***Elijah
RO141-01***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1988)**

Please open your Bibles today to a new chapter of the book of Romans: Romans 11:1-6. Our subject is "The Remnant of Grace."

We'll have just a brief overview of where we have come thus far. In Romans 9, 10, and 11, I remind you that the apostle Paul is dealing with the question of what has happened to the Jews, and their covenants with God, now that the church has become the special people of God. That is a natural thought to occur as the result of all that he has said previously, up to that point of chapter 9 in the book of Romans, concerning what God is doing for the salvation of the human race, and of the calling of a special people to Himself, in the church. Naturally, the question arises, "Well, what about the Jews?" They were the special people of God.

So, in Romans 9, Paul deals with the past condition of the Jewish people. He has pointed out that, while God promised salvation to the Jews, which indeed He had, from the time of Abraham, he never promised that every one of the Jews would receive this salvation. Paul indicates that God has always exercised His sovereign right in choosing those whom He would for the salvation from among the Jews, as indeed from among the gentiles. The Jews, however, mistakenly assumed that they would all go to heaven simply by keeping the works of the Mosaic Law.

The Jews, therefore, would not believe Paul's testimony that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah Savior, and that He is *the* only way. Consequently, the Jews, who had the advantage of being God's chosen people, with the Old Testament Scriptures, were all going into the lake of fire, while the gentiles, the outsiders, were trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, and streaming into heaven.

The Jewish prophets Hosea and Isaiah, Paul says, predicted that this very condition would exist when the Messiah came. But Paul says, "God has promised to save a remnant of Jews to preserve His people as a nation.

In Romans 10, Paul then reviews the present status of the Jewish people. He points out that the Jews are not lost because they have not been told the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ. God has seen to it that the gospel, from the first, has been communicated to the Jews by men such as Paul and others. The gospel, furthermore, was illustrated to the Jews, Paul had pointed out, in what was up in the sky through the signs of the zodiac, and the messages which were associated with the star constellations. The Jews have a great zeal for God indeed, but stubbornly pursue salvation their own way through the keeping of the Mosaic Law. But nobody goes to heaven except through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, again, the present condition of the Jews is that they are left out. The fact is, Paul says, "Our own prophet Isaiah predicted that the Jews would not listen to the gospel of grace salvation, but the gentiles, who were not seeking God, and who were not looking for salvation, would find both. Furthermore, Paul indicated that Moses predicted that the Jews would be stirred to jealousy when they saw themselves replaced as God's people by the believing gentiles.

So, we come now to Romans 11, in which Paul previews the future of the Jews. Everything we've said up to now might cause you to come to a very serious wrong conclusion. Unfortunately, the reformers did. You might assume, by what Romans 9 and 10 have said, that God is through with the Jewish people; that all those covenants have been negated, that he made with them; that all the words like" eternal kingdom" and "eternal blessing" and "eternal land" and "eternal people" have all been revised not to be eternal; or, in order to preserve some consistency for God, you might assume that the church has replaced all those promises to Israel.

So, the apostle Paul realizes, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they must not leave that false impression. So, I'll give you a preview that what he's going to tell you in chapter 11 is indeed that the Jews have been broken off from the tree of blessing, and a new branch has been grafted in – the gentiles, in the body of Christ, the church, that they come under the superior blessing of God. But he says in this chapter, "Gentiles, don't get big-headed, because you're going to find that the Jew is going to be put back into the tree of blessing, and God's going to fulfill all those promises, and all those covenants, right down to the letter. So, it is very clear from Romans 11 that God is not through with the Jew. But that's the impression, Paul realizes, that he has given thus far.

So, we begin with Romans 11:1, in which he presents a question: "I say then." The word "say" is a very familiar word in the Greek language: "lego." Usually this word means "to say," but in this case, it really means "ask." He adds another little word, this word "oun," which means "then." He says, "I ask then." This is one of those questions – we call it a rhetorical question. He doesn't expect you to answer it. He's going to insert himself. But it's a way of asking a question to present a certain point.

