

## **27. God is not done with Israel**

October 19, 2008

Before we start to study the first portion of Romans 11, I believe that we need to refresh ourselves with a brief history of Israel from the beginning.

From somewhere around 2170 B.C., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the patriarchs of Israel and their people settled in the Land of Canaan. God promised them that their descendants would inherit the land and they will be like sand on the seashore.

Around 1875 B.C., severe famines forced Israelites to migrate to Egypt. The Israelites stayed in Egypt for 400 years until Moses led them from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. Because of their disobedience they wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years. During that period, they received the Ten Commandments from the Lord at Mount Sinai.

Under the leadership of Joshua, they conquered the pagan tribes in Canaan and settled in the land. However, the Israelites soon embraced the pagan idol worship and turned their backs on God. But our gracious Lord allowed them to have a great king David to unify the nation and used his son Solomon to build the first Holy Temple for God Himself.

In spite of God's presence with them, the Israelites continuously turned their hearts to idol worship. For that, the Lord used Assyria and Babylon to invade the northern kingdom Israel and the southern kingdom Judah. Even though they returned to their own land from the exile to Babylon and Persia kingdoms, their peace was never restored due to frequent invasions by other kingdoms, such as Egypt, Greece and Rome.

By the time Jesus started His ministry on earth in Israel, they were under the occupation of Roman Empire. As the result of their rejection of the Messiah Jesus Christ, the Lord allowed Rome to invade Israel and totally destroyed her and dispersed the Israelites all over the world in 70 A.D.

Let's fast forward to the modern days. In 1948 at the end of British Mandate, the State of Israel was proclaimed. For the first time in human history, a nation came back alive again just like the prophecy from Ezekiel 37. They not only survived through the Six Days War in 1967 and Yom Kippur War in 1973 against the surrounding Arab nations, they won both battles.

To this day, they have constant threats and violences by Hamas from Lebanon and Gaza Strip and the PLO in the West Bank. If that is not bad enough, Iranian President promised that he would wipe off Israel from the map very soon.

### **A. WHY DID GOD CHOOSE ISRAEL OVER OTHER COUNTRIES?**

If you are like me you would have this same question. Why didn't the Lord choose some other countries like Texas or South Korea? For centuries people have been puzzled by the nation of Israel. The great historian Arnold Toynbee classified Israel as "a fossil civilization" and did not know what to do with it. For some reason, the nation did not fit into his historical theories.

The most obvious reason is found in the Bible.

*Deuteronomy 7:7-9 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;*

God chose the nation of Israel to be the people through whom Jesus Christ would be born – the Savior from sin and death. God first promised the Messiah after Adam and Eve’s fall into sin in Genesis 3. God later confirmed that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 12. Jesus Christ is the ultimate reason why God chose Israel to be His chosen people. God did not have to have a “chosen people,” but He decided to do it that way. Jesus had to come from a nation, and God chose Israel.

However, God’s reason for choosing the nation of Israel was not solely for the purpose of producing the Messiah. God’s desire for Israel was that they would go and teach others about Him. Israel was to be a nation of priests, prophets and missionaries to the world. God’s intent was for Israel to be a distinct people, a nation of people who pointed others to God and His promised provision of a Redeemer, Messiah and Savior. For the most part, Israel failed in this task. However, God’s ultimate purpose for Israel, that of bringing for the Messiah and Savior, was fulfilled perfectly – in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Would there be any other reasons?

*Ezekiel 5:5 “Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her.*

If you split the surface of the world globe at the Date Line and lay it flat, which is the standard way to show the map of the world, you will be able to see that Israel is located right in the center of the continents.

Right in the center of that land Israel, Jerusalem is located.

Right in the center of Jerusalem, the Holy Temple was located.

Right in the center of the Holy Temple, the Holy of Holies was located.

Right in the center of the Holy of Holies, the Ark of God which represents Jesus Christ was located.

This brings another very important point in the way I see. Did God choose Israel because it is strategically located in the middle of three continents – Europe, Asia and Africa? Thanks to Alexander the Great, the Greek language through their Hellenic culture became the common language of the known world during that period. Thanks to the Roman Highway systems through and around Israel, when the followers of Jesus Christ were dispersed all over, they could travel to many other countries on foot to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## **B. IS GOD THROUGH WITH ISRAEL?**

*Romans 11:1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

With what we just have learned, we can wonder about the same question like apostle Paul. But Paul answers his own rhetorical question with an emphatic tone, “Certainly not.”

