

ISRAEL IN GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Scripturally, we know that the Nation of Israel has been cut off from salvation for failing God's grace. It rejected His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and had Him killed. However we also know scripturally that Israel will be restored to God's grace, saved by faith in Christ, at the end of this present age, at Christ's second coming. The purpose of this study is to establish scripturally whether the Nation of Israel will be restored to God, or just a remnant incorporated into the New Testament church, as so many believe. The scriptures subject of this study are not exhaustive but representative of the many pertaining to the subject matter. They suffice for the purpose of this study.

Israel traces its ancestry back to Abraham, with whom God entered into a covenant relationship because of his absolute faith in God. Abraham trusted God completely; he believed all that God said, and did all that God told him to do. God told Abraham to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house and go to another land where God would make of him a great nation, and in him bless all the nations of the earth. Abraham did not know where God was taking him. He just believed in God, and by faith obeyed Him. The name of the land was Canaan. God promised to give it to Abraham's descendants (CP Gen 12:1-5, 7 with He 11:8-10).

To fulfil His covenant with Abraham, that He would make of him many nations and would give Canaan to his descendants for an everlasting possession God promised Abraham and his wife Sarah, who were childless, a son, to be named Isaac (CP Gen 15:1-7, 18; 17:1-8, 15-16, 19, 21; 21:1-3; Ac 7:2-5). In Gen 14:6 we see that Abraham's unquestioning submission and obedience to God was counted to him for righteousness (CP also Ro 4:3; Ga 3:6, Jas 2:23; He 11:8). In Jas 2:23 we see also that God called Abraham His friend (CP also 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8). In Gen 17:5 God changed Abraham's name from Abram, and in V15 Sarah, from Sarai. It should be noted here that Canaan, the land which God gave to Abraham's descendants – the Jews – for an everlasting possession in Gen 17:8, is better known today as Palestine. Palestine is the Promised Land. It can never be given away. It is the Jews' possession forever. They will possess it in its entirety at the consummation of this age, at the second coming of Christ.

When Isaac was a lad God tested Abraham's faith by commanding him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. Again, without question, Abraham obeyed, and God spared Isaac. He then covenanted with Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth in Isaac's seed, Christ (CP Gen 22:18). *Thy Seed* in V18 is Christ (CP Ro 9:7; Ga 3:16; He 11:17-18). The next step in God's covenant with Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth in Christ, was fulfilled in Isaac's son, Jacob (CP Gen 25:20-26). The *two nations* in Rebecca's womb was Israel – represented by Jacob, and Edom – represented by Esau. God changed Jacob's name to Israel after he wrestled with God and

prevailed (CP Gen 32:24-30; 35:9-15). God's purpose in changing Jacob's name to Israel was to fulfil His redemptive plan for man, in Christ. It was Christ whose coming constituted the purpose of Israel. God had predestined Jacob's descendants to become the nation of Israel from which Christ would come (CP Gen 49:10; Nu 24:15-19; Isa 65:9; Mic 5:2 with Mt 2:3-6; Lu 2:11; Ro 9:7-13). Jacob had twelve sons whose descendants – they fathered the twelve tribes of Israel – became the nation of Israel (CP Gen 35:21-22; 49:28; Ex 24:4; 28:21; 39:14 with Rev 7:2-8).

Ro 9:7-13 is used by some in the church to teach the doctrine of predestination; that God arbitrarily chooses who He will, and will not, save. But that is not correct as scriptures clearly teach. As we have just seen, God chose Jacob over Esau for His eternal purpose to be fulfilled in Christ. That is what the phrase, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*, in V11 means. Let us read Ro 9:7-13 again (CP Ro 9:7-13). This has nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of individuals. God purposed that Christ would come from Israel exactly as Gen 49:10, Nu 24:15-19, Isa 65:9 and Mic 5:2 predicted in the Old Testament and Mt 2:3-6 and Lu 2:11 confirmed in the New Testament. Also, God did not literally hate Esau and love Jacob. The word *hated* in Ro 9:13 is an idiom of preference, not a term expressing literal hatred toward someone. Jesus also used the word as an idiom of preference (CP Lu 14:25-27). As an idiom of preference, *hate* simply means to love less (CP Mt 10:37-38).

The nation of Israel was God's elect people – His chosen ones (CP Isa 42:1; 45:4; 65:9; Mt 28:24, 31; Mk 13:22, 27). God had predestined Israel to be His witness in the world but its people – the Jews – provoked God over the centuries with their rebellions, disobedience, unbelief, lies, murmurings, idolatry and spiritual fornication with God's enemies. The history of the Jews' relationship with God is summed up for us in Psa 78 and 106. Let us read them (CP Psa 78:1-72; 106:6-45). The Jews provoked God at every turn, but God never gave up on them because His covenant with Israel, through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is everlasting (CP Gen 17:7-13; Psa 105:6-45; 1Chr 16:17; Isa 61:8-9).

