

Leader's Guide

LESSON 18

Dr. Jerry Nelson

In response to the sermon on January 20th.

Romans 11 A Complete Israel

Key Points

In the past several weeks we have had to wrestle with some difficult passages dealing with God's divine nature. In this text we face yet another hard truth: God's divine judgment. We will discover:

- Jewish rejection of the gospel
- God's judgment: divine hardening
- Eventual restoration
- The believer's response

God's divine judgment is demonstrated throughout the Old Testament. Most notably in the fall and captivity of Jerusalem. The Jews suffered greatly. God repeatedly gave them opportunities for repentance. As we discovered in Romans 10:21 "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." Yet, God's plan and promises have always been for the eventual redemption of the Jews.

While we wholeheartedly agree that God's perfect and divine nature means that he is just, that he will judge fairly and execute just the right disciplinary action, at times it is hard to understand. In today's passage we see the judgment of God upon Israel in the form of a divine hardening; "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." (vs. 8). This sets up some challenges for us, as believers.

Personal Reflection:

- This passage can easily become an academic lesson on Jewish history. After all, it *does* help us understand God’s relationship with the Jews and his faithfulness to accomplish his sovereign will through his promises. As you study this week, ask God to reveal himself to you in a way that goes beyond a factual knowledge of him. What will lead you to a greater awe, a greater wonder, a heart of worship? That’s what happened to the apostle Paul (vs. 33-36).
- In the study questions you were asked to express your own exuberant praise to God. This will be an important part of your preparation this week, for in doing so, you will be prepared to lead others in worship. What attributes of God come to mind? What mighty deeds has he done (both historically and personally)? At the end of your lesson, encourage your group to engage in a time of affirmation and praise to our great God of justice, mercy and grace!

Discussion Questions

1. In Romans 11, Paul continues to demonstrate that God’s word has not failed (9:6). How does Paul demonstrate that truth? *Some Jews have been saved (vv1-10) and many will be (vv11-24).*
2. 11:8 says that, except for the “remnant” most Jews were hardened. What does this mean (*Remember 9:17-21*)? For what purpose did God harden them (*11-15, 25*)? At least twice Paul says that **Gentile** conversions were intended by God to create a positive jealousy among the Jews (*10:19; 11:14*). Has that happened? How might it happen?
3. Through the last 20 centuries, what attitudes among Gentile believers have developed toward Jews? What caution does Paul give Gentiles in regard to their attitude toward the Jews, and what implications does that have for us today? (*13a; 18a; 20b-22*)

4. Describe the difference between Israel being “elect” as a nation (ethnic group) and Israelites being “elect” as individuals to salvation.
5. Verses 17-21 Into what are Gentile believers now grafted and how? Into what are Jewish believers now grafted and how? Is there a difference? (*In the OT era, one had to be an Israelite of faith (true Israel) or convert to Judaism (in true faith in God) to be part of the people of God. In the NT era (including now), whether one is Jew or Gentile, one has to convert to Christ to be part of the people of God.*)
6. God is described as both stern and kind (vs. 22). Any adequate doctrine of God must include these two elements. When we ignore his kindness, God seems a ruthless tyrant; when we ignore his sternness, he seems a doting Father.”¹ In what ways did the Jews experience God’s kindness and sternness? In what ways have you experienced both of these attributes of God? What was the result?
7. In what way does Paul mean “all Israel will be saved?” When?
8. In this passage, in what ways does God display His mercy? What is your response to his mercy?
9. Describe the dynamic of belief and unbelief, of obedience and disobedience. (vs. 30-32). What is your response?
10. Paul responded to God in exuberant praise—worship. WHY? What causes this response by Paul?
11. Take time to express your gratitude to God for His great mercy and grace.

¹ Barker, Kenneth L. *NIV Study Bible (Fully Revised): Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1985, 1995, 2002.*