He says, "I ask then, in view of everything I have said thus far in chapters 9 and 10, has God cast away his people?" The word "cast away" is the Greek word "apotheo." "Apotheo" really basically means "to reject" or "to turn your back upon." And what he is referring to is the question of God's abandonment of the Jewish people. In the Greek language, this is in the aorist tense, which indicates that he's asking: "Is there some point in time when God said, 'OK, that's it. I'm through. You were My people. You were My special people, but no more. I'm casting you away."

Well, he says, "Did that happen?" And it's in the middle voice, which indicates that this is for God's benefit – did God Himself, for His own benefit, get rid of these people as His special point of blessing. A statement of fact is being made here. The very term "His people" indicates to us that there was a special close relationship between the Jews and the living God.

However, this verb has with it this Greek negative "me," which, in the Greek language, is a way of saying that the answer to the question is "No." The Greeks can ask a question in such a way as to tell you whether the answer is "Yes" or "No." In this case, he indicates that the answer is "No." And we translate this, therefore, in this way: "I ask then: God has not rejected his people, has He?" And of course, Paul comes back then with a strong negative response – one that he uses many times. It is, "God forbid." Actually, it looks like this. You Greek students are familiar with this expression: "Megenoito." Paul uses this several times. The literal words say, "May it not become," but that doesn't make sense. This is an idiom. And it's translated in a way to convey the idea of recoiling horror at the thought. So, we would say, "By no means." "God forbid" is a good translation. It's the King James translation, and it gets across the idea: absolutely no.

Paul asks whether the failure of the Jews to accept their Messiah, Jesus Christ, for their personal salvation, means that God in turn has totally rejected them. And they have rejected Him. In chapter 9, he begins this whole segment on the Jews by saying, "The Jews have rejected Jesus Christ. I'm crushed by that. If it were possible, I'd give up my own salvation if they could all go to heaven," which means that he's going to heaven, and none of them are. None of them are. Make no mistake about it. And it is a very cruel thing to suggest to a Jewish person that he has some inherent special place with God that's going to carry him into heaven. He has nothing with God except through his Messiah, Jesus Christ.

So, Paul is bringing up this question of whether the failures of the Jews means that they are now totally rejected. Is God through with a Jew as His people? Is He through with the Jews as a nation? Is He letting them all simply go into the lake of fire? And Paul's answer is an emphatic: "No."

Now, this, of course, is compatible with what the Old Testament Scripture, on many occasions, pointed out about what God's eternal relationship would be with the Jewish people. For example, in 2 Samuel 7:16, David, who has wanted to build the temple for God, is told, "No, your son will do that. But I'll tell you something, David. I am going to build a house for you – a dynasty and a kingdom. And notice what kind of a kingdom, God says, that this will be for the Jewish people. 2 Samuel 7:16: "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." You know what a kingdom is. It is a political entity over which a king rules. You know what a throne is. It is the royal imperial authority of a ruling king.

Of course, when the Lord Jesus Christ came along, about to be born, his mother was told of the strange thing that was going to happen to this young virgin woman, who was going to discover that she was pregnant. And God was explaining what was happening. He was bringing into being a special kind of human being who was back to where Adam had started without a sin nature. And He would be a God-Man, and He would come into the world to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament covenants to the Jewish people, including this promise to David about a throne on which this child would rule as king over the Jews and over the world forever.

Those are the explicit words that we're told Mary, and Mary, being a student of the Old Testament, understood exactly what the angel was referring to. So, it was very clear from Scripture that God says, "I'm going to give you a kingdom, and I'm never going to terminate this kingdom. It's going to continue forever." So, how could God cast off the Jews? 2 Samuel 7:23: "And what one nation in the earth is like the people: even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things, and awe-inspiring, for your land before the people which you redeem to be from Egypt, from the nations in their gods? For you have confirmed to yourself: your people, Israel, to be a people onto you forever. And You, Lord, have become their God." David, here in his prayer is thanking God for what He's going to do, recognizes that God has chosen the Jewish people to be His people forever.

