



“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Romans 11:29).

The Gospel and the Future of Israel

Central Truth: God is merciful to Jew and Gentile from eternity to eternity.

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Topic: Israel; Future of; Prophecy.

God has dealt with Israel through centuries passed. Abraham lived about as many years before Jesus came as we are living since Jesus came; almost four millennia have passed from Abraham's day to our own. God has dealt with Israel all the way.

What will God do about Israel in the future? She now is largely in unbelief regarding God's provision through the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Has her unbelief set her aside forever from God's purposes? Does she have any further place in His divine plan?

Romans 11 answers those questions. It encourages us in its revelation of God's mercy and grace. It says that God has not finished what He planned with Israel. Those plans are certain of fulfillment. Many promises and prophecies are not yet fulfilled. They will come to pass. Behold the mercy of God as He continues to work with “*a disobedient and gainsaying people*” (Romans 10:21).

I. MERCY WILL COME TO A REMNANT (Romans 11:1-10)

God has always worked through the minority. That minority is called the “*remnant*” in the Bible. It was the spiritual Israel within national Israel. It was the “*very small remnant*” in Isaiah's day (Isaiah 1:9). It was “*them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*” (Luke 2:38) at the time Jesus was born. The remnant of spiritual people is the hope of the world.

A. The remnant is personified. Proof that God has not rejected all Jews is seen in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul the apostle); he was a

Jew (Romans 11:1). The record of his conversion (Acts 9:1-20) shows that it was a sovereign act of God whereby He broke in on Saul's plans and called him to repentance and faith. It may be that God will do a like thing in the future to call Israel to Christ. But meanwhile we take hope for the conversion of Jews because so unlikely a convert as Saul of Tarsus came to faith in Jesus.

B. The remnant is illustrated (I Kings 19). Elijah lived when the northern kingdom, called Israel, was in apostasy, serving the Baalim. He cried out to God about the sins of his nation: their murder of God's prophets, their sacrilege against His altars, their evil intentions against him personally. He said, *"I am left alone, and they seek my life"* (Romans 11:3). But that was not so. There was the remnant. God had seven thousand men who had not bowed before Baal. Elijah did not know of them, but God did. What application did Paul make of that historical event? *"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace"* (Romans 11:5). Through the presence of that remnant, the nation was turned back to God then. Do you suppose it will happen again for you to be able to see today? What a thrill it would be to see the conversion of Israel!

C. The remnant is small. That is why it is called a *"remnant,"* a scrap, a small part of the original whole. Look at only seven thousand faithful in the entire nation in Elijah's day. Look at how few of the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity to reestablish their nation. Look at how few trusted Jesus during His ministry on earth and how few trust Him today. This is the *"very small remnant"* which Isaiah saw (Isaiah 1:9).

D. The remnant is certain. *"At this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace"* (Romans 11:5). Some Jews do believe in Jesus. They are the hope of the nation.

Paul asked, "Have they stumbled so as to fall and be destroyed? By no means!" (See Romans 11:11.) The principle still prevails, *"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God"* (John 1:12). Israel has not fallen so as to never rise again. God has promised that there will be a remnant. *"I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it"* (Isaiah 46:11).

II. MERCY COMES THROUGH THE GOSPEL (Romans 11:11-15)

God will bless Israel. He will reclaim Israel. He will use Israel again. But He will do it through the work of the Christian gospel.

A. The Gentiles receive God's mercy through the gospel. Israel refused her assignment of missionary ministry to all the world (Genesis

12:1-3); so God sent the gospel to the Gentile world without Israel's cooperation. Consequently, the riches of the gospel came to the non-Jews. Paul considered it an undeserved privilege given him of God that he “*should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:8). “*The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and . . . they will hear it*” (Acts 28:28).

B. The Jews become aware of God's mercy through the gospel. The Gentiles' reception of the gospel of God's Messiah stirred many of the Jews to jealousy (Romans 11:11). That caused the Jews in Antioch, Pisidia, to speak against the gospel preached by Paul (Acts 13:45). It caused the Jews in Thessalonica to hire lewd men to stir up a riot (Acts 17:5). It caused the Jews in Jerusalem to cry out for the death of Paul when they heard him say that God would send him to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21, 22). But, praise God, it will cause some to investigate the claims of Jesus and embrace in faith the good news that God has provided the long-awaited Messiah.

C. Both Jews and Gentiles rejoice in God's mercy through the gospel. Think about this argument: The rejection of the Jews brought the blessings of the gospel to the Gentiles, so how great a blessing will come when the Jews receive Christ (Romans 11:12, 15)? Ephesians 2 tells how God receives both Jews and Gentiles by faith in Jesus and joins them together as one new person in Christ. Can you think of a better reason to rejoice?

III. MERCY BLESSES THE REBELLIOUS (Romans 11:16-24)

A. God's mercy is extended to all people. We cannot say that He loves one more than He does another. Gentiles can say, “*Thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not*” (Isaiah 63:16). As many as receive Jesus become the sons of God (John 1:11, 12). One who is saved does not become a “Christian Jew” or a “Christian Gentile.” He becomes a Christian, with no further distinctions before God (Ephesians 2:13-18). Thank God for His mercy to us all.

B. God's mercy is no basis for pride. There is a danger that the Jew may be filled with pride because he is a part of “the chosen people.” There is a danger that the Gentile may be filled with pride because God turned to him upon the unbelief of Israel (Romans 11:17-19). It must not be! God accepts a person on the basis of faith and rejects a person on the basis of unbelief. There is no reason for pride, but rather humility before Him who loved us so.

C. God's mercy is based on faith (Romans 11:20-24). “*Without faith*

it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). His blessings are on those who trust Him (James 1:5-7), whether they are Jew or Gentile. Trust Him.

IV. MERCY GUARANTEES BLESSINGS (Romans 11:25-32)

A. Mercy limits the duration of blindness. Many of the Jews are blinded by their unbelief, but the time of their blindness is limited “*until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*” (Romans 11:25). A time will come when Israel will turn to the Lord in repentance and faith in Jesus. What a day of spiritual harvest that will be! God said it is coming. His mercy affords it; His sovereignty guarantees it.

B. Mercy brings the blessing of salvation (Romans 11:26, 27). The covenant God made in eternity, revealed to Abraham (Genesis 15), explained through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and confirmed in Jesus (Luke 22:20) is now offered to all who believe (Hebrews 8:7-13; Galatians 3:13-29). Israel will come to God and be accepted by Him, but only when she comes to faith in Jesus.

C. Mercy agrees with the doctrine of divine election. “**The gifts and calling of God are without repentance**” (Romans 11:29). God has determined that is the way it will be, and it will happen as He planned. He says, “*I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*” (Isaiah 46:11). God said it; that settles it.

“*What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Romans 3:3, 4). Jew and Gentile have the same need, so God provided the same remedy for each. Praise God for the day when Israel will turn to Him with faith in Jesus. Lord, hasten that day!

Questions

1. Why did God choose Israel?
2. How did Israel miss her place in God's plan?
3. How did unbelief cause Israel to stumble?
4. What is the doctrine of the “remnant”?
5. Where can you see a remnant in the history of Israel?
6. Why does conversion of Gentiles stir the Jews to jealousy?
7. How will Israel finally return to God?
8. What does this teach about our unity in Christ?