

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"The Indestructible Nation – Provoking"
Romans 11:11-15

Review

1. The media reports continually point to the fact that Israel as a nation is on center stage. Watch Israel and you will see what God is doing in His world. Keep your eye on the Jewish nation. They are the apple of God's eye (Deut. 32:10; Zech. 2:8).

2. Since Scripture is not debatable for believers, how does God treat the "Jewish question?" The Book of Romans clearly presents Israel's history. Their past shows God's sovereignty (Ro. 9), their present shows God's righteousness (Ro. 10), and their future shows God's faithfulness (Ro. 11).

3. It has been demonstrated that God has not replaced the O.T. "Nation" with the N. T. "Church" (see notes on Ro. 11:1-6). The Apostle Paul (11:1) and Elijah (11:2-4) unquestionably affirm that God has not rejected the entire nation!

4. Moreover, although the nation has historically been obdurate, hence petrified (11:7), and receiving a just recompense (11:8-10), yet the God of Abraham has predicted the nation will change in the future (Zech. 12:10; Mt. 24:20). They will come to Messiah Jesus as sinners – make no mistake about that!

5. Consider these proofs about Israel' s future:

1. ISRAEL' S FALL-- REJECTED v. 11a

a. It is Queried

The phrase of v. 1 is repeated, "I say then" (λέγω οὖν lego oun). It' s Paul who keeps on saying (present tense) God has a burden for Israel. Note that "then" (οὖν oun) is used six times in this context (vv. 1, 5, 7, 11, 19, 22). Paul is logical in what he writes.

b. It is Distinguished

It is apparent that "fall" (πέσωσι pesosi) is much stronger than "stumble" (ἔπτασσω eptaisso). The former points to irrevocable ruin in opposition to the latter which is something temporary. The nation has stumbled, but they have not been prostrated. The nation has not perished (cf. Heb. 4:11).

c. It is Objected

Added to these critical thoughts is one of Paul' s favorite expressions "God forbid" μή γένοιτο me genoito cf. 6:1, 15; 11:1). The negative "not" (μή me) is used before "stumble" (though not expressed in the KJV) and demands a negative response. Therefore banish the thought of Israel' s fall. It is not so!

2. ISRAEL' S SIN- OVERRULED V. 11 b

Here is a most marvelous revelation of God' s eternal purpose. True the Jews opposed preaching to Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:15, 16), but God ordained it (Acts 13:46). See how this is extrapolated:

a. To gain Salvation for Gentiles

By virtue of their (Jews) trespass, blunder, or false step (παραπτώματι paraptomati), not "fall" as KJV, salvation came to the Gentiles (note definite article "the" with "salvation"). Wonder of wonders that God bridged the gap between Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:11-18). Gentiles no longer come as proselytes, but get actual N.T. salvation (cf. Acts 10, 11, 13, etc).

b. To gain Zeal from Jews

What is great for the Gentiles is expected to be equally provocative to the Jews. The term "jealousy" (παραζηλώσαι parazelosai) is better rendered "zeal" or "emulation." It conveys the thought to stimulate the Jews to follow the Gospel which the Gentiles receive. Careless Jews hopefully will awake in the face of Gentile salvation. Jewish stumbling has two openly defined intents (purposes). Don' t miss them!

3. ISRAEL' S RETURN-- PREDICTED vv. 12 – 14

a. Through riches of the Gentiles v. 12

Twice the sending of the Gospel to the Gentiles is called their "riches" (πλοῦτος ploutos). So it was not Gentile territory, armies, culture, or wealth, but the Gospel! "Fall" is the same word as in the previous verse (παραπτώμα paraptoma), hence misdeed, trespass, or blunder. "Diminishing" (ἡττημα hetema) occurs only one other time in the N.T. (1 Cor. 6:7) where it is rendered "fault." Here it has numerical value and concerns Israel being reduced to a small number (as elect and nationally). Thus, Israel' s blunder ("fall") brought the "riches of the world" and Israel' s reduction brought "riches of the Gentiles." Now "fullness" is also numeric and states Israel' s future reoccupation of the void in their ranks (both as elect and nationally). Israel' s "fullness" will issue in something much greater than the present riches of the Gentiles. What a hope. It is inexpressibly marvelous!

b. Through apostle of the Gentiles vv. 13, 14

These verses are essential to Paul' s logical argument. "For" is really "but" and notes Paul is "speaking" ("I say" λέγω lego) to Gentiles. After all, he is the Apostle to them (Gal. 2:7, 8). He is laboring with the Gentiles and magnifies (glorifies) this office to them. Note "office" is a "ministry" (root for "deacon") by which Paul intends to provoke to emulation (same verb as "provoke to jealousy," v. 11) my flesh (i.e. "them which are"). Quite obviously, then, Paul' s efforts with Gentiles have in mind the salvation of at least some Jews! To put it pointedly, Paul believes Gentile salvation cannot be reached without the "fullness" of the Jews. So, he is interested in the Jews for the sake of the Gentiles. To put it another way, as Paul labors for the Gentiles, "some" Jews get saved and by so doing he accomplishes much toward the "fullness" (of Jews) which is necessary to the completion of world or Gentile salvation (cf. v. 12). Wow!

c. Through reconciliation of the Gentiles v. 15

Here is a grand reason why Paul reaches Jews through His Gentile ministry. The thoughts of v. 12 reverberate here and reach a climax. Be aware of the connections evident in this passage: "the casting away" (ἡ ἀποβολή hey apobole) is really the same as "their fall" or "diminution". Then "the reconciling of the world" is the same as "the riches of the world" or "the riches of the Gentiles." Further, "the receiving" of them is tantamount to "their fullness." Finally "life from (the) dead" is equivalent to "how much more" (all in v. 12). "Life from the dead" is a critical phrase. It raises two questions : "who receives it?" and "what is it?" In response one must affirm that the reference is to Israel restored to the Lord and resurrected (cf. Ezek. 37). When Israel is received again and resurrected, then everything else will be in place for Gentiles (cf. Isa. 11:9; 25:19; 27:6, 7; 60; Jer. 33:7-9).

Conclusion To what point has Paul' s argument brought the study? Consider these salient factors: By no means is it possible to conceive that God is finished with the nation Israel. On the contrary, the fact of their blunders opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. Through the Gentiles, Jews become zealous for salvation. Jewish fullness actually will come and be the basis for Gentile world reconciliation. It all depends on the purpose of God for the Jews. Rivet your eyes on the nation to track the prophetic calendar of God. Indeed, it is correct to have Israel on center stage. But this should not be only in the political realm, but also in a believer' s desire for evangelism. The salvation of Jews surely is a priority with God (Ro. 1:16). Amen.