

Is God Through with Israel?

Romans 10:18 – 11:10

Proposition: God has surely reprimanded His people for their unbelief, but He will also restore Israel both to her land and to her Lord.

Application: Accept that God is restoring Israel to her land. Pray that God restore Israel to her Lord.

Introduction

We are moving into a controversial topic. I want you to know from the outset where I stand. I am on the side of those who believe God has a lasting plan for Israel. Even though Israel on the whole has rebuffed God's offer of salvation by grace through faith; even though salvation blessings have been laid before them and they have turned their backs on such blessings, this does not mean God has turned His back on Israel and replaced them with a new spiritual Israel called the church.

The notion that God is finished with Israel does not come from a plain reading of Scripture, it comes from church history; it comes from seminary classrooms; it comes from books we read or speakers we listen to. In Scripture we find God has surely reprimanded His people for unbelief, but He will also restore Israel both to her land and to her Lord. That is the topic we are looking at this morning. Please turn with me to Romans 10 starting with verse 18.

Israel's Rejection of Her Messiah:

I. Results in the Nations Receiving Israel's Messiah (10:18 – 21)

Rejection (10:18): Some Christians in the Church of Rome wondered why Israel on the whole denied the Lord Jesus. Perhaps Israel spurned Him because they did not have the good fortune of hearing the Gospel.

Just as every person has a witness of God's creation so Israel had indeed heard. Through the ministry of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, the Jerusalem church and now the apostle Paul, the Gospel had spread throughout the whole Jewish world.

Transition: If it was not a hearing problem, maybe the problem is Israel failed to grasp the meaning of the Gospel.

Refusal and Reception (10:19): Since nations devoid of Scripture, the covenants, divine privileges, could grasp the meaning of the Gospel and respond in faith, how much more should those entrusted with the oracles of God be able to grasp the Gospel message? The problem with Israel was not a failure to hear the message; the problem was not a failure to grasp the meaning of the message; the problem was unbelief. Scripture foretold that salvation would go to the nations because of Israel's unbelief.

The salvation of the Gentiles was supposed to stir the Jewish people to jealousy. When Israel observes the spiritual blessing of believers among the nations, they would desire Gospel blessings for themselves. But what did the Jewish people face in Christian Europe through the ages? They did not find blessing they found contempt. The established church held the Jews guilty for killing Jesus. This was the main cause for Christian antisemitism and vicious acts against the Jewish people. Christian antisemitism will never compel Jews to want to believe in Jesus. If anything, it begets a dislike toward the Gospel message.

Transition: Because of Israel's unbelief the Gospel went out to the nations. And the Gentiles were turning to the Lord in large numbers. The church was supposed to be kind toward God's chastened people in order to stir up Jewish desire for the Gospel.

Refusing to be Persuaded (10:20, 21): The Gentiles did not seek the Lord as Israel did, yet they found Him. We don't seek God, He seeks us! He seeks us through the Gospel. The problem of rejection was not a lack of hearing the message; it was not a lack of knowledge; the problem was a refusal to be convinced of the Gospel. Does this mean God's program with Israel is annulled because of her refusal to accept Jesus as her Messiah? God has not and will not renege on His promises. It is not about Israel's faith in God, it is about God's faithfulness to Israel and to us! As we will learn in the next few weeks Israel's unbelief is not permanent but provisional; their unbelief is partial not total.

Transition: Israel's rejection did not result in God revoking His plan and purpose for them. Israel's rejection caused the Gospel to go to the nations. As the Jewish people witness spiritual blessings Christians receive, this should beget in Israel a desire to receive the Gospel as well.

II. Does Not Result in God Rejecting Israel (11:1 – 6)

Perpetual Place in God's Plan (11:1a): This verse should dispel once and for all the unbiblical notion that God is done with the Jewish people. If God rejects Israel as His covenant people because of their unbelief, then His promises can fail. There is a future restoration for Israel in her land and to her Lord. But as a whole church history does not believe in a future restoration for Israel.

Listen to a quote from the late Albertus Pieters, former professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, deemed by many the illustrious son of the Reformed Church of America. He said: “*God willed that after the institution of the New Covenant there should no longer be any Jewish people in the world. Yet here they are! That is a fact – a very sad fact – brought about by their wicked rebellion against God.*”¹ No wonder the Jewish people are loathe to embrace the Gospel. What does the New Covenant say?

Read Jer 31:31 – 33

The New Covenant in Christ Jesus is first with Israel. Christians are grafted into the New Covenant. God does not choose a people only to renounce them. The Lord does not treat us as we deserve. He treats us in grace.

¹ A. Pieters, *The Seed of Abraham* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 123

As long as the earth spins on its axis; as long as the earth rotates around the sun, Israel will endure as His covenant nation.

Read Jer 33:23 – 26

God has not dispensed with Israel. Paul presents three reasons why this is so. This first proof he presents is himself.

