

## Romans 9-11

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### I. Introduction

1. In Romans 9-11 Paul treats one of the most bewildering problems that faced the early church – the problem of the Jews.

A. They were God's chosen people; they had a unique role in God's plan; yet when God's son came into this world the Jews rejected and crucified him.

B. Paul's purpose in these chapters is to explain this tragic paradox.

2. Paul was the perfect person to write about this problem. Why?

A. Because – although he was the apostle to the Gentiles – Paul was to the end of his life proudly, stubbornly, and unalterably a Jew.

B. In 2 Cor. 11:22 he wrote "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I."

a) When he claimed to be a *Hebrew* he was saying that unlike many Jews who had forgotten their native language in favor of Greek, he still spoke Hebrew.

b) When he claimed to be an *Israelite* he was claiming to be a member of the nation that had first received the covenants from God.

c) When he claimed to be of the *seed of Abraham* he was claiming absolute racial purity.

C. He made similar claims in Philippians 3:4-6 and Romans 11:1 where he also reminded his readers that he was of the tribe of *Benjamin*. Why was this important?

a) It was from Benjamin that the first king of Israel came.

b) Benjamin and Judah were the only two tribes that stood true to Rehoboam when the kingdom split.

c) Benjamin was the only son of Jacob that was born in the land of promise.

d) When Israel went to battle, the tribe of Benjamin held the post of honor (Judges 5:14; Hosea 5:8).

D. Paul was not just an Israelite; he was of the *aristocracy* of Israel.

a) Indeed, he was a Pharisee. (Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6). (His fellow Pharisees even rose to his support in Acts 23.)

E. No Jewish critic of Paul could ever criticize his Jewishness.

a) No one could say that Paul abandoned Judaism because he did not understand it or because he had not fully experienced it.

b) No one could say that Paul misunderstood Judaism or knew it only from the outside.

c) Like an insider who writes a tell-tale memoir he knew Judaism inside and out and gained instant respect (in that regard) from his critics.

3. But Paul does not write this section out of anger toward his fellow Jews; he writes it out of heartbreak.

4. He also never denies that the Jews played a unique role in God's plan of bringing the Messiah to the world.

5. Why did Paul write these chapters?

A. He is returning to questions he raised briefly earlier in the book. Here he will consider them in detail.

B. God made promises to physical Jews, yet according to Paul's teaching the bulk of physical Jews were unblessed.

C. The problem Paul faces is to reconcile God's faithfulness to those whom he gave promises when the bulk of them were cut off from those blessings.

D. These chapters are a defense of God's faithfulness.

## II. Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

1. Paul prefaces his remarks by saying that he is speaking the truth in Christ.

A. Paul often uses the phrase “I am speaking the truth... I am not lying.” See, for example, 2 Cor. 11:31, 2 Cor. 12:6, Gal. 1:20, and 1 Tim. 2:7.

B. This statement, of course, does not mean that Paul is not speaking the truth elsewhere! This expression is simply intended to show the depth of Paul’s feelings about this subject. This problem really struck home for the apostle Paul.

2. Paul makes it clear from the start that he loves the Jewish people.

A. He is not a renegade that is dissatisfied with his heritage and is seeking to defame it.

B. He is living with the pain of watching his own people live apart from their Messiah when they could so easily be enjoying God’s promises.

3. But look at what Paul is saying here! He is telling the Jews that they are lost without Jesus Christ. How could someone so intolerant be characterized as loving?

A. If he really loved them, wouldn’t he tell them what they wanted to hear? Paul has made them unhappy – doesn’t that automatically imply that Paul has been unloving? No.

B. Paul loves the Jews, and thus he is telling them the truth about their condition. If you truly love someone the **worst** thing you can do is to make them think they are right with God when they are not.

C. Most people don’t want to go to a doctor who tells them just what they want to hear – they want a doctor who gives them an accurate diagnosis and tells them how to fix the problem. And yet what kind of preacher do most people want?

