



THE IMPORTANCE OF ALL OF THE BOOK OF



ROMANS

By Mottel Baleston



Early on in my ministry, I had the experience of needing to raise support. It is a process of visiting churches that are willing to allow you to come and present the vision for your anticipated work. My experience of being around believers and churches up to that point was made up fully of those who took the Bible seriously and literally and did not try to invent allegorical or imaginary interpretations that were not tied directly to the text. My experience broadened considerably over the next two years as I encountered all sorts of churches that were on different points of the doctrinal spectrum between allegorical and very literal. The fact that they had invited me certainly showed that they acknowledged the need for Jewish people to come to faith in Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah, but beyond that, I was surprised at just how much they varied.

A wake-up call of sorts came as I visited a church several hours from my home. The elders showed me the curriculum booklets that they were using for their adult Sunday school Bible class. The study centered on a survey of the book of Romans. The sessions doubled as a “new members” class since that epistle takes a person through all of the basics of New Testament theology. As I thumbed through the booklet, I found an extensive treatment of Romans 1–2. These chapters show that all are sinners—both the religious and non-religious, Jews and Gentiles—and that nature itself demonstrates proof of the Creator. Then, in Romans 3–5, we understand that while we were still sinners, Messiah died in our place.

Chapters 6–8 show that we are eternally secure as children of God. All of this is wonderful, basic theology.

Then, a curious thing happened. The booklet skipped over Romans 9, 10, and 11 as though these chapters did not exist and picked up again with the text of Romans 12. Oh, there was a short note at the end of chapter 8 along the lines of: “Since Romans 9–11 considers the question of the Jewish people and is a temporary departure from Paul’s main theme, we will continue with chapter 12.”

It took me a while to digest the meaning of that editorial decision. There are only sixteen chapters in the book of Romans, and Paul thought it important enough to take three entire chapters to write about the absolute continuing relationship of God with the Jewish people corporately. The editors of the Sunday school booklet already had their theological model set, derived from seventeenth-century European doctrinal statements. Therefore, they were not about to let someone like the Apostle Paul tell us what God inspired him to write!

Let us be clear on one thing: All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching and reproof.

Out of sixteen chapters in Romans, three are wholly devoted to Israel for the same reason that many prominent theologians have observed: If you get Israel right, you are on the path to getting the rest of the Scriptures right. Those who take an allegorical view of Paul’s references to Israel in Romans imagine that he either is simply using Israel as a case in point to explain his other doctrines, or they may go to the extreme... *continued on page 19*

The following article is an excerpt of Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s commentary on Romans that was recently released by Ariel Ministries. It summarizes Paul’s teaching of Romans 9–11 that was also mentioned in Mottel Baleston’s article.

ROMANS 9–11: A SUMMARY

by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

In summary, Romans 9–11 assures the believer of the following truth: God will keep His promises to Israel. Therefore, He will also keep His promises to the body of Messiah. The church has every reason to be thankful for this fact and may rejoice with Paul by exclaiming, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God!” (Rom. 8:38-39). Nevertheless, there are some who may wonder what difference this all makes. For them, the following review may be helpful.

In the first eight chapters of the book of Romans, Paul dealt with the theology of the righteousness of God. By doing so, the apostle provided the first example of systematic theology.

After introducing the book in 1:1-17, Paul spelled out the details of the theology of God’s righteousness. In the first three chapters, he pointed out that everyone has fallen short of the righteous standards of God, and that includes all sections of



humanity: pagan Gentiles (Rom. 1:18-32), cultured Gentiles (Rom. 2:1-16), and the Jews (Rom. 2:17-3:8). Paul concluded that all have sinned and have come short of the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:9-31).

The Three Tenses of Salvation

Paul next described how this problem for humanity was solved: God provided righteousness through salvation in Yeshua the Messiah. This salvation has three tenses: past, present, and future. The past aspect of salvation is justification (Rom. 4:1-5:21). Once one believes, he is justified—or declared righteous—by God. The present aspect of salvation is sanctification (Rom. 6:1-8:17). Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life today, conforming him more and more to the image of the Son of God. The future aspect of salvation is glorification (Rom. 8:18-39). Glorification is guaranteed in light of the fact that believers have been justified and are being sanctified and will therefore someday be glorified and be like the Messiah who saved them.

At the end of chapter 8, as he concluded the theology of God's righteousness, Paul pointed out that in light of all that God has done for believers in justification, sanctification, and glorification, there is absolutely nothing that can separate them from the love of God. Nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing below the earth, nothing outside of believers, nothing inside of them, not even they themselves can separate them from the love of God.

One would think that having stated all this, Paul would immediately proceed to deal with the practice of God's

righteousness, as he did in other epistles. For example, in Ephesians 1-3, he dealt with theology; then in Ephesians 4-6, he addressed the practical application of that theology. Yet, in Romans, having spelled out the theology of God's righteousness, Paul did not immediately proceed to the practice of God's righteousness. Instead, between the theology of God's righteousness in chapters 1-8 and the practice of God's righteousness in chapters 12-16, Paul inserted three chapters dealing with God's righteousness in His relationship with Israel. Why?

