

Romans 9-11 Intro - A Gospel for All

Romans chapters 9 through 11 should be read as one unit. Interrupting the flow of Paul's argument can lead to misconceptions, and in some cases poor interpretations that are "antibiblical and antievangelical (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 141)."

"Building on that foundation, this book aims to show how Paul himself engages with and renegotiates the boundaries of Israel and his arguments about Israelite status, salvation, and gentile inclusion (Staples, Jason, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 19)."

In these chapters Paul continues to connect points that he has already made to his overall all argument that God's justice is present in the messianic event and has radically altered the way we interact with one another in our communal lives.

"For Paul, the equal incorporation of gentiles was not in tension with Israel's anticipated salvation but rather was the very means by which part of Israel was being restored. As a result, this study shows Paul's thinking to be much more in line with that of other first century Jews, expecting the restoration of Israel than previously anticipated (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 20)."

The energy from Romans 8:31-39 carries us into this next segment. Paul's thunderous proclamation that nothing can separate us from God's love, or one another, brings us to a grand conclusion to Paul's discussion of the differences between our being enslaved in the flesh (Adamic reality) and set free through our resurrection by the spirit (the messianic reality).

The initial statement of Paul's argument must now be dealt with: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16)."

For the majority of the argument to this point, Paul has dealt with connecting the gentiles to the work of the good news. He will now shift focus to the Judeans and their relationship to God through the messianic reality.

"At the beginning of chapter 3 was a series of questions that seemed to be left hanging: **If some were unfaithful, does their faithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?** [3:3]. **If our wickedness serves to show the justice of God...is God unjust to inflict wrath on us?** [3:5]. **If through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?** [3:7-8]. The argument of the long discourse the we will track through the next three chapters serves as a reply to these questions (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 139-40)."

"The basic issue - **Will their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?** (3:3) - is now going to be addressed... If the promise of God has failed with respect to Israel, it cannot stand with respect to us. Who could then have confidence in the divine promise (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 140)."

“Christianity has often assumed it can do without a relation to the root of Israel’s history. The result has been the enablement of tacit or terrifyingly explicit anti-Judaism (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 140-41).”

Paul uses the Hebrew scriptures throughout his argument and very densely in the next three chapters. Paul does this to build his argument. It is important to remember that Paul is arguing for God’s reliability and not looking for some pattern or code that would justify human condition to achieve justice. God is the author of this story, scripture is merely a response.

“It is important to keep in mind two interrelated coordinates: history and Israel. History is crucial since God is involved in history, including some relationship to the history of the rejection and execution of the messiah (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 141).”

Israelite or Judean?

“But even if the terms were truly interchangeable, one would expect them to be evenly distributed across the Pauline letters and other early Jewish sources. This is far from the case, however. Paul, for example, uses ‘Israel’ and cognates thirteen times in Romans 9-11 but only six times in the rest of the seven undisputed letters. *Ioudias* and its cognates, on the other hand, appear twenty-nine times broadly scattered across the seven letters but only twice in 9-11 (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 38).”

“The biggest obstacle to treating “Israel” is merely an alternative term for “the Jews” in this period is the fact that the Jews were not the only Yahwistic ethnic group, claiming the Israelite label in the Second Temple period (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 41-42).”

“The reason the Samaritans identified themselves as Israelites but not Jews is that they claimed descent from the northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh rather than from Judah (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 43).”

Northern Kingdom (10 tribes) - Assyrian attack, destruction, and assimilation in 722 B.C.E.

Southern Kingdom (Judah) - Babylonian attack 597 B.C.E., exile destruction of Temple in Jerusalem 587 B.C.E.

“The result is that Israel and Judah and their respective exiles are regularly conflated, as though Israel as a nation had persisted until the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. The biblical authors, however, distinguished between the fall and the captivity of *Israel* and that of *Judah* over a century later, long after Israel ceased to exist as a nation (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 45).”