4. The depth of Paul’s love and concern is expressed by the phrase “*for I could wish.*”

A. The tense in the Greek indicates that Paul had often felt this way and in fact continued to feel this way. He had not simply had this thought once and then quickly dismissed it.

B. This section is even more meaningful when we remember that Paul at one time intensely persecuted the church and even caused some Jewish Christians to blaspheme. He now would be accursed himself if he could only undo the damage that he had once caused.

5. This section reminds us of Moses who like Paul felt so strongly about his people that he wished to be cut off for their sake. Recall Exodus 32:30–32 where we read:

On the morrow Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’ So Moses returned to the Lord and said, ‘Alas, this people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’

A. Paul, like Moses, was trying to deliver his people from their slavery and bondage.

B. Of course, it was Jesus rather than either Moses or Paul who really became a substitute.

a) In Rom. 8:32 we read that God gave his son up for us all—Jesus was our substitute.

b) (2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”)

6. Note from verse 3 of chapter 9 that Paul is speaking here of his kinsmen according to the *flesh*. We need to keep this important contextual clue in mind as we continue our study.

<sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

7. In this section Paul lists the advantages of the Jews – and they did have many advantages.

A. But with great advantage, comes great responsibility. (Luke 12:48 “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required.”)

8. What were those advantages?

A. Paul’s kinsmen were *Israelites*; that is, they were descendants of Abraham and Jacob.

a) The name Israel was a name of distinction and Paul used it here to recall their unique place in history. It is used many times in the New Testament as a title of honor.

B. The '*adoption*' that Paul speaks of refers to God's choice of Israel as a people for His own possession.

a) Recall Deut. 14:2 where we read:

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth.

b) Paul, as in Isaiah 51:1, is saying to the Jews, "Consider the rock from which you were hewn." They had been chosen by God. What an incredible honor!

C. The *glory* that Paul recalls refers to is the glory of God that was manifested through Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

a) The Greek term used here for glory indicates the divine radiance; what has been called the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

D. Paul speaks of the *covenants* (plural) instead of the covenant (singular).

a) To deduce what covenants Paul has in mind we need to recall that he is speaking to physical Jews—his kinsmen according to the flesh. Thus he must be referring to the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Aaronic, and Davidic covenants.

E. 'The giving of the law' recalls Mount Sinai, which is considered by the Jews to be the central event in Jewish history.

F. The 'worship' or 'service of God' speaks of the whole sacrificial and priestly system of Israel.

a) Hebrews speaks of the first tabernacle as having "ordinances of divine service" (9:1) and of priests who "serve" the copy (8:5) and "serve" the earthly tabernacle (13:10).

b) It was Israel's privilege to serve God in ways that no other nation could. For much of the world's history, the proper object and character of true worship had been revealed only to the Jews.

G. The '*promises*' recall the Messianic promises of the prophets. From the first such promise in Gen. 3:15 to the last in Mal. 3:1 all had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

H. The *'patriarchs'* or *'fathers'* were Jews; they were not Gentiles. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were part of Israel's heritage.

a) Paul is listing the honors of Israel and the list is neither short nor unimpressive.

I. Finally, Paul reminds the Jews that the Messiah came out of the Jewish race.

a) There is a definite article before 'Christ.' Paul is saying that *the* Messiah is Jewish according to the flesh.

b) Here Paul reaches the pinnacle of all the Jewish privileges—when God chose to enter the world, he did so as a Jew!

9. Despite some modern translations (most notably the RSV), the doxology (hymn of praise to God) in verse 5 is not directed toward God the Father but toward God the Son.