God's Promises to Israel

At the end of chapter 8, Paul concluded that in light of all that God has done, in light of His promises, there is nothing that can separate the believers from the love of God. At this point, one might object and say, "But did not Israel have promises from God, and did not God make certain promises and commitments to Israel that included national salvation and worldwide restoration? Yet, the majority of Israel is in a state of unbelief. It does not seem that God's promises to Israel have been kept. If God's promises to Israel have not been kept, how can we really believe that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God, since it seems that Israel has been separated from the love of God?" Therefore, Paul must deal with the question of God's righteousness in His relationship with Israel.

For this reason, Romans 9-11 should not be ignored, as some commentators have chosen to do, nor should these chapters be viewed merely as parenthetical or unrelated to Paul's

argument. They should be considered pivotal in that they justify or vindicate God's righteousness in His relationship with Israel. They form a bridge between the theology of God's righteousness in chapters 1-8 and the practice of God's righteousness in chapters 12-16.

Hence, in Romans 9-11, Paul dealt with the outworking of God's righteousness toward Israel, showing that Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua was not something that caught God by surprise.

Romans 9

In Romans 9, the apostle pointed out that the rejection was part of God's plan. In fact, if Israel as a nation had accepted the Messiah at His first coming, it would have proved Yeshua not to be the Messiah. The Hebrew Bible makes it very clear that His Messiahship necessitated a rejection by the nation, and so this rejection actually proves that Yeshua is indeed the Messiah. In summary, the rejection was part of God's program.

Romans 10

In Romans 10, Paul explained that God has decreed this program in order for the call of salvation to go out to Jews and Gentiles alike. This call is on an individual basis because anyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Romans 11

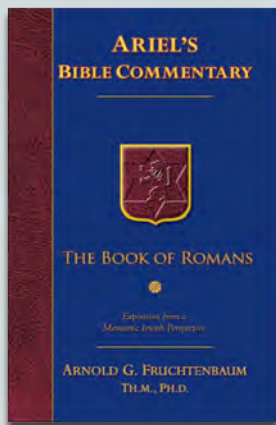
In Romans 11, Paul pointed out that Israel's rejection of the Messiah is not total. What is happening in Jewish history in modern times has happened throughout Jewish history in Old Testament times. The majority of the nation



has always been in unbelief. Yet, there has always been a believing remnant due to the election of grace, and this fact is still true today. Hence, Israel's rejection of the Messiah is not total, nor is it final. One day, the fullness of Gentiles will have come in, and once God is through with His program for the Gentiles, He will again turn His attention to the Jewish nation. At this point, all Israel will come to a saving knowledge of Him, and God's program for Israel will be fulfilled because the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Conclusion

God's program for Israel has not failed; it is continuing according to His divine plan, and Israel too will someday experience the fullness of God's grace in a national sense. Having settled that, Paul can now provide practical applications.¹



¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary — The Book of Romans* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2022), pp. 231-234.

of saying that when you read the word “Israel,” you should think that it actually refers to the church.

Here is a “for instance.” Those who take a less than literal view of Romans 9–11 make the following argument about chapter 9: “Paul’s only aim is to demonstrate election and eternal security; once God makes a sovereign choice, we are His. Nothing can change that.” Well, those two elements are certainly in view. However, apparently lost on many is the greater context of what Paul chooses to use as an example: their relationship with God is secure because it is based on a covenant that God has ratified—in the same way that Israel as a corporate entity has a relationship with God that is secure because it is also based on a covenant that God has ratified. Is there any limit to that relationship?

Here is where those who have their mind set against Israel do not want to hear all the evidence from the rest of Paul’s writing in Romans. For instance, they may cite Romans 9:6 out of context as a sort of proof that the church has become some kind of “spiritual Israel.” The verse reads: *But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel. But then, these people have to ignore verse 8: That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.* This verse qualifies the statement of verse 6 and echoes a point that Paul made earlier in Romans 2:17: *Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God.* This verse

explicitly sets the parameters for who can be considered a “spiritual Jew.” These parameters are as follows:

1. Spiritual Jews are already physically Jewish (Rom. 2:17).
2. They have also yielded their hearts to God by faith in His Messiah (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:8).

In other words, in keeping with his “election” theme of chapter 9, Paul noted that there is going to be an elect Jewish remnant within the larger people of Israel that ultimately will be seen as being Israel in its true sense: a redeemed Israel that has come to faith in Messiah Yeshua. In Galatians 6:16, this Israel is called the “Israel of God,” which is held to be a separate ethnic entity in that passage.

Abrahamic Covenant

Of course, once you go forward to chapters 10 and 11 of Romans, there is no doubt that Paul is addressing ethnic Israel, which still has a place in the kingdom of God. The key to understanding this truth is a piece of common knowledge held by first-century readers of Romans but often overlooked by modern readers: While the eternal Abrahamic Covenant guarantees the continuity and survival of the Jewish people as a nation, it does not grant salvation to individuals. That crucial truth is what guides our understanding of Romans 9 and prevents us from embracing the error of replacement theology. In a sense, it is not surprising that those who are ignorant of the eternal Abrahamic Covenant and are reading seventeenth-century European doctrinal statements (which retain Roman Catholic doctrine regarding Isra-