Israel was the nation God predestined, through which He would bring salvation in Christ to all the nations of the earth, and He offered it to Israel first (CP Mt 10:1, 5-6; 15:24; Ro 1:16). But the Jews rejected Christ (CP Jn 1:11; Ac 13:46). Christ was an offence and a stumblingstone to the Jews and they had Him killed, which God predicted would happen (CP Isa 8:13-15; 28:16; Ro 9:31-33; 1Cor 1:23; 1Pe 2:6-8 with Isa 53:1-12; Mic 5:1-3; Ac 2:22-23; 3:13-15; 4:10-11; 1Th 2:14-15). Israel's rejection of Christ was a result of their unbelief and rebellion against God (CP Mt 13:58; Ro 10:1-4; 11:20). In the Greek construction of Ro 10:3, the phrase, *being ignorant of*, means that Israel's lack of knowledge was due to wilful disobedience (CP Isa 65:2-5; Ro 10:21). Israel

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wilfully ignored God's righteousness manifest in Christ and tried to establish its own righteousness by works of the Old Covenant law (CP Ro 9:31-32; 10:3). As a consequence of the Jews' rejection of Christ, God cut Israel off from salvation and gave the gospel to the Gentiles (CP Hos 2:23 with Ro 9:25-26; 1Pe 2:9-10).

However, notwithstanding Israel's provocations against Him, and its rejection of Christ, God has not utterly cast Israel away. As a nation it has been cut off from salvation – not Jews individually, for many have accepted Christ – but it will be raised up again as a nation, as scriptures plainly teach (CP Psa 94:14-15; Isa 10:20-22; 27:12-13; 41:8-10; Hos 3:1-5; Mic 2:12-13; Zech 8:6-13; Ro 11:1-10). Some Bible scholars do not believe that Ro 11 deals with the restoration of Israel as a nation, but with a remnant being incorporated into the New Testament church. That is not correct. While individual Jews indeed have been incorporated into the New Testament Church, God will still restore Israel as a nation, no longer in unbelief, but as a Christian believing nation, at Christ's second coming, which Ro 11 teaches in conformity with other scriptures (CP Psa 14:7 (53:6); Isa 11:10-13; 49:22-26; 59:20-21; 66:7-14; Jer 23:3-6, 31:31-34; Eze 37:11-14; Joel 2:32; Mic 4:6-8; 5:7-8; Zech 12:8-13:1; Mt 24:30-31 with Ro 11: 12, 23, 26-29). The word *fullness* in Ro 11:12 refers to that which is complete – the completeness of national Israel in its return to God and its salvation through Christ, at Christ's Second Coming. *All Israel* in Ro 11:26 does not mean that every Jew who ever lived will be saved, but that each member of the nation of Israel living at the time of Christ's second coming, who have accepted Him as Saviour, will be saved. Ro 11:29 teaches that God has never repented or regretted His calling the nation of Israel to be a part of His external kingdom. He has merely set it aside temporarily and will restore it at Christ's second coming.

(There are many in the church who believe that Ro 11:29 applies to all Christians, but that is not correct. The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance only in relation to Israel as the nation sovereignly chosen by God in order for His redemptive plan to be fulfilled in Christ. Israel's relationship with God is the subject of discussion in Ro 9; 10 and 11. Ro 11:29 must be kept in the context in which it is spoken, and the context clearly refers to Israel in God's eternal purpose, not the gifts of the Spirit and the calling of God upon Christians in the New Testament church (CP Ro 11:1-2, 12, 23, 26-29 with Isa 59:20-21; Jer 31:38-40; 32:37-42; Eze 36:22-28; 37:15-28; He 8:8-12)).

The most crucial factor involved in Israel failing God's grace, is the issue of faith. The lost spiritual condition of the majority of Jews was not arbitrarily predetermined by God, as some teach, but came as a result of their refusal to submit to God's redemption plan through faith in Christ. God did not predestinate this to happen, He simply foretold it (CP Isa 8:14-15; 28:16; Ro 9:31-33; 1Cor 1:23; 1Pe 2:6). While the Jews refused the gospel, the Gentiles accepted it (CP Hos 2:23; Ro 9:25-26; 1Pe 2:9-10). This underscores the importance of believing in Christ and obeying God's call and election (CP Ro 1:5; 16:25-26).

Paul's assertion in Ro 11:29 that the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance in relation to Israel, is merely the reason he gives to demonstrate the veracity of V 28 (CP V 28-29). This teaches simply that Israel's rejection of the gospel and antagonism toward God did not cause God to totally reject Israel. He has merely set Israel aside temporarily and given the gospel to the Gentiles until His purpose has been fulfilled in the Gentiles at the end of this present age, at Christ's second coming (CP Ac 13:44-47; Ro 11:25-27). In conclusion, this study clearly shows that Israel the nation, has an enduring place in God's eternal purpose.