A. To say otherwise is to wrest Paul's grand conclusion directly from its context.

B. The NKJV translation of verse 5 is correct: "Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

C. As you know, the RSV has problems with the deity of Christ. (At least one of the translators for the RSV did not believe in the deity of Christ.) The RSV has: "to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen." That translation should be rejected for several reasons:

a) The fact that in the preceding clause Paul has commented on Christ's human nature makes it reasonable to believe that he would now say something about his divine nature.

b) The rendering, "Let God be blessed forever" would be a doxology in honor of God. It is Paul's custom in such doxologies to include in a preceding line a reference to God. He does this in Rom. 1:25, Gal. 1:4–5, 2 Cor. 11:31, and 2 Tim. 4:18. He does not do so here.

c) It would seem unusual that Paul would insert a doxology to God after complaining about Israel's unbelief. It would be like a missionary writing back to a congregation and saying "Even though the people I am teaching have many advantages there have been very few conversions. Praise the Lord!"

10. In reviewing these unique blessings, Paul is seemingly making his problem more difficult.

A. How could such a privileged people be cut off from the promises of God? Was God faithless to his promises? Had his promises come to nothing?

<sup>6</sup> But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

11. Paul insists of course that the word of God has not failed.

A. Right away we can see the direction that Paul is taking in his answer. He begins with a lesson on 'selection' or 'election.'

B. That they are not all Israel who are of Israel implies that there is a part of Israel that is Israel.

C. Note that Paul is not discussing Gentiles at all at this point. (That is, the true Israel in verse 6 is not a figure for the Church. The context for verse 6 is found in verse 3 – Paul is still concerned about his countrymen *according to the flesh*.)

D. Paul wants us to know that within physical Israel there are physical Israelites who are Israelites indeed.

12. How, though, does this distinction deal with the problem?

A. Paul insists that the word of God has not failed. But if God's promises had been made to physical Jews and not all of the physical Jews were blessed, then wasn't God faithless?

B. Paul's answer is that only a faithful Jew is a real Jew. The unblessed Jews are not really Jews! They have the flesh but not the faith. They are children only of the flesh, just like Ishmael.

13. Paul insists that although the blessings were offered to all physical Jews they were appropriated by faith.

A. Those who were intended to inherit the promises were faithful Jews. The real heir of the promises to the Jews is a faithful physical Jew.

14. Note the parallel between this explanation and the situation of the entire world with respect to Christ's promises.

A. 1 John 2:1 says that Christ is the expiation for the sins of the whole world. 1 Timothy 4:10 says that Jesus is the savior of all men, especially of

those who believe. 2 Peter 2:1 implies that Christ purchased everyone at his death.

B. Thus, Christ died for all and offers salvation to all but only those who appropriate that promise through faith will actually inherit the blessing.

C. Is God faithless because few will find the narrow way and be saved? No! The promise of salvation is conditioned on faith.

D. If there is no condition then 2 Peter 3:9 (God does not wish that any should perish) and 1 Timothy 2:4 (God desires all men to be saved) logically imply that all men will be saved.

E. Does man have to do anything to be saved? Peter was asked that very question in Acts 2:37 and provided the answer in Acts 2:38. Does man then earn his salvation through his own actions. No! Paul answers that question in Ephesians 2:8–9.

15. There are four (and only four) options that are open to us:

A. Here are our four options:

a) God made promises to all of Jacob's descendants and those promises were unconditional.

b) God made promises to all of Jacob's descendants and those promises were conditional.

c) God made promises to some of Jacob's descendants and those promises were unconditional.

d) God made promises to some of Jacob's descendants and those promises were conditional.

B. Number 1 is out because it would mean that no Jew could ever be lost and the Bible gives many examples of Jews that were lost.

a) In fact, Paul's very problem is to explain why so many Jews are lost! Since Paul's day countless Jews have died without Christ and hence, according to Acts 4:12, have been lost.

C. Number 3 and Number 4 contradict Romans 9:4–5, which clearly teaches that the promises were extended to all physical Jews.

a) Peter in Acts 3 and Paul in Acts 13 both treat faithless Jews as having had the promises extended to them.

D. Number 2 is the only remaining option.



a) Further, it makes sense of all the evidence. It explains why the millions of unblessed Jews pose a problem (they had the promises extended to them) and further it explains the way out of the problem (those promises were conditional).

