

Israel: Past, Present, and Future #8

Romans 11:26-27

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Greg L. Price

We have considered in past sermons how some expositors look at all of the prophecies related to Israel in the Old Testament as being presently fulfilled either in the New Israel (i.e. the Church consisting of both Jews and Gentiles) or in an elect remnant of Jews who are being presently brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ (**Supersessionism**). According to this view, God's redemptive plan is finished for Israel as a nation. However, the Apostle Paul declares that though Israel is presently under God's judgment for her rejection of the Messiah, yet in the future all Israel as a covenanted nation shall be saved (Romans 11:26).

Paul's argument in Romans 11 may be summarized as follows: (1) Though God had stretched out His hand all day long to the disobedient and covenant-breaking nation of Israel (Romans 10:21), He has not totally and permanently cast away His people, the covenanted nation of Israel (Romans 11:1). (2) Though Israel as a nation was hardened, not all of Israel was hardened, for God is presently saving an elect remnant (Romans 11:1-11). (3) Though Israel as a nation is presently a covenant-breaking nation that has been cast out of the Visible Church (represented by the olive tree), Israel as a nation shall in the future be grafted back into the Visible Church by the mercy of her covenant-keeping God (Romans 11:12-26). (4) In this way God has purposed that the nation of Israel will be saved: namely, in bringing the Gentile nations of the world together with the nation of Israel to trust in Jesus as Messiah (Romans 11:25-26). And finally, (5) The conversion of the nation of Israel is not simply asserted by the Apostle Paul, but is proven from Old Testament prophecies which we shall briefly consider today (Romans 11:26-27).

There are two questions that we will seek to answer in Romans 11:26-27: (1) Who Will Save All Israel as a Nation (Romans 11:26)? (2) Why Will All Israel as a Nation Be Saved (Romans 11:27)?

I. Who Will Save All Israel as a Nation (Romans 11:26)?

A. When the Gentile nations of the world and Israel as a nation come in faith to Jesus Christ, they will be joined together into the same olive tree—the one and same Visible Church (Romans 11:23-24). There are not presently nor will there ever be two distinct olive trees—one for Israel and one for the Church. Christ does not have two brides, nor are there two olive trees (Israel and the Church). There is one people of God.

1. Contrary to **Dispensationalism**, the Visible Church (the olive tree) did not begin in Acts 2, but was brought into being by God in the Old Testament (Acts 7:37-38). The LXX was translated in the 3rd century b.c. In the LXX the Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, is used some 76 times in preparation for its use in the New Testament (1 Chronicles 28:8; 1 Kings 8:14).

2. Our Reformed Presbyterian forefathers referred to the church as having its beginning in the Old Testament. **The Westminster Confession of Faith** (1647) refers to the people of Israel in the Old Testament as “a church under age” (19:3) and declares in (20:1) that

the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected...

And when speaking of the Visible Church, we confess (25:2) that

The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children....

3. Thus, when Jesus declared in Matthew 16:18 that He will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, He was not saying that **He will begin to build His church** (*ekklesia*) that was non-existent at that time, but rather that **He will continue to build His church**. The olive tree, or Visible Church (Romans 11) began in the Old Testament (for the natural branches, the Jews at the time of Christ, had been in the olive tree and were broken off from it, and the root of this olive tree was God's covenant made with the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Romans 11:16,28). In other words, the same olive tree continued into the New Testament from which Israel as a nation was broken off for unbelief and Gentiles grafted in due to their professed faith in Christ (along with a believing remnant of Israel). Paul teaches that Israel as a nation will yet be grafted back into the same olive tree with the fullness of the Gentile nation in the future when she turns in faith to Christ (Romans 11:24).

4. The Visible Church is also called the Kingdom of God on earth in Matthew 21:43—the Kingdom of God/Visible Church was taken from Israel and given to a nation that would consist of mostly Gentiles—but there is only one Kingdom, not one for Israel and one for the Church).

B. Who is this “deliverer” in Romans 11:25 that will deliver the nation of Israel from her sins? It is the same one who will yet deliver the nation of Egypt from her sins in Isaiah 19:20. This is Jesus, our great God and Savior.

1. The same Savior is promised to Israel and to the Gentile nations alike. The same gospel that saves the Gentile nations will save Israel as a nation—there is only one gospel and one salvation for Jew and Gentile alike (Romans 1:16). I submit that whereas **supersessionists** err in not seeing a future salvation of Israel as a nation, **dispensationalists** err in seeing a purpose of God for the nation of Israel distinct from that of Christ's Church. Whereas **covenantalists** affirm that God's purpose for the conversion of Israel as a nation in the future is bound together with His purpose for the enlargement of Christ's Church throughout the world.

