

Romans 11 • God Still Has a Plan for Israel

Introduction

One of the most pervasive false teachings within the church is called “Replacementism”. This is the false notion that the church has succeeded and replaced Israel. Such adherents, whenever they come across a biblical reference to Israel, claim that such references should now instead be interpreted as referring to the church. What is misunderstood is that God is dealing uniquely with Israel, but is not yet finished with her. God **WILL** fulfill **ALL** His promises in Scripture, many of which remain where it literally and specifically applies to Israel. To subscribe to Replacementism means having to ignore all of the apostle Paul’s very plain teaching to the contrary, particularly Romans 9-11.

¹I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

[Read v.1]

Proof #1: The Personal Proof

Q: What is Paul’s first proof that God still has a plan for Israel?

A: His own conversion. God chose to found and build the church on Jewish believers.

Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

1 Timothy 1:16

Q: How do we know, scripturally, that Israel will yet turn en masse to Jesus as their Messiah?

A: It’s a prediction in Zechariah that has yet to be fulfilled, one associated with His Second Coming, the only way that they could “look to Me whom they have pierced”.

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Zechariah 12:10

Q: Three times Paul’s conversion experience is described in the book of Acts. How might that experience be a picture of how Israel will be converted at Christ’s Second Coming?

A: Like Paul, they will be in rebellion and unbelief. They will see Him whom they pierced and will repent and be saved.

and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

1 Corinthians 15:8

Q: What is Paul alluding to in 1 Corinthians 15:8?

A: To be “one untimely born” is a reference to the fact that as a Jew, Paul saw Christ and was saved long before his people would have the same experience.

Point: *Because of their unbelief, God temporarily turned from Israel to the church, which is composed of **BOTH** Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. His plan is to finish that work where Israel is concerned.*

²God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³“Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.” ⁴But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.” ⁵In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. ⁷What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸just as it is written,

“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR
NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”

⁹And David says,

“LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE
AND A TRAP,
AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A
RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

¹⁰LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE
NOT,
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”

¹¹I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. ¹²Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹³But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save

[Read v.2-10]

Proof #2: The Historical Proof

Q: Why is the remnant of Elijah’s time given as an example? What is the historical patterns where “remnants” are concerned?

A: It’s the example that even in the times of greatest unbelief, God has always had a faithful remnant. This is always the group He used and blessed. [Note: Elijah has a special place in the Passover and Christ’s coming.]

*Unless the Lord of hosts
Had left us a few survivors,
We would be like Sodom,
We would be like Gomorrah.
Isaiah 1:9*

Point: *It is the basic teaching of Scripture that the when the majority falls from the faith and cannot/will not be reformed, so God takes the remnant and starts over again.*

Q: According to v.5-6, what is special about this particular remnant?

A: It is not composed exclusively of Jews, but based on God’s grace it includes both Jew and Gentile. The new remnant’s distinctions are removed.

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.
Galatians 3:28-29*

Q: Why is it important to understand what has happened to Israel is a hardening?

A: God has never – and never will – forsake Israel. What is being described is dealing with Israel on a spiritual level, that because the vast majority have rejected not only God’s Word and ways but the Messiah Himself, there are consequences for their choices. But it’s not a permanent condition.

Point: *If God is saving Jews during this age of the church when Israel is blind, how much more will He do in the coming age when He fully turns back to Israel again?*

[Read v.11-24]

Proof #3: The Dispensational Proof

Q: This is very important in order to place this passage in the proper context: Is Paul talking about individual saints vs. sinners?

A: No, he is discussing Jews and Gentiles.

Observation: *In God’s economy there are only Jews (Israel), Gentiles (all other nations) and the church composed of BOTH Jew and Gentile who have come to faith in Christ.*

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some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. ²²Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

Q: We know that God uses all things to accomplish His will. How did He use the fall of Israel?

A: God had a dispensational purpose behind the fall of Israel, namely the salvation of the Gentiles through the rise of the body of Christ known as the church.

Observation: Nowhere does it state that Gentiles first had to become Jews. This is further testimony of God's love and grace to both those rejecting Christ and those accepting Him.