<sup>7</sup> nor are *they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

16. Verse 6 must have startled the Jews.

A. Particularly when they realized that Paul, a Jewish aristocrat, was saying that before he found Christ he wasn't really a Jew at all.

B. Verse 7 did not make them feel any better.

17. Here Paul reminds the Jews that they are not the only seed of Abraham.

A. If the blessings and honor rested solely on physical kinship with Abraham, Ishmael and all of the Arabs would be equal heirs of those blessings.

B. But scripture teaches that such is not the case.

a) God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael as the chosen line.

b) In fact, in Genesis 22:2, 12 God refers to Isaac as Abraham's **only** son.

18. Although the Jews would be glad to hear that the Arabs are not heirs, Paul is reminding them that the consequence of the Arab's position is that kinship with Abraham does not alone guarantee blessings.

A. Paul is proving to the Jews using their own scriptures that their fleshly connection is not enough to guarantee blessing.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For this *is* the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

19. Isaac was more than Abraham's physical child; he was a child of promise.

A. God chose Isaac over Ishmael before either was even born.

B. The child that was to be Abraham's true seed would be a child of promise and this promise was made in Genesis 15 prior to the birth of either Ishmael or Isaac.

C. Isaac was God's idea. The whole history of Israel began with God's promises and kindness.

20. The eternal salvation of Isaac and Ishmael is not the point here at all. What is the point?

A. Paul had just listed many advantages enjoyed by the Jews. Paul's point here is that the Jews had not received those blessings due to their own merit. Instead, they had received these blessings because God chose them to receive them.

B. The Jews were the chosen people --- and God did the choosing. Paul is not saying that these choices by God were that some would be saved and some would be lost. Indeed, the whole point here is that the majority of these chosen people are lost people!

21. Calvinists read these verses and conclude that God chooses some to eternal salvation and some to eternal damnation before they are even born – but that sort of idea was the very thing that Paul was refuting here!

A. God's choice of the Jews did not mean that the Jews were okay apart from Christ.

B. These choices are depicted almost as arbitrary – God chose one son over another son before either was born. The implication is that it could have easily gone the other way.

C. But for one choice by God long ago, the roles of the Arabs and the Jews would have been reversed! Is that the foundation these Jews are resting on?

D. The Jews were God's chosen people, and they were resting on that relationship as a firm foundation.

E. Paul is knocking that prop out from under them and pointing them instead to the true foundation – a relationship with Jesus Christ.

<sup>10</sup> And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac <sup>11</sup> (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), <sup>12</sup> it was said to her, "The older shall serve the

younger.”<sup>13</sup> As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

22. The same issues that arose with Ishmael and Isaac also arose with Esau and Jacob.

A. Esau and Jacob were both sons of Isaac, and Esau, not Jacob, was the firstborn, yet God chose Jacob over Esau. God chose between two people from the same family—he rejected one and chose the other.

a) The Jews who may have initially been shocked by this idea of selection are now getting a Bible full of it!

b) The Jews might have explained Ishmael away as being illegitimate, but that would not work here. Esau and Jacob were both legitimate sons of Isaac.

23. “But wait,” the Jews say, “Esau was rejected because he sold his birthright.”

A. Wrong, Paul responds. Jacob was chosen while both were still in the womb. In Genesis 25:23 we read:

Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.

B. That is, the choice was made before the children were born—before they had done anything good or bad. Why? So the purpose of election might continue.

C. That is, God wanted to cut away the ground of any Jew who claimed that his relationship with God was based on merit or law-keeping.

D. The very factors being discussed are those the Jews claimed as the ground of their special relationship with God: flesh and law.

a) They have now learned that neither fleshly connection nor moral performance is the basis of their blessing.

b) They weren't the issues when Isaac was chosen over Ishmael, they weren't the issues when Jacob was chosen over Esau, and they aren't the issues now.

c) No Jew can demand a blessing from God because of his fleshly connection or moral performance.