Proofs God Has Not Rejected Israel (11:1b – 5)

Apostle Paul (11:1b): If anyone should be cast off for having rejected the Messiah, it was Paul. Before his encounter with the Lord, he opposed God and His people with all his might. Yet the Lord saved him. The worst enemy of the Gospel was now its most ardent defender. If God had cast off the Jews, would He still choose a Jew to be an apostle to the Gentiles? Paul presents himself as proof that God has not given up on Israel.

Paul also points to God's foreknowledge as further proof He has not disowned the Jewish people.

God's Foreknowledge (11:2a): God's foreknowledge of Israel prevents Him from forsaking Israel. To *foreknow* means to know in advance. God not only knows in advance what choices Israel will make or not make, God also foreknows the nation even before the nation came into being. God was *pre-acquainted* with Jacob in an intimate way before Jacob was conceived. It is not *what* God knew in advance it is *whom* He knew in advance. God joined Himself to Israel before Israel was even born.

Read Amos 3:1, 2

God disciplines those whom He foreknows, but He does not forsake those whom He foreknows.

Transition: Paul is proof God has not parted with Israel. Foreknowledge is proof God has not forsaken Israel. Paul presents the *remnant* as further proof God has not *rejected* Israel.

Believing Remnant (11:2b – 5): The prophet Elijah was living in the worst of times for Israel. He was convinced he was the only man of God left. Baal’s prophets numbered in the hundreds and Elijah thought he was the last prophet standing. What was God’s answer? There is a remnant! Despite Israel’s great apostacy, the Lord had a believing remnant according to grace.

Unbelief has always been a part of Israel's history. Israel's unbelief in Elijah's day was the same as in Paul's day. At the time Paul penned the book of Romans, most of Israel was in unbelief. But there was a remnant of Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church, proving God was not done with Israel!

Read Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7

Because of the remnant, apostate Israel survives as God's covenant people. Just as God had a faithful remnant in Elijah's time; just as God had a faithful remnant in Paul's day; God also has a faithful remnant of messianic Jewish believers in our day. This proves that He has not abandoned the Jewish people.

Even throughout the history of the church, there has always been a remnant church amid the apostate state church. God did not abandon His promises for Israel when the nation was apostate, in the same way the Lord will not abandon His promises for the Christian even when the church is apostate. God moves His plan forward through the believing remnant.

Transition: Paul presents himself as proof that God has not parted with Israel. God's foreknowledge is further proof He has not forsaken Israel. The believing remnant is still more proof God has not rejected Israel. And the believing remnant is also proof that salvation was never by works it is always by *grace alone through faith alone in the Messiah alone.*

The late Bible Scholar John Stott said: “*the repeated promises in the Qar’an of the forgiveness of a compassionate and merciful Allah are all made to the meritorious, whose merits have been weighed in Allah’s scales, whereas the Gospel is good news of mercy for the undeserving. The symbol of the religion of Jesus is the cross, not the scales.*”²

Salvation has always been by *grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone*. But sadly, Israel sought the righteousness of God yet failed to obtain it. Why? Because they did not seek His righteousness on the basis of faith.

III. Results in God Reprimanding Israel only to Restore Israel (11:7 – 10)

Reprimand and Restore (11:7 – 10): Righteousness based on merit is not within reach. It is by faith we obtain the promises.

² John Stott in *Authentic Christianity*. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 1.

Read Heb 11:33

Unbelief leads to a hardening of the heart and a rejection of the Gospel. And surely God has reprimanded His people for their unbelief, but He will also restore Israel both to her land and to her Lord.

Transition: Let's recap what Paul is saying with respect to the Jewish people. Israel's rejection of the Gospel resulted in the nations receiving the Gospel. Israel's rejection of the Gospel does not result in God rejecting Israel. Israel rejecting the Gospel does however result in God reprimanding Israel. How then did God discipline His people for their unbelief? A few decades after the ascension of Jesus, the temple in Jerusalem was *destroyed*, the city of Jerusalem was *decimated*, and the Jewish people were *dispersed* among the nations. That was the full discipline of God.

The nations were supposed to be hospitable to God's disciplined people. Rather than hospitality the Jewish people faced centuries of hostility – especially in Christian Europe. In their disdain for the God's chastened people, the nations added to God's discipline through centuries of oppression and brutality culminating in the Holocaust.

Read Zech 1:14 – 17

The Holocaust was not God's judgement on Israel it was an expression of centuries of hatred of the nations toward the Jewish people. Israel still has a place in God's program. God has disciplined His covenant nation and in mercy He will restore Israel. God will restore Israel to her land – protecting them from the brutality of the exile and God will restore Israel to her Lord as part of His program for the End of Days.

Conclusion

If God rejects Israel, then His promises fail. What we can learn from this is that it is more about God's faithfulness and less about Israel faithlessness. Let's accept Israel as a nation. It is fair to criticize Israel's policies as a democratic state, but it is not fair to delegitimize or demonize Israel nor is it fair to hold her to a double standard. God is restoring Israel to her land and pray that He restore Israel to her Lord. If you know any Jewish people, show kindness to them, so they might desire salvation blessings for themselves.