So, it was not possible, no matter what the Jews did, for them to suddenly find themselves cast off and abandoned by God, and gentiles in the church substituted for them on a permanent basis.

We can add one more Scriptures to that principle, Deuteronomy 14:2, in which Moses says, "For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God (speaking of Israel), and the Lord has chosen you to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." He has chosen the Jewish people to be a special nation.

Paul, furthermore, here in Romans 11, points to himself as a Jew who is born again. So, he says, "For I also am an Israelite." An "Israelite" means that he is a person who is born from the line of, not only Abraham, but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Arabs are born from Abraham, but they're not Israelites. He has the genetic heritage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – a true Israelites.

Furthermore, he says that he is of the seed of Abraham. The word "seed" here is the Greek word "sperma," and here it connotes "a descendant." He says, "I am a descendant of Abraham." So, Paul is stressing again that he is a true, genuine Jew.

Furthermore, he says, "I'm from a tribe that I take great pride in. I'm from the tribe of Benjamin." Benjamin was the tribe that was descended from Jacob's last son by his most beloved wife, Rachel. This was the smallest tribe numerically among the 12, but it was one which was fanatically loyal to God. Therefore, when there was a debate among the tribes, following the death of Solomon, whether they would stay with the tribe of Judah, through whom God had indicated the Messiah was going to come, only little Benjamin stood with Judah. The other 10 tribes broke off, and formed their own nation in the north. So, the tribe of Benjamin was noted for the fact that it absolutely refused to join in the apostasy of the northern kingdom, with its false altars; its false priesthood; its false centers of worship; and, its intense idolatry. It was indeed a tribe that a person could take pride in being a descendant of. And Paul certainly was.

So, Paul in these words, in verse 1, is simply stressing that he is a pure blooded Jew, and that he is a born-again Jew. And He cites that as evidence that God has not sent every Jew into the lake of fire. He has not completely abandoned all the Jewish people. He stresses this because he is writing to Christians in Rome who were, in large part, gentile converts. The Jews still do have a very special place with God, even though they, as gentiles, are now coming into the prominent place in the body of Christ. These Christian converts in Rome were the result of the testimony of Jews, and of gentile proselytes; that is, those gentiles who had been converted to Judaism, who happened to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And Acts 2:10 specifically identifies that they were there. These people took the message back to Rome, so that in Rome, there was a large contingent of born-again Christians, both from among the gentiles and the Jews. Paul himself is stressing, however, that he comes out of Judaism into Christianity. He is not a gentile proselyte. He is not a gentile who has accepted Judaism. He is a pure-blooded Jew, and that is his background as a Christian.

In Philippians 3:5, he stresses that same principle when he says, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin: a Hebrew of the Hebrew; as touching the Law, a Pharisee. Paul, in fact, was once a dedicated Pharisee who adamantly opposed Jesus Christ. This is also significant to Paul. Paul says, "I know where you Jews are coming from. I hated Jesus Christ with a vengeance." Paul could speak to the Jews of *our* day: "I know when you people are coming from. I was in your position. I had your attitude toward Jesus Christ."

I was speaking to a Jewish father one time, whose son was in our school, and I was talking to him about Old Testament Scriptures that confirmed the claims of Jesus Christ. He said, "Oh, Dr. Danish, I know everything that Paul said. I know what Paul was talking about. I know what Paul's point of view was." And what he was saying was that he, as a Jew, had to listen to Paul. He looked at Paul. He listened to what Paul said. And Paul is saying, "Jesus is the Messiah." But he said, "Paul was wrong." That's what the apostle Paul understands that he is facing. That's why Paul is saying, "Yes, I was just like all the rest of you. I hated Jesus Christ. I blasphemed against Him."

For example, he points out, in Galatians 1:13-14, "For you have heard of my manner of life," Paul says, "in time past, in the Jews' religion: how that, beyond measure, I persecuted the church of God and wasted it, and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in my own nation; being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." He said, "Among the other Jewish boys, there was none who could compare to me. I was a real zealot for the Jews' religion."