24. Note that when God speaks of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:23 he speaks about them as nations and not as individuals.

A. So while the choice was made between individuals, God regarded it as a choice between nations. Not only does the text say this, but history tells us this as well.

B. As far as the individuals went, the elder did **not** serve the younger.

a) In Genesis 27 Jacob fled to Laban because Esau was trying to kill him.

b) In Genesis 32 Jacob is scared to death of Esau and sends his family ahead to soften him up.

c) In Genesis 33:3 Jacob bowed to the ground seven times when Esau approached.

C. Thus the elder serving the younger must refer to the nations that Jacob and Esau represented.

25. Next Paul quotes Malachi 1:2–3 where God says “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

A. The context in Malachi clearly indicates that God is speaking to nations and not individuals.

B. Some look at Malachi 1:2–3, assume it speaks of individuals, and then claim that Jacob was predestined to be saved and Esau predestined to be lost prior to their birth. Yet this view doesn't hold water!

C. In Hebrews 11:20 we see that Isaac by faith invoked future blessings on **both** Jacob and Esau. So whatever we say of Esau (and hence of all his descendants) we **cannot** say he was an eternally damned, God-hated man prior to his birth.

D. Further, if God hated Esau prior to his birth (as Calvinists believe) then God hated him without cause since Esau had not yet done anything good or bad. Why did Jesus indict the Jews in John 15:23–25? Because they hated him without a cause.

26. God had made a distinction between children of the same father and different mothers. He had made a distinction between children of the same father and same mother—even before they were born.

A. Paul's purpose here is to convince the Jews that they cannot rest on their position as God's chosen people.

B. Those who wrench predestination from these verses should keep the context and Paul's purpose in mind.

C. The selection Paul has in mind involves the covenants of promise and not the offer of salvation in Christ.

D. This is also clear from Ephesians 2:12 where we find that the Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise yet could still accept the offer of eternal salvation.

27. The next objection that Paul deals with is that to some God's choices may seem unfair.

A. All that Paul has said is contrary to the traditional way that a Jew looked at things—earning power must count for something with God.

B. Esau must have earned his rejection and Jacob must have earned his acceptance. Otherwise, how could God avoid a charge of partiality? Let's see how Paul responds to that one...

<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." <sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

28. Paul's first point is to remind his readers that God was merciful to the Israelites even though they did not deserve that mercy.

A. Deut. 9:4–29 makes that point very clear. (Verse 6: "Your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness." Verse 24: "You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.")

B. Paul's quote from Exodus 33:16 stresses the quality of mercy as distinct from (but not opposed to) the quality of justice.

29. God's mercy does not make him unjust.

A. God is not compelled to extend mercy to anyone. If he chooses to do so, he does it.

B. The Jews felt that God was obligated to them. Paul is saying that He is not. (Paul is also implying that if the Jews knew the scriptures they would realize that He is not.)

C. Mercy is a result of God's free and sovereign will and not a result of man's will or performance. No man deserves or merits the mercy of God. If mercy is deserved, then how is it mercy?

<sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

30. In this passage from Exodus 9:16 God makes it clear that Pharaoh had served God's purpose in refusing to let the Israelites leave Egypt. What was that purpose?

A. Pharaoh allowed God to demonstrate His power to the entire earth. God used a wicked man to manifest His power.

B. But why did God choose this particular Pharaoh and not his father or his son? Because God has the sovereign right to do whatever he wants to do!

a) David in Psalm 115:3 reminds us that God does whatever he pleases.

b) Now we need to be careful here.

(1) 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." So if God wants all men to be saved and if God does whatever he pleases, then why aren't all men saved?

(2) The answer is that God does whatever he pleases, but what he pleases will never violate His nature.

(3) For example, God cannot lie. (Hebrews 6:18) So, it will never please God to tell a lie.

