

GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL **Romans 11:25-36**

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Every student of Scripture must reckon with the biblical teachings on Israel, for around this nation God centers his whole plan for the world. Israel is the apple of God's eye, and at this point in history he still loves her and has a purpose for her in the future.

The Israelites are God's chosen people (Deut. 7:6-7a). It all began when God chose one man, Abram (a.k.a. Abraham), out of Ur of the Chaldees, and promised to make of him a great nation. He made a covenant with Abraham, called the Abrahamic Covenant, and promised that his physical seed would be a nation forever and have a land forever. He also promised that Abraham would be a blessing to the world, that it would be through his seed that the Messiah would come. This universal aspect of the covenant applies also to believing Gentiles (Gen. 15; 17; 22:16-18; Gal 3:8).

The people of Israel looked forward to the coming of their Messiah, thinking that when he came they would have a thriving nation, ruling over their land and the world forever. But when Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ) did come to Israel, he did not come as the great political leader they had conceived him to be, one who would overthrow the tyranny of Rome in Palestine, but he came as a lowly one, and the nation refused to believe he was the Messiah. He had all the credentials: he claimed to be God; he did miracles; he claimed to be the long awaited Messiah; he was even resurrected from the dead to substantiate his claims. But Israel rejected him because of their hard and unbelieving hearts.

When Israel rejected him, Christ sent his apostles to the Gentiles and offered them salvation if they would believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Within a few years more Gentiles had responded to Christ than had Jews, to whom the Messiah had first been promised. This brought up several questions: Is God finished with the nation of Israel? Has God forgotten all about his promise to Abraham now that the Gentiles are responding in such great numbers? Does God yet have a future for the nation of Israel?

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL NOW — Romans 11:25

“For I would not, brethren.” Paul now addresses those Gentiles who have trusted in Christ, and explains about Israel's purpose in God's prophetic program.

“That ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits.” A “mystery” in Scripture is a divinely revealed truth not previously known. The

mystery that was revealed to Paul was that Israel had been blinded by God because of her rejection of Messiah, and that the gospel was going out to the Gentiles. It was never a mystery during Old Testament times that Gentiles would be saved, but they were to be saved through Israel, with Israel in the predominant place:

“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (Isa. 60:3-5).

The mystery now is that Jew and Gentile are placed on the same basis for salvation, namely faith in Christ, and Jews and Gentiles together form the church, the body of Christ. Gentiles are now in the place of gospel opportunity and the (national) Jews are rejected. Paul did not want them to be ignorant of these truths, but there are many Christians who see no place for Israel in God’s prophetic program. Paul says that these Gentiles were not to be conceited over their new position, for God was yet going to restore the Jews and fulfill his covenants with them.

“That blindness [hardening] in part is happened to Israel.” Most of the nation of Israel rejected Messiah, and because of this God hardened their hearts as judicial punishment for the rejection of truth. There was an elect remnant among the Jews who did believe, but this was, and is today, only a few in relation to the whole nation.

“Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Israel’s judicial blindness will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles, but what does this mean? The “fulness of the Gentiles” refers to God’s present program for Gentiles who believe and become part of the Church. All who trust in Christ in this present age, whether Jew or Gentile, form the church, the body of Christ. The church is also spoken of as a mystery. When the full number of Gentiles that God intends to save in this present age is saved, then Christ will return and God will again begin to work with the nation of Israel. God’s plan for the Gentiles now is a calling out from the nations of the world a people for himself through faith in Christ Jesus:

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down: and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:14-17).

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL IN THE FUTURE — Romans 11:26-29

“And so all Israel shall be saved.” Here is a clear statement that God’s purpose for Israel as a nation will only come to pass after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The “all” here does not refer to every physical Jew who ever lived, but to that last generation of physical Jews. At that time God will supernaturally and sovereignly convert that generation of physical Jews and fulfill his promise to them. At the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, millions of Jews will be converted by the sovereign grace of God, and they will worship their Messiah.