In 1 Timothy 1:13, he further says, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance" that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

So, the apostle Paul says, "Yes, I know what it is to have that antagonism toward Jesus Christ; to say ugly things about Him; and, to curse him. But God forgave me. I did that in the same ignorance that you people are doing this in. And suddenly, He opened my eyes on the Damascus road, and I'm here to tell you: He's up there. He is alive. He is the Messiah Savior. And I urge you to change your mind as I changed mine."

Well, the fact that such a blaspheming Jew as Paul had been saved by God, proves that God has not cast off the Jewish people. Paul is a trophy of God's grace. And the point is that God always preserves a remnant of Jewish believers. That's what Paul is conveying to us here.

This is what is stated in Psalm 94:14, when the psalmist says, "For the Lord will not cast off His people; neither will He forsake His inheritance." The Jewish people can expect God to stay with them.

Now, Israel's disobedience of the Word of God, and the rejection of the Messiah Jesus Christ, has indeed brought them under divine discipline – the divine discipline of foreign domination, but it has not brought them to the place where God has abandoned them. You can look up on your own Nehemiah 9:26-31 and Isaiah 54:1-10, which will give you a description of the rebellion of the Jews and of the consequent discipline that God has indicated He would bring on them.

So, the Old Testament covenants with Israel did not secure salvation for every Jew, but those covenants did ensure the preservation of the Jews as a nation.

**Foreknowledge**

So, having presented his question in Romans 11:1, Paul proceeds with the answer in verses 2-4. Paul immediately denies that God has cast away the Jews as a people. In the Greek sentence, the word "not" (the Greek word "ou") comes in first. This is the way of emphasis in the Greek language. And it is again, Paul saying, "Absolutely not. His people have not been cast away: "God has not cast away His people whom he foreknew." Here's a word we have studied extensively: "proginosko." And I trust that, by now, you have been well enough instructed, such that immediately you know that, in the Bible, the word "foreknowledge" does not simply mean knowing something beforehand. But in the Greek Bible, as well as in the Old Testament, the word "knowing" implies an intimacy of relationship. So, this word means that the sovereign God has exercised His sovereignty in selecting some, from among long lost humanity, to have an intimate relationship with Him forever in personal salvation as members of His family. Those whom God has foreknown are people that God looked at, like yourselves, out of the mass of sinners, and said, "I want you to come in and have a personal close relationship as part of My family." This is another way of indicating being called and selected for eternal life.

Foreknowledge always deals with the word "whom." Remember that. Foreknowledge always deals with the word "whom." Foreknowledge never deals with the word "what." It is *whom* God has foreknown, not *what* God foreknew. It is a God looking down and seeing that someone is going to accept Christ, and therefore, He has foreknown him for salvation. He knows that person is going to accept Christ because God has decided that issue.

So, God foreknew the Jews as a nation. He has selected them by His personal divine decree. The unsaved Jews, on their own volition, simply will not trust in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they will seek to prevent others from doing it. God has to bring them in by His own gracious choice. A couple of passages you may read: Acts 13:38-52; Romans 3:11; and, Romans 8:7 – all of which illustrate the adamant resistance of the Jews toward the Savior that God sent to them. So, the only way these Jews ever will be saved, which is what Paul is implying here, is because God has personally chosen to enlighten them, and draw them into His family. He has chosen these people from eternity past, for a special purpose, and that purpose cannot be frustrated. God is not fickle. He is immutable.

So, the nation of Israel cannot be abandoned by God. Only individual Jews will not be chosen unto salvation, and to the enjoyment of the covenant blessing. But the nation as a whole will be carried into that blessing. There is always, therefore, a small remnant number of saved Jews preserving the race and the nation.

**Elijah**

Paul, to prove his point, then goes to an Old Testament illustration, as he is so prone to do. He picks out the great prophet Elijah. He says, "Do you not know what the Scripture say of Elijah?" The word "Scripture" is the Greek word "graphe." This means literally "the writing." This refers to the writing specifically here of the Old Testament Scripture. As you know, the writers of the Bible always view the Old Testament Scripture as the authoritative Word of God. It can only be that kind of an authoritative work if it is inerrant. The Lord Jesus Christ clearly shared this view. When He referred to the Scripture, it was the last Word. When he said, "The Bible says," there was no further discussion; there was no further argument; and, there was no further resistance. God had spoken, once you quoted Scripture.

