

Sent: Wednesday, March 07, 2018 4:33 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 11

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things! To Him be the glory forever! Amen! (Romans 11:33-36)

And with that, Paul provides a joyous and fitting response not only to our text for last nite's lesson, but also for chapters 9-11, about God's future plans for Israel--and, even more, for his entire discussion, beginning with chapter 1, about "justification by faith" for all the chosen of God--both Jews and Gentiles--because of Christ's redemptive work on the Cross!

Well, Romans 11 doesn't exactly start with all that grandeur! In fact, it begins on a rather somber note, certainly for Israel, based on chapter 10, with God seemingly reaching another frustration point with Israel--if that's indeed possible for a sovereign God! Hear Him declare: "But as for Israel...All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people!"

And so, Paul begins chapter 11 with another of his rhetorical questions: "God hasn't rejected His people, has He? A question which could only be applied, in context, to the actual people of Israel!

Certainly, a legitimate question, based on countless iterations of Israel's failures and disobedience, recorded in the Old Testament, over centuries of time--culminating in their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, whom they failed to recognize as their long-awaited Messiah! (But somehow doing so in accord with the "mystery" of the foreknowledge and sovereign plan of God!)

And yet Paul responds with an emphatic "no"! God has certainly not rejected His people whom He foreknew (again speaking of Israel) --at least not totally, and not forever! God, being God, could not renege on His promises, His covenants, or His Word forever settled in heaven!

Many Old Testament references could be cited! Here are a few:

I Samuel 12:22--"For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name! Because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself!"

Psalms 89:31-37--"If they (His people Israel) violate My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgressions with a rod and their iniquity with stripes! But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him (speaking of David), nor deal falsely in My faithfulness...His descendants shall endure forever and His throne as the sun before Me! It will be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful!"

Jeremiah 12:15--"And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each on his land!"

Paul argues in Romans 11:1-6 that there's always been at least a "remnant according to God's gracious choice"! He himself is living proof of that! A once Christ-rejecting, Christ-hating, Christian-killing Jew who should never have been allowed into the covenant! (so, says MacArthur) And, looking back, during "dark times" for Israel, the story of Elijah, when God delivered him from his doldrums, by reminding him that He (God) had "left for Himself" seven thousand men "who have not bowed their knee to the image of Baal"! And what about all those Messianic Jews who made up the early church at Jerusalem (as noted in Acts 2:41; 4:4; and 6:1)? There's always been a "remnant"--even to this day!

But Paul is referring to more to come! In fact, many more! Later, in Romans 11:26, he even says that "all Israel will be saved"--although the "all" has been variously translated, e.g., perhaps referring, as MacArthur suggests, to "all the elect of Israel," while Moo says "a significant number"!

But Paul is obviously speaking of a great future for the actual people of Israel (although some Bible-believing theologians, including those of "covenant theology" persuasion, believe that the Israel spoken of in this passage, and all the remaining prophecies concerning her, have now been replaced by, or apply to, the "church")!

And yet Paul appears to be definitely talking about the real people of Israel, who have--for the most part--been temporarily "set-aside" and "partially hardened" while God is bringing about salvation for the Gentiles. That hardening process will last, according to Paul, in verse 25, "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so, all Israel will be saved!" Verse 26 says it's "when the Deliverer will come from Zion and remove ungodliness from Jacob..." (perhaps referring to the coming tribulation period, and the second coming of Christ). All of which constitutes another one of those "mysteries" (unfathomable?) of God's salvation plan!

Jeremiah prophesied; "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart, I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people!" (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

Moo sees this larger salvation for the Jews as a "future eschatological event"! MacArthur notes that God's covenants and promises "demand Israel's preservation" as a nation and a people, and that "human history is moving unwaveringly and inexorably on a track that God has established...and that it's moving to the salvation of the people of Israel"! (Interestingly, Israel has been reestablished--and somehow survived as a nation for 70 years!)

Paul uses the analogy of the "olive tree," in verses 17-24, to illustrate how the Jewish believers are the "natural branches," as "spiritual heirs of Abraham," while the believing Gentiles are the "wild branches" which have been "grafted into" the tree, rooted in the covenant of salvation which God made with Abraham. But also, that more natural branches (of believing Jews) are yet to be added!

Paul also alludes, in verse 15, to their "life from the dead"--which MacArthur sees as a future "spiritual rebirth" for his fellow countrymen!

Well, although not specifically stated in our text, the scene seems to be set for the "rapture" of believers (the church)--when the "fullness of the Gentiles has been reached--and the coming of the prophesied tribulation period; and a time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7); the appearing of the "anti-Christ," and the rise of 144,000 Jewish "evangelists" (composed of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel), resulting (according to Revelation 7:9) in "a great multitude (of believers) which no one could number, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb..."! And then, the return of Christ (His second coming) to defeat the anti-Christ and establish a thousand year "millennial kingdom" on this earth!

Dispensation theology to be sure, most of which is not specifically covered by this text, and with which some will take issue! But certainly, we believe, it demonstrates a future for Israel--and for all believers, Jews and Gentiles--in line with the covenant promises! And reason for Paul to end chapter 11 with great joy and satisfaction--not just for the hope for Israel and his kinsmen, but for all believers who have been justified by faith through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ!

And so, the great doxology of Romans 11:33-36! "To Him be the glory forever! Amen"!

And now moving on in our study of Romans from chapters 1-11--and the topics of sin and salvation and sanctification and sovereignty--to chapter 12. and "service"!

Shalom!

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