“As it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” This quote from Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9 shows that Israel’s salvation was predicted in the Old Testament. The terms “Israel” and “Jacob” are sometimes used interchangeably:

“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof towards the east” (Zech. 14:1-4).

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

God will spare that last generation of Jews and miraculously convert them.

“For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” This is another quote from the Old Testament to show that God will fulfill his covenant with Israel. This is called the new covenant and is simply an enlargement of the Abrahamic covenant:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his

brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:31-34).

“As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” Because Israel is now blinded by unbelief, they are now enemies of the true message of Christ. However, Israel is still the elect people of God, and he still has a future for the nation. This means there can be no place for anti-Semitism for the biblical Christian. This does not mean that we should not try to win Jews to Christ, or that we should not oppose their principles. We should oppose Spinoza for his rationalism, and Marx and Engles for their communism even though they were Jews, but there is no place for hatred of Jews as a people.

“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” God cannot go back on his word. His gifts of the covenants and his effectual calling of the Jews as a nation for himself will be fulfilled. God is sovereign and unchangeable and never goes back on his word!

GOD’S PURPOSE INCLUDES SHOWING MERCY — Romans 11:30-32

“For as ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief.” The unsaved Gentiles were dead in sin, living for self, and without hope and without God in this world:

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:17-19).

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:1-5,8-9).

Unless God had shown his grace and mercy to us Gentiles, we would have never been saved. The originating cause of every man’s salvation is God’s mercy and grace. God’s plan was not

thwarted by Israel's rejection; he turned it for good in that now Gentiles have great gospel opportunity and multiplied millions have been the objects of his saving mercy.

“Even so have these [Israel] also now not believed, that through your [Gentile believers'] mercy they also may obtain mercy.” Someday Israel will be provoked to jealousy when they see how God has lavishly shed his mercy on millions of Gentiles and blessed them. This will cause Israel to seek God's mercy and they will be saved at the second advent.

“For God hath concluded them all [Israel] in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all [all Israel at the second advent].” Do not let this verse throw you, but read it in context. This does not mean that God shows saving mercy on all men (universalism), nor does it mean that God gives mercy to all men in that he gives them an opportunity to accept or reject light. God has sovereignly shut national Israel up to unbelief that someday in the future he might save the nation of Israel by his sovereign mercy. Then all Israel shall be saved.

GOD'S PURPOSES AROUSE PRAISE FOR HIS PERSON — Romans 11:33-36

Paul gives a majestic doxology or benediction as he concludes this argument on Israel. He is brought to a place of awe and wonderment as he considers the plans and purposes of God for this world. An understanding of God brings Paul to the place of worship.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” In Romans 9-11 Paul told us many wonderful things about God and his program for the world: his absolute sovereignty and man's absolute responsibility to believe in God through Christ; how Israel has been cut out of the place of blessing and gospel opportunity has come to the Gentiles; and that God will again deal with the nation of Israel, and that his plans and covenants for her will be fulfilled. If we do not understand the reasons behind God's dealings with Israel, Gentiles and ourselves, it is not because there is not good and sufficient reason. The difficulty is with our inability to comprehend the wisdom and ways of God:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” No human being or created creature knows the mind of God, nor can any give him advice. He does as he pleases in heaven and earth!

“Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not

sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity” (Isaiah 40:15-17).

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” God is the creator and sustainer of all things, and everything that happens is working according to his plan and for his glory!

CONCLUSION

God has a plan and future for Israel. What we are seeing today is a fleshy or carnal return to the land by Israel; it is not what was predicted in the Old Testament. However, the existence of Israel as a thriving nation shows that God could start his program with them at any time. But before he begins his program for Israel, there must be the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles.

Are you, Jew or Gentile, prepared to meet God? No man on this earth is prepared until he has received Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. Then, and only then, is he prepared to meet God. Only then can he look forward to the coming of the Lord for his Church.

What must you do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!