“The Hebrew prophets, however, declared that both Israel and Judah would ultimately be restored and focus on the fate of the northern Israelites to a surprising degree, though this fact has largely been ignored or overlooked due to the presumption that after the Babylonian exile the meaning of Israel narrowed to the remnant of Judah (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 45).”

“This distinction between northern Israel and southern Judah – maintained and even emphasized throughout the biblical tradition – is ultimately the source of the terminological distinctions between ‘Israelite’ and ‘Jew’ that continue to be made throughout the Second Temple period (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 45).”

“Nevertheless, although Samaritan claims of Israelite status were rejected by many Jews, this did not imply that only Jews were Israelites, but rather that the other real Israelites (the scattered northern tribes) remained in exile until the restoration and reunification with Judah promised by the prophets (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 48).”

Ezekiel 37

“This paradigm, which I will call ‘Israelite restoration eschatology,’ reflects a narrative framework in which: (1) because of biblical Israel’s covenantal infidelity and disobedience (2) Israel fell under the covenantal curses, most notably the dissolution, captivity/exile, and dispersion of Israel, sometimes characterized as the ‘death’ and the people as a whole, from which (3) God will redeem, reunify, and restore all twelve tribes of Israel to covenantal favor, including an inward ethical transformation of the people to ensure the restoration will be lasting, an eschatological miracle akin to resurrection from the dead (Ezekiel 37:1-14) (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 59).”

“It is important that Ezekiel prophesies here not about Judah, which had been in exile only a few years, but ‘the whole house of Israel,’ terminology that usually refers to the northern kingdom, which had been in exile well over a century by the time of Ezekiel’s prophetic career. The question, ‘can these bones live?’ (Ezek 37:3) confronts skepticism over whether that seemingly long-dead northern house of Israel could be restored, a point reinforced a few verses later when God promises to reunite the sticks of ‘Ephraim’ and ‘Judah’ into one people (37:15-25) (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 100).”

“In this light, it is evident that the “kingdom of God” Jesus proclaimed was the restored Israel promised by the prophets, through which God himself would bring justice to all the nations. This was the radical message Jesus went to the cross proclaiming and expecting to initiate. Not coincidentally, it is also exactly the sort of revolutionary message that would get an apocalyptic Jew executed by the Romans (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 66).”

Israelite Restoration Eschatology

“First of all, every instance of *Ioudaios* in the Pauline corpus refers to contemporary Jews. Fifteen of these explicitly contrasts Jews with non-Jews, either Greeks, or nations/gentiles, as in the phrase ‘to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Paul also uses cognates of *Ioudaios* on four occasions (all in Galatians) to refer to the Jewish way of life, and the geographical term (Judah/Judea) also appears four times. Paul does not use *Ioudaios* to refer to biblical history of the eschatological people of God, nor does this term occur in the context of prayer or ritual formulas (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 69).”

“Indeed, at its core, Romans is a defense of how gentile incorporation in the *ekklesia* following Israel’s messiah is inextricably linked to Israel’s salvation and is paradoxical proof of God’s faithfulness to Israel (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 111).”

“Idolatry and impiety are therefore no less the root of the Israel problem than the gentile problem. Indeed, a central premise of traditional Jewish restoration eschatology is the conviction that due to its own idolatry and rejection of God’s revelation, and failure to keep the command to love YHWH, Israel is no longer separate and distinct from the rest of humanity, but rather stands under the same judgment (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 128-29).”

“That is, if, as the prophets declared, Israel has become indistinct from the nations due to sin, do not the nations now have an opportunity to partake in Israel’s transformation and deliverance from that condition? ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the YHWH will be saved’ (Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13), and everyone means *everyone* (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 147).”

“That is, although he builds on the same restoration eschatological foundation as his contemporaries, Paul takes the additional step of arguing that the restoration promises to Israel also apply to uncircumcised Gentiles, who can (and do!) receive the spirit, thereby becoming equal members in the restored Israel’s new covenant. For Paul, because God is impartial and Israel has become indistinct from the nations by behaving like the nations, the promise to Israel is also a promise to the nations (Staples, *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel*, 150).”