

4. All Israel Saved

What's God Doing with Israel and the Church?

In our last study, study 3, we finished on a prophetic passage found in Ezekiel 39:29, i.e., that there will come a time that is still ahead as of the time of the writing of this study, when God will act to bring back the rest of the Jewish people that are still outside His land—a number estimated to number five million in the USA alone:

²⁸Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. **I will leave none of them remaining among the nations** anymore. ²⁹And I will not hide my face anymore from them, **when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel**, declares the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 39:28-29).

God says that He will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. What do you think could happen to force or encourage five million Jewish people to emigrate to Israel?

We cannot be dogmatic about such things, but it is possible that God will allow a time of persecution of the Jewish people, perhaps because of a collapse of the dollar being blamed on Jewish bankers. The Jews have been the scapegoats for hundreds of years of political turmoil. However, it could also be that the Spirit of God is poured out on the land of Israel, which is what the last verse of the passage above, Ezekiel 39:29, says.

It is interesting to think that often events that happen to the Jewish people are accompanied with similar times for the true church of God, i.e., the called-out, born-again believers in Jesus. Times of renewal and revival in Church history have been preceded by events in the life of the Jewish people. Think about it: God raised up Theodor Herzl to begin the movement for a national home for the Jewish people, and the first Zionist Congress was in 1897. From that point, Jewish people started to immigrate to Palestine. It was in 1906 that the Azusa Street Revival broke out in Los Angeles, i.e. an outpouring of the Spirit, which started the Pentecostal movement. Then, when the Jewish people regained control of Jerusalem from the Jordanians in 1967, we saw another revival and renewal breaking out, viz. the Jesus Revival, beginning in California and which became the Charismatic Renewal.

What's Next on God's Timetable?

As of January 2019, there are 200 Jewish Messianic congregations in the land of Israel, numbering around 20,000 Messianic believers that have endured persecution at the hands of Orthodox Jews. We don't know at what time the Lord will come, but we know that, at the time of the end of the age, Scripture tells us there will be 144,000 Jewish Messianic believers that have responded to the call of Messiah and have the seal of God upon them: ³**“Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”** ⁴**Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel** (Revelation 7:3-4). This same seal is placed on all believers when they come to Christ. Paul wrote,

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

The Apostle Paul, writing to the church under the anointing of the Spirit, tells us that the Holy Spirit seals all believers to the Day of Redemption, and of course, this is what we read happening to 144,000 Jews in our passage in Revelation. After telling us of the work of redeeming a body of Messianic believers, Christ instructs John the Apostle to write also of believers taken from the Gentiles. John writes of a “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9).

Who Are Those Spoken of as All Israel?

Some believe that the 144,000 is a symbolic number because, they say, Paul the Apostle wrote that *all* Israel will be saved:

...and in this way **all Israel will be saved**. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob (Romans 11:26).

What did Paul mean when he wrote that all Israel would be saved? Is he saying that all Jews in the nation of Israel will come to Christ, or is he saying that God has not given up on the people of Israel and will call to Himself 144,000 out of the nation of Israel? This writer questions that the whole nation will be saved because Paul writes elsewhere that only a remnant will be saved: “And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved” (Romans 9:27). The question we must ask is to what could Paul be referring when he said that all Israel would be saved?

First of all, we need to examine the reason why Paul wrote his letter to the Roman church in the first place. When He wrote to the Corinthian church, it was to correct many attitudes of the flesh going on there. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, it was to adjust many of their false assumptions as to what would happen in the end-times. When he wrote to the Galatian church, it was to correct the false teaching by the "Judaizers," who wanted the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses. So, what was the reason Paul wrote his letter to the church at Rome? Author Peter Tsukahira helps us here. In his book, *God's Tsunami*, Tsukahira writes:

The problem in Rome was a conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers over their respective places in leadership. Perhaps this problem developed when the Jews who planted the church in Rome were expelled under Emperor Claudius. Later, when they were able to return, the new Gentile leaders did not accept them back as equals since most of the congregation was by then Gentile and Israel as a nation had rejected Jesus as Messiah. Paul heard about this growing conflict and the division between Jewish and Gentile believers, so he wrote to correct it.¹

It is possible that, because Paul had not planted the church, he started off his letter by making explicit the Gospel he preached so that the Roman church would accept his recommendations to go forward with Jews and Gentiles in leadership. He writes in Romans 2:17-29 about those who call themselves Jews:

²⁸For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God (Romans 2:28-29).