2. The Old Testament prophecy applied by Paul to the future conversion of the nation of Israel is found in Isaiah 59:20.

a. There the Lord comes “to Zion” (“Sion” in both Hebrew and Greek), but Paul likely joins Isaiah 59:20 with Psalm 14:7.

b. Here in Romans 11:26, Paul applies those Old Testament texts to the future conversion of Israel at which time Christ, the Deliverer, will come out of Sion.

c. What is “Sion”? It is only used one other time by Paul in Romans (Romans 9:33). Sion is not speaking of heaven, but of the church; for Jesus is laid as a chief corner stone in Sion—in the church (1 Peter 2:5-6).

d. **John Brown of Wamphray** (1610-1679), faithful covenanted minister in the Church of Scotland writes in his commentary:

When the Lord shall come unto the Jews, it will be out of his Zion among the Gentiles, out of his church there.

e. **The Westminster Annotations** (1651) interpret “out of Sion” as the church also, *Out of Zion*; that is, out of the midst of the church, where he [Christ—GLP] hath his dwelling and abode by his Spirit, will he call and re-collect the Jews again.

f. Jesus will come out of “Sion”, His Church, to save Israel by means of the gospel of Christ—that is how Jesus continues to come to us each Lord's Day through faithful preaching (Acts 3:25-26). Christ's sheep hear His voice through faithful shepherds Jesus has appointed. This will be the means that the Lord will use to convert the nations and Israel, and that being the case, should we think faithful preaching is ineffective in changing us, our marriages, our families, our church, our neighbors?

II. Why Will All Israel as a Nation Be Saved (Romans 11:27)?

A. Israel as a nation will be saved because the Lord is gracious and will remember His covenant (“This is MY covenant with them”).

1. Let me be quick to add that this is not a different covenant with Israel (as to substance) than the covenant He makes with all who believe in Him (Jews and Gentiles alike). There is only one Covenant of Grace to save sinners through Jesus Christ—which God revealed to Adam in Genesis 3:15; revealed to Abraham in Genesis 17:7; revealed to Israel in Leviticus 26:12; revealed to believers in the New Testament in Hebrews 8:10; and shall reveal in the New Heaven and New Earth in Revelation 21:3. The New Covenant is the realization in Jesus Christ of all the covenants made with God’s people in the Old Testament (Matthew 26:28—this is the new testament in my blood). Paul states that the covenant made with Abraham was confirmed in Christ (Galatians 3:17—it was a Christian covenant). We who believe become the spiritual heirs to the promises made to Abraham through Jesus—who is the specific and particular seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16) through whom all the families and nations of the earth will be blessed.

2. Paul quotes from two more Old Testament passages in Romans 11:27 to confirm why God will save all Israel as a nation (Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 31:34—the New Covenant). Calvin likens God’s gracious covenant to the foundation of salvation and the promises of the covenant to the stones built upon that foundation. God promises will always be kept because they are founded upon His covenant which He has sworn to keep with His people (Hebrews 6:17-18).

3. **The Dutch Annotations** (1637 in Dutch, 1657 in English) interpret Paul’s words here as the full realization of the New Covenant to the salvation of the Jews in the future.

And this is a Covenant unto them [Namely, to the Jews, who for this cause, seeing this Covenant is firm and unchangeable, shall yet be converted to the faith, that thereby their sins may be forgiven and taken away]

4. This is the New Covenant wherein God promises to forgive the nation of Israel her sins when Israel turns in faith and repentance to Jesus. Israel will be brought into the Church of the New Covenant, where though there are national distinctions (Egypt, Assyria, and Israel in Isaiah 19), yet those distinctions do not now nor will they then divide us into two distinct olive trees, kingdoms, brides. There is only one Church.

5. Paul makes clear that all of Israel shall be saved in the future because the Lord has covenanted from old (in the Old Testament) to do so. The fact that we, Gentiles, have been included in that glorious New Covenant in Christ’s blood, in no way should discount the truth that God will yet save Israel as a nation and the nations of the world on the basis of that same gracious New Covenant in Christ’s blood.

B. Application

1. God’s faithfulness to keep His covenant with Israel gives me an unshakeable hope that He will keep His covenant with me as I have embraced His covenant grace in Jesus Christ. The gospel is based upon God’s Covenant of Grace to save us from a Covenant of Works which condemned us. In Adam we die—In Christ we live. In the gospel we enter into a covenant with God through Jesus. He has sworn and promised to save us through Christ and to become our God and we His people. We trust His promise in Christ, repent of our sins, and walk in love and new obedience to Christ as our Savior and Lord.

2. Likewise, since God is a covenant-keeping God, He will not forget the national covenants made with Him though made hundreds of years ago (the covenant with the Gibeonites though made 500 years before in Joshua 9; nor the brotherly covenant in Amos 1:9-10).

3. God takes covenants seriously—whether church covenants or marriage covenants. Israel was judged for breaking covenant with God. So will we be for breaking what He has joined together (Matthew 19:6).

4. None of us will keep our covenants perfectly, we all fall short. Jesus alone is our covenant-righteousness before God. We are faithful to our covenant when we look to Christ in faith, sincerely repent of sin and evidence by a changed heart and life, and renew our love and obedience to the Lord. Praise God for His mercy and love to us which is founded upon His covenant faithfulness in Christ. Let this be a time of covenant renewal with the Lord, with your spouse, and with your brethren.

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