The Book of Romans

Part Four: God’s righteousness is revealed in His Sovereign Plan for Israel. (Romans 9-11)

***The Nation Israel and God’s Eternal Plan: How will all Israel be saved? Romans 11:17-36***

Since the time of Abraham, the Jewish people have been central players on the world stage. Although a relatively small population, and long since deprived of a kingdom, they have been influential in international affairs, banking, science, and the arts, far beyond their size. Comprising only .02 percent of the world’s population, Jewish persons have received 193 Nobel prizes, over 22 percent of the total.

In spite of that, they have been heavily persecuted since the earliest times. What do we make of all of this, and what is the future for the Jewish race? Anti-Semitism has never run higher, and the Jewish state seems always on the edge of extinction by her neighbors. Paul contends that spiritually, the Jews’ future is bright, because at the end of the age, they will turn to their temporarily rejected Messiah, Jesus.

***Israel’s rejection should be a warning. . .*** 11:17-24

Paul already has hinted (v. 16) that the remnant of the Jewish nation (the patriarchs and remnant) are holy, so also will be the whole. Here he compares God’s people to an olive tree, with some of the natural branches pruned away because of unbelief.

The lesson is that since being God’s people is defined by faith, the Gentiles also are included only by faith. Should the Gentiles stop believing (as a group), then they too would be “cut out.” After all, if “wild” branches can be grafted in, so also the “natural branches” can be grafted back in. He is not talking about losing one’s salvation. He is talking about people collectively as either Jew or Gentile believing or not believing (see vv. 13, 25).

***Israel’s rejection is partial and temporary.*** 11:25-27

That the Gentiles would be saved was no mystery, since “all nations” are included in the blessings of Abraham (Genesis 12:3), but how and when “all Israel” would be saved was a mystery. A biblical “mystery” means a new idea that had up to that point been hidden in the mind of God. So the mystery explained is that after the full number of Gentiles is saved, Israel, as a nation, will be spiritually restored through the New Covenant promises. There is nothing here about a rebuilt temple or animal sacrifices, just a promise to forgive sins through a “Deliverer,” whom we know is Jesus. Jer. 31:31-37; Luke 21:20-24. See also Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 66:8; Matthew 23:29.

***And all of this brings glory to God’s grace*.** 11:28-36

So the Jews are, at the same time, “enemies” and “beloved.” On the one hand, their rejection of the Gospel enabled missionaries to go to the ends of the world. But God has never rejected totally the physical descendants of Abraham. The bottom line: since all have sinned, all need mercy, and this drama has been playing out in salvation history since the beginning of man. God delights to show mercy to all who lay down their arms and receive His pardon, but also is glorified in the just judgment of those who hate Him and prefer idols. Ezekiel 18:30-32

Last week we concluded three things from Paul’s thoughts on Israel’s salvation:

*1. God’s redeeming plan is to bless ALL NATIONS.*

*2. The present nation of Israel is not the promised remnant.*

*3. God’s people are identified by faith, not race.*

Israel **≠** Jews. How shall Christians respond to the present state of Israel?

***1. Pray. Like all nations, Israel needs Jesus Christ.***

Jews need to be forgiven just as the Gentiles.

***2. Consider. Israel is surrounded and will defend her borders.***

Israel will make mistakes, just like her enemies.

***3. Read. Israel’s salvation will come at Jesus’ return.***

Israel will possess the Promised Land because God’s people (all believers) will possess the whole earth.