And further on, Paul writes his treatise of the faith of Abraham, i.e. that Abraham was justified with God apart from the Law and his works. He writes:

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations” (Romans 4:16-17).

By the time Paul got to chapter nine, he was ready to write the real reason for his letter, i.e. that Jewish believers should not be excluded from leadership positions in the church because God will fulfill His calling to the Jewish people. He shared a vital thought in chapter nine when he writes:

⁶But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring (Romans 9:6-8)

What is Paul saying here? Who are the children of Abraham?

Paul carries on his thoughts on the rejection of Jesus by the majority of Jewish people, telling us God’s plans are for many Gentiles to be brought into the New Covenant. The natural branches, the Jewish people, would be broken off until a certain time arrives, a time when the *pleroma* of the Gentiles has come in:

²⁴For if you were cut from a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into one that is cultivated, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! ²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you will not be conceited: **A hardening in part has come to Israel, until the full number (pleroma) of the Gentiles has come in.** ²⁶And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove godlessness from Jacob” (Romans 11:24-26).

Pleroma, what does this Greek word mean? Some translators, such as the *New International Version* reproduces above, interpret the word to mean a full number. In the translators’ view, they believe Paul is saying that the Church will be caught up in a pre-tribulation rapture, and then

God will begin to work among the Jews. However, is that correct? If this word is so critical to our understanding of the end-times, we should look at other places where the word is used so that we may clearly understand what Paul had in mind under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote elsewhere of the church being called the *pleroma* of Christ. To the church at Ephesus, he wrote about the church being the body of Christ, saying, “**which is his body, the fullness (pleroma) of him who fills all in all**” (Ephesians 1:23). The word is again used by Paul to describe Christ being the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form: “**For in him all the fullness (pleroma) of God was pleased to dwell**” (Colossians 1:19). How can we translate *pleroma* as being a full number? Since when is Christ a full number of the Godhead? I put it to you that *pleroma* should be translated as fullness and that Christ really is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. When writing that “**A hardening in part has come to Israel, until the full number (pleroma) of the Gentiles has come in**” (Romans 11:25), it is this writer’s belief that Paul is writing about a time when a completeness, or adulthood, comes to pass in the body of Christ called out from the Gentiles.

He is writing that there will come a time when the Gentile body of believers will no longer be children in their faith, but having full understanding of who they are and completely grown up in the faith of Abraham, they will be full partakers of the covenant of promise along with the Messianic believers. When this adulthood of the Gentile believers comes to pass, God will begin to remove the hardening of the Jewish people against their Messiah and bring forth a remnant out of the Jewish people.

This adulthood, or maturity of the Gentile body of Christ into a full understanding of the covenant, is also written in a different letter by Paul. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, he wrote of God calling individuals to be equippers of the church in order to bring all believers together into maturity, i.e. full adulthood, and to no longer be children in their understanding. I have taken the liberty of underlining the key phrases:

¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we are **no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in all aspects into Him** who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, **causes the growth of the body** for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16 Emphasis mine).**

These gifted ministers are called of God to build up the body (v. 13) and to bring the body to a mature man, i.e. to the full measure of the stature, which belongs to the FULLNESS (*pleroma*) of Christ, no longer to be children in the things of God but to be a pure strong bride of Christ.

I contend that, when Paul wrote about all Israel's being saved, he was saying that there will be one body, i.e., one bride of Christ, composed not only of Jewish believers but also of Gentiles, too. All Israel means those who are called to the faith of Abraham.

I remind you again of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus:

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, **who has made us both one** and has broken down in his flesh **the dividing wall of hostility** ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that **he might create in himself one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, ¹⁶and **might reconcile us both** to God **in one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For **through him we both have access** in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹**in whom the whole structure, being joined together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11-22).

God is at work in the nation of Israel, using true biblical believers among the Gentiles to break down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles so that the Jews might finally see that their Messiah is for all who will receive the faith of Abraham. The whole structure of the spiritual Body of Christ is being joined together (v. 21), i.e., Jews and Arabs and Gentile believers from all over the world are flowing together as one. What a wonderful testimony of God!

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com