

THREE REASONS WHY GOD HAS SET ISRAEL ASIDE

TEXT: ROMANS 11:11-24

INTRODUCTION:

1. Romans 9—11 emphasize God's program with the nation of Israel.
2. The Bible teaches that because of their unbelief, Israel has been set aside as a nation. However, there has always been a small remnant of Jews who are saved by the grace of God (cf. 11:5).
3. This remnant has not bowed the knee to Baal (11:1-4).
4. Soon, a life-size reproduction of the arch of the Temple of Baal from Palmyra, Syria will be erected in Times Square in New York, and in Leicester Square in London.
5. Prior to the current war in Syria, the ancient site of the Temple of Baal had over 150,000 visitors a year. But it was destroyed by ISIS in August, 2015.
6. Using a database of thousands of images, the Institute for Digital Archaeology is creating a full-sized, 50-foot tall, 3D-printed replica of the entrance arch to the temple. The work is being done in China.
7. It should be noted that Israel's rejection is not final, but temporary (cf. 11:26). God is not finished with Israel (cf. 11:1).
8. There is an old story that I have either heard several times over the years, concerning Frederick the Great, the king of Prussia. He and his chaplain were discussing the veracity of the Bible, and Frederick the Great said to his chaplain, "Give me proof that the Bible is the inspired word of God."
9. The chaplain said, "Your majesty, I will answer your request in a word, the Jews." The Jew is evidence of the inspiration of the Bible.
10. Tonight we will consider three reasons why God has set Israel aside.

I. IN ORDER TO OPEN UP AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GENTILES (11:11)

1. The apostle Paul asks rhetorically, "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" (11:11). The idea is, "Have they stumbled that they should fall beyond recovery?"
2. The answer: "God forbid" (11:11).
3. There is a divine purpose for Israel's rejection – "through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (11:11). "Jealousy" which would lead to salvation (11:14).

4. "If by any means I may provoke to emulation ("jealousy," same word in the original Greek) them which are my flesh, and might save some of them" (11:14).
5. This divine plan to save Gentiles is brought out in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 13:46-48; 18:6; 28:25-28).
6. In his commentary on the book of Romans, J. Vernon McGee gives a good illustration of this principle. He was in Israel, and he noticed that his Jewish tour guides were puzzled by his intense interest in their country and in Jewish culture and their history and traditions, etc.
7. One Jewish guide said, "I want to know why these things are so important to you?"
8. The apostle Paul said this was prophesied in the Old Testament (Romans 10:19; cf. Deuteronomy 32:21).

II. IN ORDER THAT ISRAEL ONE DAY WOULD BE RESTORED

1. "Riches" in the context of Romans 11:12 refers to spiritual blessings, not material or financial blessings.
2. For example, in Romans 2:4, Paul refers to the riches of God's goodness, and in Romans 9:23, he refers to the riches of God's glory.
3. And in Romans 11:33, Paul says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"
4. When Israel fell, and when Israel was "diminished" (temporarily set aside), the Gentiles were spiritually enriched (11:12).
5. But the Gentiles will be blessed even more (11:12b) at the time of Israel's "fullness" (their future restoration).
6. H.A. Ironside said, "The fullness of Israel will be the conversion of Israel – the fulfilment of God's purpose regarding them" (*Romans*).
7. They are spiritually "empty" today but will enjoy "fullness" when Christ returns and they are restored.
8. Israel's restoration is described as a spiritual resurrection in Romans 11:15 – "life from the dead." The prophet Ezekiel uses this imagery in Ezekiel 37:1-14.
9. Then Ezekiel 37:15-28 describes the future reuniting of Israel (Ephraim) and Judah.
10. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are "the firstfruit" and "the root" (11:16). They were "holy" (consecrated), that is, set apart by God.

11. The idea of the first fruits as the pledge of the rest comes from Numbers 15:19-21. "Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD an heave offering in your generations" (Numbers 15:21).
12. Their descendants, the Jews, are "the lump" and "the branches" (11:16). They are also holy. God chose the nation Israel and has set them apart from all the other nations.
13. Their standing and their separation from the nations is irrespective of their faithfulness (or unfaithfulness), moral purity (or impurity), and consecration (or lack of consecration).
14. During the coming tribulation, there will be a great purging, and the Jews who enter the millennial kingdom will be cleansed from all sin and defilement.
15. Then they will not only be "holy" in the sense of being separated from the other nations, but also in the full sense of the word – separated unto God from sin and unbelief.
16. Compare I Corinthians 7:14 (Israel today) and II Corinthians 7:1 (Israel after they are restored) for similar usage.

III. IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A WARNING TO THE GENTILES (11:21, 22)

1. Jews who reject the Lord Jesus Christ are like branches "broken off" the olive tree (11:17-19).
2. The "olive tree" represents the place of privilege that was first occupied by the natural branches, i.e., the Jews.
3. The "wild olive tree" (11:17) represents unregenerate Gentiles, without the light of the Gospel – "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).
4. After the Jewish branches were broken off, Gentiles who received Christ were "grafted in" (Romans 11:17, 19).
5. Therefore, we Gentiles that are saved now occupy the place of privilege.
6. After Israel's rejection of Christ, the wild olive tree began to be grafted into the good olive tree. This teaching can be traced throughout the four Gospels and the book of Acts (cf. Matthew 12:14-21; Acts 14:27; 22:21-23; 26:19-23; etc).

7. Along with saved Jews, we can partake of “the root and fatness of the olive tree” (11:17b). The LORD told Abraham, “and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3b).
8. Here in Romans chapter 11, God gives several warnings to the Gentiles (11:18, 20, 21, 22).
9. If God set Israel aside for unbelief, He could do the same to the Gentiles for their pride (11:18, 20b).
10. It has been pointed out by many Bible teachers that conditions among professed Christians are just as bad today – and perhaps even worse – than they ever were in Israel.

CONCLUSION:

“It is prophetic. Christendom is exactly that which is here warned against--boasting, high-minded, not abiding in goodness, in one word, apostate. The unbelief and failure of professing Christendom is as great, if not greater than the unbelief and failure of Israel. The time will come when God will not spare, but execute judgment upon Christendom. He will spew Laodicea out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). Then the hour of Israel's restoration has come” – A.C. Gaebelien.