Q: How do we know from Paul's own words that he believed God was not through with Israel yet?

A: In v.15 it's the contrast of "their rejection" versus "their acceptance". Paul's further reference in v.16 to "the root" combines to show that God has begun something that He has yet to finish, that Israel's condition is not permanent.

Q: In Paul's illustration of the olive tree, is he teaching about salvation?

A: No. Paul is speaking about the position of Jews and Gentiles as peoples in the overall program of God. Israel is the olive tree which failed to bear fruit. God broke off some of the branches and grafted into the tree Gentiles called "a wild olive tree".

Q: What might stand out in this illustration to farmers of that day? How is the grafting process here described contrary to the way they usually approached doing such grafts agriculturally?

A: The "normal", agricultural way would have been to graft the good, natural branches into the wild tree, not to graft the wild branches into a natural tree. This is an even greater illustration of God's working in His goodness towards the Gentiles and His "severity" (v.22) towards Israel because of their rebelliousness.

Q: So what's wrong with Gentiles who boast of their station in God's kingdom, even of their claims to have replaced Israel?

A: It's not only inaccurate, but comes with the same responsibility that led to God's turning away from Israel. It's an issue of faithfulness, not station.

Point: The church dares not boast because they believe they now have Israel's place of spiritual privilege, because God can cut them off, too! In fact, that is precisely what happens at the end of the church age. He will call out the true church, judge the Gentile nations, purge Israel, and set up His promised kingdom through Israel.

Application: Paul's teaching is national in nature, not personal. God will never "break off" true believers from their salvation. Although the church is primarily made up of Gentiles, we benefit from the spiritual heritage of Israel (the rich sap of the olive tree). The roots have always been Jewish and will, at some point, fully return to that heritage but in its fulfillment through Christ. But the **LESSONS** of Israel are the same lessons for the church today.

²⁵For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

²⁷THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

²⁸From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. ³²For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? ³⁵Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? ³⁶For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

[Read v.25-36]

Proof #4: The Scriptural Proof

Q: What is the biblical definition of a “mystery”?

A: A “mystery” is a truth which in past ages was hidden, but now revealed in its fullness in the New Testament.

Q: What is revealed about this particular mystery?

1. “...a partial hardening has happened to Israel...” (v.25)
2. “...until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...” (v.25)
3. “...all Israel will be saved...” (v.26)

Point: Clearly, God is not through with Israel yet.

Q: What does “the fullness of the Gentiles” mean?

A: It refers to the number of Gentiles who will be saved during the church age.

Q: What does “all Israel” (v.26) refer to? Is Paul speaking of every last Jew?

A: It’s a reference to Israel in the End Times when it will experience a spiritual revival and become a redeemed, regenerated nation. The covenant as quoted from Jeremiah in v.27 is something God specifically promised to Israel.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Q: When Paul states in v.29 that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”, is he addressing man’s response to God?

A: It’s actually a reference to the fact that God Himself cannot revoke His promises, and therefore will accomplish everything commanded by His Word.

Q: What is the ultimate example Paul gives the Gentiles in v.30-32 where Israel’s future is concerned?

A: That just as they, the Gentiles, at one time rejected God and yet now are being saved by faith, so today although the Jews are in unbelief, they too shall one day obtain mercy. Both were “shut up in disobedience” (v.32) that God might be able to save both through grace.

Q: How would you summarize the thoughts behind Paul’s closing prayer of praise?

A: In spite of circumstances appearing to the contrary, God is in control.

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Epilogue

*There are those who mistakenly take the sign of Jews returning to the physical land of Israel as being the most prominent sign of the End Times heralding Christ's return. However, that is but a prelude to the more specific Scriptural sign of large-scale spiritual revival regenerating the whole of the people of Israel to accept Jesus as their Messiah, a **spiritual** return to Israel.. Before 1967 there were no records of Messianic Jewish congregations in existence; today there are hundreds if not thousands. In the past 40 years, more Jews have come to accept Jesus than the sum total for the entire preceding 1,800 years. Whereas previous generations of believers may have found little evidence God was not yet through with Israel, our generation is experiencing the full brunt of it.*