

Israel Provoked God

Romans 10:14—21

In Romans 9, Paul explains why the nation of Israel has been put aside. They are now in a “not my people” condition (Hosea 1:9), which was a reoccurring event in Israel’s history. Paul points out that it is not so unusual for God to stop dealing with the nation of Israel. Hosea warned Israel that they needed to come back to God, or He would turn His back on them. Hosea wrote this just before the Assyrian Captivity (roughly 700 BC).

These “Lo-ammi” times, when God stops dealing with Israel as a nation, have been going on since the nation of Israel was formed. For instance, 1 Kings 6:1 records that there were 480 years between the exodus until the beginning of the building of the temple, but Acts 13:17—22 says that there was a span of 573 years. Why the 93-year difference? This can be attributed to 93 years that God turned away from Israel, as recorded in the book of Judges (Judges 3:8; 3:14; 4:3; 6:1; 13:1). When God turns away from Israel, the prophetic clock stops. This explains what is happening today. God has turned away from Israel, and the prophetic clock has stopped. The Tribulation was to begin after Stephen was stoned (approximately one year after the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. See Luke 13:6—9). Since God cut off the nation of Israel, and the Church, the Body of Christ was formed, Israel’s prophetic clock has stopped, and won’t begin until after the Rapture of the Church, at which time God will resume his dealings with Israel as their prophetic clock begins ticking again.

This dispensational change is described to the nation of Israel by Peter (2 Peter 3:8—9) as he tells them that God is still faithful, and that He will bring to pass the things He promised to them. It is also covered by the Apostle Paul as he writes to the churches at Rome, including those who were Kingdom believers. That particular group was most likely confused with the dispensational changes that were happening. That is why Paul describes to them (in Romans 9—11) why God turned away from Israel, and that he will once again work with true Israel after the Rapture.

Chapter 10 explains how God is dealing with Israelites in this Age of Grace. He is dealing with them now in the same manner that He dealt with Paul, reaching to them as individuals. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (1 Corinthians 1:2). In this case, calling on the name of the Lord is not a physical activity leading to salvation, it is acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the only Person capable of salvation. In this dispensation, people are saved when they believe in the Person of Jesus Christ and in His work of death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1—4).

Gospel of peace (verses 14—15)

Paul uses an Old Testament quote from Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.” to show that Israel has had the Good News preached to them in the past, and that the Good News is still right in front of them. When Israel was still a vessel of honor and God was using her to communicate God to the world, this Good News was that salvation would lead to the Millennial Kingdom with Jesus Christ sitting on the throne, and Israel as the preeminent nation on the earth. The proclamation announcing peace and salvation is actually the Second Coming. Israel is not living safely in their land today in a state of peace, and therefore we know that Scripture was not fulfilled when Israel became a nation in 1948. When God fulfills this promise, Israel will not only be living safely, they will be placed above all other nations.

The Gospel of Peace, that was preached to Israel, will be fulfilled at the Second Coming. This gospel is no longer being preached. However, it can also be said that we are preaching a Gospel of Peace when we share the Good News to others today. This Gospel of Peace is not about the Millennial Kingdom and the Second Coming, it is the peace we can have between ourselves and God through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:15). Our peace is found in Romans 5:1, not Luke 12:51. Israel was looking for peace on this earth, and Jesus told them He did not come (at His first coming) to bring them peace, that will happen at His Second Coming. We find our peace with God once we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. I believe Paul is using their knowledge of the peace promised to Israel and contrasting that with the peace we have in Jesus Christ.

Didn't Israel Know? (verses 16—21)

Israel heard, they knew, but they did not believe. The word of God came through the nation of Israel and so they have no excuse for not believing. Although Romans 10 can be basically characterized as Paul speaking to Israel about their present situation, he now goes back into their history to show how they provoked God to jealousy, and how they got into the state they are currently in.

Moses, in Deuteronomy 32:16—21, shows how Israel provoked God with their idol worship, and then gave a prophecy that God will provoke them by casting them aside and raising up another nation. Most Bible teachers today identify this nation as the Gentiles, disregarding the singular use of the word *nation*. When the singular form of nation is used, it is referring to Israel, not the Gentiles, since there is only one nation of Israel and many Gentile nations. The nation that will rise up to make Israel jealous is the nation of believing Israel, the Little Flock. Israel will be refined in the Tribulation (Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2—3). This refined Israel will be the nation that will produce good fruit, and will be led by the 12 Disciples in the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 21:43; 19:28).

Paul is explaining to these Little Flock believers, who are a part of the church at Rome, that they are being used by God to make Israel jealous. In this case, they are not being told to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, but to preach the Gospel of Grace, as outlined in Romans 10:8—11, the same Gospel Paul is preaching. The hope is that unbelieving Israel will believe when they see God is no longer with them.

Paul shows that he does not hold out too much hope that they will turn to God by quoting Isaiah 65:1—3. God had sought to bring Israel to Himself, but Israel rebelled and refused. They continually provoked God to jealousy by worshipping other gods. Those who reject God will be destroyed (Isaiah 65:11—12), while the nation that was not actively looking for the Lord will be brought into the Kingdom (Isaiah 65:9).

Those who found Jesus Christ were not actively looking for Him. This Little Flock of believers is the believing remnant of Israel who were saved out of the nation of Israel and have become true Israel, the children of the promise (Romans 9:8). While the leaders of Israel were seeking God in their own way, through self-righteousness, those who were not seeking God in this way became the nation that would be ruling in the Millennial Kingdom. God has been reaching out to Israel for hundreds of years through many prophets, but they have always rejected God.

In this case, God is stretching out His hand in love for the nation of Israel, but once he has cut off unbelieving Israel from true Israel, he will stretch out His hand against the rebellious nation and destroy them (Jeremiah 15:6; Zephaniah 1:4).

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