

Israel's Future

Text: Romans 11:1-36

Introduction:

1. Romans 9, 10 & 11 form an important trilogy concerning the nation of Israel.
2. Theme: The mystery of Israel's blindness (11:25). Acts 13:46 *"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."*
3. This lesson: Paul answers the question "Hath God cast away his people?" Israel has been temporarily blinded and set aside until the harvest of Gentiles in the church age is complete. Israel will experience a great national conversion in the future.

I. The Question of Israel's Future (Vs. 1-2)

A. The basis of the question (Vs. 1a)

1. 'then' = draws inference from what has been discussed previously.
2. Note particularly Vs. 19-21 of previous chapter

B. The answer to the question (Vs. 1b-2a)

1. "God forbid" = away with the thought! Strong denial
2. Paul refers to His own natural lineage as an Israelite.

II. The Election of Israel's Remnant (Vs. 2b-6)

A. A Past Illustration (Vs. 2b-4)

1. Elijah's mistake – he assumed he was the only faithful one left.
2. God's answer – He had reserved for Himself 7,000 men who refused to worship Baal.

B. A Present Application (Vs. 5-6)

1. "present time" = Jews still being saved in this church age, albeit in small numbers (a 'remnant')
2. 'grace' = the source of salvation.
3. Verse 6 contains one of the clearest statements in the Bible on the truth that salvation is by grace ALONE. It **cannot** be a mixture of works and grace. (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7)

III. The Reprobation of Israel's Unbelievers (Vs. 7-10)

A. The Willful Hardening of Israel (Vs. 7)

1. Chapter 9:30-33 *"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but*

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as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; As it is written, Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

2. Israel willfully rejected the free offer of salvation, choosing to pursue a works-based righteousness. Vs. 20 “...**because of unbelief they were broken off...**”

B. The Judicial Hardening of Israel (Vs. 8-10)

1. Israel rejected the truth and as they did so, their hearts were hardened.
2. In addition to their self-hardening, there is God’s judicial hardening as an act of judgment because of their rejection of Him.
3. Same principle illustrated: Pharaoh (chapter 9) & 2 Thess. 2:10-12

IV. The Provocation of Israel’s Repentance (Vs. 11-15)

A. To Save the Gentiles (Vs. 11)

1. ‘fall’ = an irremediable (irreversible/permanent) fall. (Wuest) “that is, utterly fall, fall without any hope or possibility of recovery.” (Ironsides)
2. “God in His providence used it as an occasion to bring His salvation to the Gentiles and this as a means whereby He could make Israel jealous of the Gentiles and thus incite in them a desire for the salvation they had rejected.” (Wuest)

B. To Stimulate Israel’s repentance (Vs. 12-15)

1. Paul’s ministry as the Apostle to the Gentiles also included the desire for the salvation of ‘some’ of Israel.
2. “provoke to jealousy” (Vs. 11); “provoke to emulation” (Vs. 14)
3. Illustration: A young man seeks to woo a young ladies affection. She enjoys the attention but takes it for granted. Eventually he turns his attention to another and then she is “provoked to jealousy”.
4. Note: Imagine if you were a Jew living at this time in history. You’ve been accustomed to viewing the Gentiles as the pagan offscouring of the world and you now hear of great numbers turning to Jesus of Nazareth through the preaching of men like Paul. It would surely arrest your attention!
5. Israel’s future salvation viewed as a glorious thing. If God in His Providence has brought so much blessing to the Gentiles through Israel’s blindness, how much more blessing is there in store when Israel returns to the Lord in repentance (Vs. 25-26)

V. The Illustration of the Olive Tree (Vs. 16-24)

A. The grafting in of the Gentiles (Vs. 16-17)

1. ‘holy’ (Vs. 16) = character of the roots
2. “broken off” = reference to temporary setting aside of Israel

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3. 'partakest' = we have entered into the blessings of Israel

B. The warning to the Gentiles (Vs. 18-21)

1. "boast not"; "be not highminded" = warning against becoming puffed up and prideful in our attitude to Israel. The Gentile church has largely failed when it comes to this command!
2. Israel is the apple of God's eye (Zec. 2:8). Those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse her will be cursed (Gen. 12:3)
3. Illustration: Luther's tirade against the Jews (refer other notes)

C. The summary (Vs. 22-24)

1. Two aspects of God's character revealed – 'goodness' (kindness) and 'severity' (rigor, abrupt, firm). Note: This second aspect that relates to God's judgment is often downplayed and overlooked. Often our conception of God is not entirely Scriptural.
2. God deals firmly with those who reject His offer of salvation. Israel is an illustration of this.
3. This is a warning to the Gentiles. If God dealt so firmly with the natural branches, how much more the wild olive branches! (Vs. 21)

VI. The Conversion of Israel (Vs. 25-32)

A. The temporary nature of Israel's blindness (Vs. 25)

1. 'mystery' = See Eph. 3:1-6 & Col. 1:25-27 for clear definition of a 'mystery'
2. "ignorant...wise in your own conceits" = the inevitable result of failing to recognize this truth
3. "in part" = the blindness is partial
4. 'until' = it is a **temporary** blindness
5. "the fulness of the Gentiles" = the totality of the church prior to the Rapture. "The completion of the work among the nations which has been going on ever since Israel's rejection." (Ironsides)

B. The promise of the national conversion of Israel (Vs. 26-32)

1. Paul quotes from Isaiah 59:20-21. See Zechariah 13:8-9. Surviving third of the nation saved at the Second Advent.
2. God has not changed His mind concerning Israel (Vs. 29). He will fulfill His covenants!
3. Mercy came to the Gentiles through Israel's unbelief (Vs. 30). The Gentiles in turn are to show mercy to the Jews in reaching out to them with the Gospel (Vs. 31).
4. Both Jew and Gentile are saved the same way (Vs. 32). 'concluded' = to shut up on all sides, to enclose. "To confine in, as in a corral, to enclose, to coop up." (Romans 3 – all under sin)

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VII. The Adoration of God (Vs. 33-36)

In light of God's glorious plan of salvation for both Jew & Gentile (Vs. 32), in light of the unveiling of His Sovereign dealings in the affairs of men, Paul falls to His knees in heartfelt worship.

- A. God's Unfathomable Wisdom (Vs. 33)
- B. God's Unknowable Mind (Vs. 34-35)
- C. God the Ultimate Reality (Vs. 36) = "for of him, (the Source) and through him (the mighty Worker) and to him (the Object and focus) are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.
- D. "Like a traveler who has reached the summit of an Alpine ascent, the apostle turns and contemplates. Depths are at his feet, but waves of light illumine them, and there spreads all around an immense horizon which his eye commands." (Godet)
- E. "The Apostles heart is filled with worship, and praise, and admiration as the full blaze of the divine plan fills the horizon of his soul." (Ironsides)
- F. We find ourselves as the hymn writer put it, "lost in wonder, love and praise."
- G. Psalm 115:3 "*But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*"
- H. "...*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*" (Rev. 19:6)

Conclusion:

1. Have you been saved by Grace or are you still trusting in your works?
2. What is our attitude to Israel? Are we puffed up in pride or do we bow in humble thanksgiving that we have been made partakers of the great blessings God has given His chosen people?