So, Paul says, "Let me give you an authoritative example to prove my point that God has not cast away the Jewish people, from the Old Testament situation in the case of Elijah. Elijah lived in a time of terrible, terrible apostasy in the nation of Israel – in the northern kingdom. It was a time when Ahab and Jezebel were reining with intense sex-worship of god Baal.

So, Paul says, "You remember what Elijah said – how he was making intercession to God against Israel." The word "intercession" is the word "entugchano." And "entugchano" really means "to plead" or "to appeal." What it connotes is Ezekiel presenting an argument to God. Ezekiel is pleading a cause. It is in the present tense, which indicates that Ezekiel was constantly dealing with God on this issue. It is active voice, indicating that Isaiah himself presented his case. It is indicative mood – a statement of fact. Elijah speaks to God against the Jews of his day.

To fully appreciate what the problem was, I must remind you of the background of this discouraged protest resulting from his confrontation with Queen Jezebel's prophets of the Baal cult. Elijah, you must remember, made a very courageous and forceful stand for the true God, whom the Jews had deserted for Baal. Elijah was standing there as the only prophet who had not yet been murdered. He stood alone. He knew that every one of his fellow prophets now were in their graves dead. And the people as a whole were streaming to the sex cult worship of bail. This man stands up in a society like that and says, "You people are wrong. And I'm here to tell you that God is going to bring judgment upon you. And I'm calling you back to the true God, and to the true gospel." That takes a lot of internal fortitude to do. This was a very gutsy man. And he was a man who knew that he was taking his life in his hand to stand up in that society, to do that, not only relative to the people, but even more so relative to King Ahab and the Jezebel, who were among the most wicked rulers that the Jewish people had ever come under. They were truly foul creatures. So, this man is facing this kind of a nation, and these rulers who have turned their backs upon God.

**Emotions**

Turned to 1 King's 18:20 for just a moment. The background should not escape you. Here's the situation. And I want you to notice, as we read this passage, how Satan works through intense emotions so that people will not think of Bible doctrine principles. The devil always wants to work through emotions, so that you won't think about what God has said. This is the heart of the charismatic movement today. This is the heart of Hinduism today. This is the heart of what you're going to see tonight on videotape: emotions, so that you will not think. This is domination of the soul by emotions under the control of the sin nature, and the result then is gross every time.

1 Kings 18:20: "So, Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people and said, 'How do you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him.' And the people answered him not a word." What a tough situation it is when you make an appeal for a righteous cause to people, and they treat you with silence. That is rejection. Here are these people: the people who have all these marvelous covenants, and all the marvelous promises, from Abraham on down; the people have been prospered in every way by God; and, the people who have been promised material blessings, and they've got it; and, spiritual blessings, and they got it. They had it all. And now they're all caught up in what is the thing of the day – Baal worship. And Elijah says, "Now make up your mind. Don't stand around calling yourself Jews, when you're out here worshiping with the pagans. Just say that you're a pagan. Don't pretend that you're the people of God when you're not. You're trying to keep a foot in each camp. Make your decision. They sat there, and they glowered at him, and they would not respond.

Verse 22: "Then said Elijah unto the people, 'I, even I, only remain a prophet of the Lord. But Baal's prophets are 450 men." Now that's tough for a preacher. You're the only preacher that has the truth. 450 odd balls with error are out there opposing you, standing against you. They have all the empires' power behind them. They have all the money; they have all the prestige; they have all the influence; and they have all the laws. And you're trying to change things?

In verse 23, "Elijah said, 'Let's make a test – a test which is suited to our day. Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves (that is, the prophets of Baal); cut it in pieces; and, lay it on the wood with no fire under it. And I will prepare the other bullock; lay it on wood; and, put no fire under it. And you call on the name of your gods. And I will call on the name of the Lord, the God who answers by fire. Let him be God.' And all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.'" This was a suitable test in the day when God was performing these miraculous confirmations.