(4) God desires that all men be saved. Thus, it pleased Him to provide a plan by which all men could be saved. But it could not please God to choose some people to be lost before they are even born. Why? Because that action by God would cause His statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 to be a lie.

31. What then does it mean when it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart?

A. First, let's recall the setting for this story.

a) Moses was not conducting a Bible study with Pharaoh when God suddenly rushed in and hardened Pharaoh's heart.

- b) Pharaoh had arrayed himself against God right from the start—in fact, he considered himself to be a god.
- c) Nowhere in the Bible is there a single example of God hardening the heart of someone who is seeking him. To those people God says “Seek and ye shall find.” (Matthew 7:7)
- d) God hardens only those who have actively chosen to reject him.
- e) In 2 Thess. 2:11 we read that God sent on some a strong delusion that they would believe a lie. To whom did he send this delusion? He sent it to those who had refused to believe the truth but instead had pleasure in unrighteousness.
- f) Pharaoh was not seeking the truth when God hardened his heart; Pharaoh was standing in opposition to the plan of God.

32. But *how* does God harden someone’s heart?

- A. First, this hardening is part of God’s judicial work—it is directed only at those who have refused to do God’s will.
- B. The result of this hardening is that people become increasingly insensitive to God’s word.
- C. The hardened person moves further and further away from God. How is this accomplished? God deliberately forces a person to choose even though he knows that the person will choose what is wrong.
- D. In Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:8; 14:17 God said that he hardened Pharaoh’s heart. What does this mean?
  - a) First, was God the *only* cause of Pharaoh’s hardened heart? No. In Exodus 8:32; 9:34 and 1 Samuel 6:6 we see that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Further, in Exodus 7:22 it is implied that Pharaoh’s magicians also contributed to the hardness of his heart.
  - b) What did God do to harden Pharaoh’s heart? God hardened his heart by making demands that Pharaoh rejected! Similarly, we contribute to the hardening of men’s hearts when we teach people the gospel and they reject the message.
  - c) How did the magicians harden Pharaoh’s heart? They imitated some of the plagues and made Pharaoh think that the plagues were not God’s doing.
- E. Without God’s demands we cannot harden our hearts against him.

a) When he makes a demand he gives us a choice; we can accept his demand or harden our heart against his demand.

b) In either case, the choice is ours – but God's approach to us initiated the choice and hence it is right to say (if we reject him) that he hardened our heart.

33. Does God harden the hearts of believers? Absolutely not!

A. In 2 Corinthians 3:12--16 Paul says that the unbelieving Jews are hardened when they read the old law apart from Christ, but when they turn to Christ the hardness is removed.

B. In Hebrews 3:13 we read that we are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and in Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7 we are instructed not to harden our own hearts.

34. Is there something mysterious in God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Does he harden people today? Are the Jews being restrained from believing because God has hardened their hearts and will not let them believe? No, to all three questions.

A. We harden our hearts when we choose the world over God and we become increasingly hardened every time we make that choice.

B. God's only contribution to the hardness of our heart is the demands he makes upon us. Without the demands there would be no hardness of heart against him.

C. When Pharaoh rejected God, God did not back off. Instead, God *increased* the demands that he was making on Pharaoh.

D. In that sense, God hardened Pharaoh's heart even further. God's part in the hardening was to force Pharaoh to make a choice; Pharaoh's part was to make the wrong choice.

E. God knew that Pharaoh would rebel against his requests and, by God's continued asking, Pharaoh was driven deeper into rebellion. Yet the choice was his at each step, and each step God demonstrated his power to the world.

F. Pharaoh served God by his disobedience just as much as Moses served God by his obedience. Is this just? Of course! It is well within God's right to demand obedience of any man—even if God knows ahead of time that that man will choose to disobey.

35. What is the message to the Jews?



A. Pharaoh served God's purposes but was justly condemned for his rebellion. The faithless Jews who also served God's purpose are in the same boat.