

Romans

Bible Study

Israel's Failure Romans 9:27—33

Israel was once a vessel of honor because she was elect to be used by God to reveal Himself to the world. They were given the promises, the commandments, the temple service, and even the Son of God (Romans 9:4—5). For approximately 1,500 years, if anyone desired to come to God, they needed to come through the nation of Israel. In spite of having every benefit, Israel continually turned away from God to serve other gods. They didn't outright reject God, but played the harlot in chasing after other gods (Jeremiah 3:1), until they even pushed God out of His own temple (Ezekiel 8—10).

Those who were waiting for the Kingdom were probably wondering why things were not happening as they thought they should. It's been perhaps 15 years and still no Kingdom. The natural reaction is to wonder what God is doing and even blame Him for the lack of action. Paul makes it clear that it was Israel who was at fault, not God. He shows how God often put Israel's program on hold, and called them, "Not My people" during those times. This is what the book of Hosea is all about. Just as Hosea was told to marry a harlot, God was joined to a nation who "cheated" by worshipping other gods.

Paul also compared Israel to a clay pot. The Maker (God) can make one pot for His honor, and another for dishonor. He is sovereign and doesn't need to answer to anyone. Israel was once a vessel made unto honor, while the Gentiles were vessels of dishonor. This changed at the stoning of Stephen when God turned away from Israel as His special, set-apart nation. In this Dispensation of Grace, the Gentiles are now vessels of honor while the nation of Israel is a vessel of dishonor (Ephesians 2:11—12). Note that Israelites are not vessels of dishonor, but that the nation of Israel is, now that God is no longer dealing with the nation as His chosen people. Saying that Israel is not His chosen nation today is a concept that many today reject because they do not properly divide between Israel's prophetic program and the church's Mystery program today.

The remnant (verses 27—29)

Although chapter 9 is mainly concerned with Israel's past, Paul takes the last few verse to speak of her future, but in the context of why God has turned away from Israel in this Church age. The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 10:22) shows that even though Israel is a great nation made up of many people, God will ultimately be dealing with only a small remnant, true Israel, sometimes called the Little Flock. God had promised that Israel would have many blessings on this earth including land, and ruling over all other nations. They will become a kingdom of priests who will be leading the nations to Christ as He rules on the throne from Jerusalem (Exodus 19:6; Zechariah 8:23). Only those who are believers are promised the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom. All within the nation of Israel are called to become a part of this remnant of believers, but only a handful will positively respond. Those who do not respond will be cut off from Israel. They will no longer be part of Israel (Numbers 15:31; Zechariah 13:8; Matthew 22:14).

Unbelieving Israelites will be cut off from true Israel when the Lord consumes those people according to His decree during the Tribulation (Isaiah 10:22—23). He will use the "Assyrian" to complete His work (Isaiah 10:24). The Assyrian is the antichrist who will rise to power during the Tribulation through the work of Satan. While he is called Satan's man, it is actually God who is using the antichrist to punish Israel, and will use him to purify Israel (Isaiah 10:5—6).

Paul makes it clear in Romans 9 that it is God who has decided to use only the remnant of Israel as His chosen people in the end times, just as God has decided to use the Gentile nations today. He goes on to say that if God did not intervene, that Israel would be left with nothing, like Sodom and Gomorrah. God is going to protect the faithful remnant and fulfill His promises through the remnant of Israel.

Israel falls, Gentiles rise (verses 30—33)

Israel is said to have stumbled over the Stone. Matthew 21:42 shows that the builders of Israel (the religious leaders of Israel) did not recognize Jesus, the Stone (Psalm 118:22). Peter calls out those who did not recognize Jesus as the foundational Stone in Acts 4:11—12. Those who build on Jesus Christ will withstand the coming Tribulation, and will be given eternal life (Matthew 7:24—27).

Jesus Christ is the chief Cornerstone when He is given the Kingdom by the Father (Psalm 110:1—2). He is the Cornerstone of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 2:20) and of Israel (1 Peter 2:6). Both Peter and Paul were to build upon this foundational Stone, one to form Israel's Kingdom and the other, the Body of Christ (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:10—11). Each man was building a different structure but using the same “footings.” Footings form the base of any structure with the foundation walls built upon the footings. Jesus Christ is like the footings, with each structure, the Kingdom and the Church, being built upon their unique foundation. Christ is foundational for both the Church and for the nation of Israel. For Israel Christ, the Cornerstone, was rejected by the leaders of Israel, but is the foundation for the Little Flock of believers who believed from within Israel (Matthew 21:43; Luke 12:32). While most people think that Jesus was speaking of Gentiles and the church in Matthew 21:43, He was actually condemning the religious leaders of Israel and promising that a new nation would rise up out of the unbelieving nation of Israel. This new nation is the Little Flock of believers who will be led by the 12 Disciples, who will be sitting on 12 thrones, ruling from Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 19:28). This new nation (singular) is composed of the remnant of believers, true Israel, not the church, and has nothing to do with Gentile nations. Note that the word nations, in the plural, refers to Gentiles.

Israel stumbled when they rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah and they crucified Him. However, God was not done working with Israel yet because He was going to give them another chance. As Jesus Christ hung from the cross, He asked the Father to forgive Israel of their sin of rejecting Him. Israel was ignorant of what they were doing, and were therefore given another chance at repentance (Luke 23:34). The Father did forgive Israel and they were given another chance through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This additional time, that God allowed Israel, is spoken of in the parable found in Luke 13:6—9. Here God came looking for fruit on His fig tree, Israel. None was found, so the owner (the Father) said to tear it down. The Son pleads with the Father to give it just one more year beyond the three that Israel was given to produce fruit (the three-year ministry of Jesus Christ). This additional year is recorded in the early part of the book of Acts and culminates with the stoning of Stephen.

The stoning of Stephen marks the point at which God turns from Israel and begins a new work with the Gentile nations through the Apostle Paul. Many think God was done with Israel when they killed the Son, but because they did so in ignorance, they were forgiven. This is in accordance with the Mosaic Law. Sins done in ignorance are forgivable, while intentional sins have no sacrifice (Numbers 15:29—31). Once Israel saw the risen Jesus Christ, and they were given the testimony of the Holy Spirit, they were now without any excuse to continue in unbelief. Their rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah was done intentionally, and there was no sacrifice for that sin. This is spoken of in Hebrews 10:26. This is often misapplied to believers in this church age, but actually is about Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Notice how the next verse (Hebrews 10:27) goes right into the seven-year Tribulation, the consequence for those who reject the Messiah. Although the book of Hebrews is almost always applied to the Church, the Body of Christ, the title says it all. It was written to the Hebrews, Israel. It was not written to “Christian” Jews, because Paul is careful to not separate Jews from Gentiles in this Dispensation of Grace (Galatians 2:11—21; 3:28; Romans 3:22; 10:12; Colossians 3:11).

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com