So, Elijah says, "Let's have a confirmation that you cannot fake. Let your god do his thing:" "And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one bullock for yourselves, and prepare it first, for you are many, and call on the name of the gods, but put no fire under it." So, Elijah says, "You fellows go first. There are 450 of you to prepare. It's going to take me a little time. I'm all by myself, getting my sacrifice and altar ready."

"And they took the bullock (the prophets of Baal) which was given to them, and they prepared it. And they called on the name of Baal from morning even unto noon (three hours of prayers, incantations, and chants), saying, 'O, Baal, hear us.' But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made." Now they're dancing around it. Their hands are up in the air. They're gyrating. They're yelling. They're screaming. Well, now that they had done this for three hours, some of them were beginning to get hoarse. And there's 450 of them to take turns. Can you imagine 450 guys streaming around an altar: screaming; yelling; and, praying?

"Well, it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them." Elijah has his work done. So, he comes over, and stands around the outside of the circle, and decides to have a little fun. So, he starts poking fun at these guys. He says, "Hey fellows, why don't you yell louder. Your god may be asleep." Now that's really disrespectful. It's not very kind at all. He says, "He may not be paying attention to you," giving him a sly dig, and saying, "Your God's not omniscient. My God always hears. I don't have to get His attention because He knows it. They reply, "Yes, he's a God." Elijah says, "Oh, yeah? But he's not omniscient. Either he's talking – he's carrying on a conversation with somebody, so that he can't be distracted; or, he's pursuing." The Hebrew word here for "pursuing" literally means "relieving himself." That's not a nice thing to say about somebody's God. This guy, Elijah, says, "Why don't you check in the outhouse. That may be why you can't get his attention. Kick it over. That'll get his attention." Oh, I love these nice, gracious preachers who are never judgmental: "Don't ever tell people, 'You are wrong. The Word of God says that you're wrong, and you're going to bear the consequences of your error, and I'm doing you a kindness to alerting you, and you better think through whether you're prepared to pay the price when you discover that indeed you were wrong.'"

Elijah says, "Or he is on a journey. He may be out there where he's on the trip, so he can't hear you." And again, what he is saying is that this god is not omnipresent. He says, "Or perhaps he sleeps," meaning that he needs to have his strength restored. So, he digs them and says, "Your God is not omnipotent." So, he gets all three "omnis" in there.

Well, the Baal prophets keep it up for another three hours. They get to 3:00 in the afternoon, which was the time of the Jewish evening sacrifice. And it was an appropriate time for Elijah now to take over. Verse 28 says that: "The Baal prophets, during that last three hours, cried aloud. They cut themselves, after their manner, with swords and lances, till the blood gushed out from them." They started clawing on themselves, and cutting themselves with instruments.

"So, it came to pass when midday was passed, and they promised until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice (3:00 in the afternoon) that there was neither voice, nor any answer, nor any that regarded. Elijah said unto all the people, 'Come near to me.' All the Jews came near him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down."

The Jews did not like to have altars to the true God. They not only had murdered the prophets, but anytime they found an altar that was made to the true God, in that northern kingdom, they kicked it over. That's how degraded they had become. They weren't going to let anybody have a chance to approach the true God, which they had to do through those altars to the true God.

Verse 31: "And Elijah took 12 stones, according to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, 'Israel shall be your name." I think this is very significant, because immediately, the prophets of Baal had been operating on falsehood and human viewpoint. Now Elijah takes over, and the first thing he does is start operating on Bible doctrine principles, so that he can truly approach God and God's name. And he uses those 12 stones to represent that he is approaching God in the name of the 12 tribes of Israel.

"And with the stones, he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench about the altar as great as would contain two measures of seed." That's several barrels-full there. "And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces; laid it on the wood; and, said, 'Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.' He said, 'Do it a second time,' and they did it the second time (eight barrels). And he said, 'Do it a third time (12 barrels now).' And he did it once more (and everything is soaked). And the water ran about the altar, and filled the trench with water.