Paul devoted all of Romans 11 to present proofs that God is not through with Israel. We must not apply this chapter to the church today like some people would do which is known as the "Replacement Theology". Paul is discussing a literal future for a literal nation – Israel.

As one of the evidences, Paul presents his own conversion. The fact that Paul has come to faith in Jesus as Messiah proves that there are some Jews who have been chosen by God and who have embraced the Gospel.

The details of Israel's future restoration and salvation are given in Zechariah 12:10-13:1. The nation shall see Him as He returns, recognize Him as their Messiah, repent and receive Him.

### **C. YOU AND OTHERS**

*Romans 11:2-6 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.*

Most of the people during the time of Elijah followed Baal rather than one true God. The current Israel people are pretty much liberal and do not worship their God. The majority of them are tired of wars around their country and want to go on with their living more than following their one true God.

In his day, Elijah thought that the nation had totally departed from God. But he was told by the Lord that there were yet 7,000 remnant of true believers.

When God said to Elijah He had remnants, He didn't mean 7000 physical children of Israel, but spiritual followers. We, too, have this evidence today. We see many Jews getting converted to Christianity from their Jewish religion. We call them 'Messianic Jews' and I call them 'Perfect Jews', because they are physically and spiritually born in God's choice.

I am sure that you've noticed born-again Christians are the minority in the world. If you want to be popular in the world's standard, you don't want to be a Christian. That is why so many Christians don't want other people at work or neighborhood to know that they are born-again Christians. Hope that none of you are like that.

We often think that God needs a lot of people to do a great work, but He often works through a small group, or through a group that starts out small. God will use that small group in a big way. That is why I believe that our small church can change the communities of Sahuarita and Green Valley and the surrounding areas with the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **D. THE SPIRITUAL HARDENING OF ISRAEL**

*Romans 11:7-10 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that*

*they should not hear, To this very day.” 9 And David says: “Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. 10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, And bow down their back always.”*

Paul was quoting Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:3-4 in v8 to further his convincing arguments. As a whole, Israel was given the greatest offer to be saved by God, but the majority of them chose not to put their faith in Him because their hearts were hardened and God allowed them to have a spirit of stupor. It is a kind of numbness that results in spiritual blindness and deafness. When people repeatedly refuse to listen to God’s inviting salvation messages, they eventually will be not able to hear and understand it.

*Hebrews 3:15 while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

In v9, Paul quotes Psalm 69 which is a messianic psalm foreshadowing the suffering of Jesus and is referred to several times in the New Testament.

Their “*table to become a snare*” means that their blessings turn into burdens and judgments. This is what happened to them: Israel’s spiritual blessings should have led them to Christ, but instead they became a snare that kept them from Christ. Their very religious practices and observances became substitutes for the real experience of salvation. Sad to say, this same mistake is made today when people depend on religious rituals and practices instead of trusting in the Christ who is pictured in these activities.

### **E. SALVATION FOR THE GENTILES AND THE JEWS WHO WANT TO BE SAVED**

*Romans 11:11-14 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! 13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.*

When the Jews rejected the Gospel, God sent it to the Gentiles and they believed and were saved. In this sense, the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews was riches for the Gentiles.

Paul’s desire isn’t only that these riches would be enjoyed by the Gentiles only, but that the Jews would be provoked to a good kind of jealousy, motivating them to receive some of the blessings the Gentiles enjoyed. It was God’s plan all along by His foreknowledge.

If the truth be known, the Jews long for the intimate relationship Christians have with God as the Father and the children of the Living God even though they don’t believe in Christ.

A good example of that is Lieutenant Colonel Ronny Simons of Israel Defense Forces Reserve. He has an absolutely incredible knowledge of the Old Testament, world history, geography, as well as the New Testament, yet he does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What a loss! If the Lord spares him so that he can survive through the Great Tribulation time, he will realize that Jesus is the real Messiah.

Today, Israel is fallen spiritually, but when Christ returns, the nation will rise again. Today, Israel is cast away from God, but one day they shall be received again. God will never break His covenant with His people, and He has promised to restore them.

***F. APPLICATION***

1) Christianity should not be another religious practice, rather it should be a lifestyle to follow and worship Jesus as our God.