

The Apostolic Perspective on the Issue of Israel (Romans 9-11)

I. At The Heart of the End-Time Prayer and Worship Movement is the Issue of Israel

"On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth." (Isaiah 62:6-7)

1. Watchmen are Intercessors who give the Lord no rest concerning His promises
2. Watchmen are Proclaimers who give the people no rest concerning the prophecies

"7 For thus says the LORD: "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.' 8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. 9 With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back...." (Jeremiah 31:7-9)

1. Sing aloud
2. Raise shouts
3. Proclaim
4. Give praise
5. Say: "Save Your people, the remnant of Israel"

II. At the Heart of the Apostolic Gospel is the Issue of Israel - An Outline of Romans 9-11

Romans 9-11 contains the apostolic perspective on the issue of Israel as it relates to the Gospel. These chapters contain Paul's teaching on the past, present and future of National Israel.

A. Romans 9-11 has 3 main sections:

1. Israel's **Election** in the Past (Romans 9)
2. Israel's **Deflection** in the Present (Romans 10)
3. Israel's **Salvation** in the Future (Romans 11)

B. The 3 chapters revolve around the phrase in 9:6 where Paul asks "Has the word of God failed?" The failure of the word of God refers to the sure word of prophecy delivered to National Israel between the calling of Abraham and the coming of Jesus. The failure of the word of God refers to the great dilemma of Jewish unbelief and the conundrum of their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. With this question Paul is addressing the great theological crisis of Jewish apostasy and what it means to the Gospel (as outlined in 1-8) and the character of God.

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- C. Paul was writing to a Gentile Church in Rome to explain the “**mystery**” of Israel. The issue of Israel was central to Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 28:20). Namely because the issue of Israel is the issue of the glory of God. If Israel has sinned away God’s promises, what are we to conclude about God? We Gentiles don’t understand the magnitude of the crisis of Jewish unbelief. But Paul understood it. He understood the long line of prophecies concerning Israel’s future. And he understood the prophetic implications of their present rebellion against Jesus their Messiah. As did the Church in Rome. They observed Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah and had concluded that God had rejected them as a National people and had therefore redefined and revised the promises He previously made to them. This theology pervades the modern Church:

“[Paul] has systematically transferred the privileges and attributes of “Israel” to the Messiah and His people. It is therefore greatly preferable to take...“Israel” as a typically Pauline polemical redefinition...”¹

“The church, then, as the people of the New Covenant has taken the place of Israel, and the national Israel is nothing other than the empty shell from which the pearl has been removed and which has lost its function in the history of redemption.” (Herman Ridderbos)²

- D. Reggie Kelly explains the nature of these epic chapters saying that: “*Romans 9-11 is Paul's theological overview of history that gives the context for the full display of God's eternal purpose in grace. It provides the framework to understand "why" God chose Israel in the first place, "how" He has used Israel in His plan, and "where" the prophesied future is taking us. It is taking us to the "end" (goal) of the covenant (see Ro 11:27).*”

III. An Overview of Romans 9-11

Below are 6 dimensions of Paul's teaching on Israel concerning what should be the Church's posture towards the Jewish people in their past election, present rebellion, and future salvation; 6 dimensions that we must understand and obey. In this session we won't deal with any of the controversial texts or themes. Instead we're going to look at Paul's heart: how he looked upon the issue of Israel and how he felt about it. My aim in the outline below is to introduce you to the general realities contained within Romans 9-11. In these chapters we observe Paul's:

- A. Pain

"1 I am speaking the truth in Christ-I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit- 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 9:1-5)

- B. Prayer

"1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

¹ Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 25

² H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, (Eerdmans 1975 344-345)

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3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:1-3)

C. Perspective

"6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. 9 For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." 10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad-in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls-12 she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."" (Romans 9:6-13)

"1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." 4 But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. 7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened..." (Romans 11:1-7)

D. Provocation

"11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to provoke Israel to jealousy. 12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! 13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry 14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. 15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:11-15)

E. Prophecy

"25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And then, all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." (Romans 11:25-27)

Despite Paul's clear teaching on the issue of Israel's Age-ending salvation, much of the Church has embraced a different perspective:

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"...hard fact that national Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the New Covenant." (Bruce Waltke)³

"God willed that after the institution of the New Covenant there should no longer be any Jewish people in the world - yet here they are! That is a fact - a very sad fact, brought about by their wicked rebellion against God." (Albert Pieters)⁴

"Old Testament prophecies must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament to find their deeper meaning...I do not see how it is possible to avoid the conclusion that the New Testament applies Old Testament prophecies to the New Testament church and in so doing identified the church as spiritual Israel." ⁵

"...the church is in fact the true Israel of God." (George Eldon Ladd)⁶

"...we should notice the main New Testament verses that understand the church as the "new Israel" or new "people of God"...The nation blessed by God is no longer said to be the nation of Israel, for Christians are now God's true "holy nation." The people of Israel are no longer said to be the people of God..." (Wayne Grudem)⁷

F. Purpose

"28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that [i.e. "FOR THE PURPOSE OF"] by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. 32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God [TO EXECUTE HIS PURPOSES]! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:28-36)

³ from *Kingdom Promises as Spiritual*, in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, pg. 274

⁴ from *The Seed of Abraham*; pg. 123

⁵ from *Historic Premillennialism, The Meaning of the Millennium*; pg. 23

⁶ from *A Theology of the New Testament*; pg. 433

⁷ In the 'Nature and Purposes of the Church' section of his *Systematic Theology*; pg. 861, 863