you too can be trimmed off.

 3] "*And they also if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft then in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree."*

 Paul is explaining to the Gentiles this truth which we do well to understand. The Jewish unbelievers, IF THEY turn their hearts back to the Lord and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, they will be rejoined to the family of God. Or as Paul puts it, be regrafted back on to the tree. We are getting quite a lesson in horticulture in this chapter aren’t we?

 D] Romans 11:25 through 35; (read)

 1] "*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentile has come in."*

 One of the things scholars have deduced from their historical studies was the Jewish nation had over its millenia become quite arrogant in their attitudes regarding non-Jews. And if you can notice, this is one issue Paul is now addressing with the Gentiles. Just because you are now a child of God, a wild branch grafted on to God's olive tree, this does not give you the right to be arrogant over those who have not become a brother with you. To you, what God does, has been and now is a mystery, because God does what He will do for His own reasons and not by man's reasoning. All of mankind was God's creation to begin with, and because of Mankind's sin, God did chose a people out of mankind for His own but friends He never forgot the rest of them, they are still His creation, aren’t they. This is the mystery, that God has reasoned that all mankind has a hope in His salvation.

 2] "*And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The deliverer will come out of Zion and He will turn away all ungodliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins,"(Isaiah 59: 20&21)*

 So, after all this discussion, Paul affirms through Scripture, That God will not forsake Israel. God does not break His covenants. This is the mystery. Friends, the one thing we all seem to forget, is that God is God, He is creator, He is holy. And God can do as God will do. We may not understand all of that, and so many cannot seem to accept that truism. We want God to be the God of our making, of our ideals. But we as believers need to accept that there are mysteries and some we cannot solve, but we accept them and study on.

 3] "*Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."*
 Bishop Ellicott puts it this way; "The real position of the Jews is this, They have been suffered to fall into a state of estrangement in order to make room for the Gentiles. But this does not abrogate God's original choice for them. They are still His beloved people, for the sake of their forefathers, the patriarchs, if not for their own." (Bishop John Ellicott was a theologian and academic during the middle to late 1800's over the Church of England)

 4] "*For as once you were disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy, through their disobedience, even so these also now have been disobedient, that through mercy shown you, they also may obtain mercy."*

 This is the history of mankind. Because of mankind's sin, God called out a people for His own, but because of the sin and unbelief of These, God's chosen people, mankind has been restored, now through our restoration, the way is prepared for the restoration of Israel. Are you following this?

 5] *For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."*

 I am not sure where Dr Jeremiah got the word 'committed' from, but the Greek word (synekleisen) more or less means bound up or wrapped up, or in modern parlance Paul put it this way, "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God" All mankind has sinned, even God's own people, and with this in mind, God wants to show mercy on all.

 6] "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God; How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*

 McGee put it this way, "Paul has come to the place of recognizing the wisdom and the glory of all that he has been discussing." As we have read through this chapter Paul has been encouraged by the revelations God has given him as he is writing this letter. We can see how God has inspired him and used him to first educate the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians but also educating the countless students for thousands of years to follow.

 7] "’*For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be repaid to Him? (Isaiah 40:13; Jeremiah 23:18)’”*

 First God is unfathomable, Who can know what is on God's mind, who can give wisdom to God, when we know God is all wisdom, . And who can give to God first that God should receive? God has it all because He created it all. God doesn't owe anybody or anything. We owe Him. Remember this, all things are God’s and we have things only for a season. Today we seem to have a culture that we can buy our way out of anything or into anything.

 8] "*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Whom be the glory forever, amen."*

 This is a 'benediction' or "good Word" to be received. It merely says all is Gods and we should be thankful He has shared of His things, even His Son for our redemption. He should get all the glory, shouldn’t He?