"And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the Prophet came there and said." Now I want you to notice that, for six hours, the prophets of Baal had been doing their thing, with total disaster, and with nothing resulting. Now Elijah is going to pray for 15 seconds, and everything breaks out. It was a 15-second prayer, and that's all it takes: "'Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel. Let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your Word. Hear me, O, lord. Hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their heart back again.' Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and looked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, 'The LORD ('Yahweh') – He is God.'

"And Elijah said unto them, 'Take the prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape.' And they took them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there." They rounded up the 450 prophets, and systematically, he killed them. And he removed the error and the cancer from Israel. Those who were promoting that which was false were totally neutralized by the command of God.

In all of this, Elijah was very careful to make it clear that there is no trickery. The water made it clear that he could not have some kind of a clever device that would ignite this thing. The only way that soaked alter was going to ignite was when God brought the fire. And then for the fire to burn up the sacrifice was not amazing. For it to burn the wood that was on the altar was not surprising. But when it burned up the stones out of which the altar was made, and just made ashes out of the altar, and then headed for the water, and licked it out of the ditch, that was a spectacle. The point was that Elijah made it very clear that this was something that God had done. You have a tremendous miracle here.

Well, the dumb Jews here finally got the message, and they say, "Yes, God is the true God." But King Ahab and his evil wife, Jezebel, did not respond, even though Elijah followed this up immediately with a secondary prayer (a secondary miracle). He said, Now, for three-and-a-half years, there has been drought in this land." 1 King 17:1 gives us the dramatic confrontation where Elijah walks into the throne room of Ahab; points his finger at him; and, says, "I'm going to tell you right now, until you turn this people back to God, this land will not have rain upon it."

Now, you cannot fully appreciate a statement like that unless you have been to Israel, and you've traveled in that land, and you understand what kind of a country it is. It is a disaster without water. I mean, it is a disaster without water. So, this sent a chill through the king, and through all of his council, and through all the people. And for three-and-a-half years they were eating dust. But Elijah comes along and says, "Now it's really going to rain." And he says, "King, I would suggest to you that you get into your chariot; go into high gear; and, get on home, because you're going to get soaked." While the heaven is going black, and the clouds are building up, Ahab jumps into that chair, to ride to Jezreel, which is 25 miles away. And God gives a burst of capacity to Elijah. He jumps in front of the horse; grabs the reins; pulls the horse to follow him; and, the horse tries to keep up with Elijah for 25 miles of running. He was one of the all-time great joggers of history. Elijah ran 25 miles, all the way, with the horses trying to keep up with him, as he's dashing back to Israel.

You would think that a guy like Ahab would put two and two together, and say, "My wife is a yo-yo. There's nothing to this Baal stuff. We need to get rid of that. We need to go back to where the real power is in the Scriptures of the Old Testament," which Ahab knew so well, "and back to the God who has given us that doctrinal truth to work from." But that was not so. Jezebel gets the word, and this old vixen goes into a real fit of rage. And she puts the word out: "Kill Elijah. I've killed every other prophet. This one dude is all that's left. He is the fly in my ointment. Kill him.

Elijah gets the word, and he's been through so much. It's one last thing he can't take. And it puts him into fear. So, what he does is tear out, and he heads out a hundred miles to the town of Beersheba; finds a cave; and, hides in it. Here sits this discouraged preacher, who expected that the people would rise up in support of their prophet, who had confirmed his authority from God by the confirmation of the Word of God, which he preached to them. And that's the only authority that a prophet or preacher has – that the Word of God proves to be the truth, indeed, that is being proclaimed. But instead, he ends up as a fugitive.

This is the background as Paul now comes to using the example of Elijah, who now sits in this cave – a despondent man, to the point where he says, "God, this isn't worth it."

Then God comes into the picture, and Paul uses God's response once more to prove that God has bigger plans for the Jewish people than might appear to be the case to poor Elijah at that time. And we'll pick up the story at that point next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)