

Cultural Conversations: Jesus and Israel

Week 5: The Future of Israel

What are some of the divisions in the Church today?

Rom 11:25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 **And in this way all Israel will be saved**, as it is written,

“The Deliverer will come from Zion,

he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;

27 “and this will be my covenant with them

when I take away their sins.”

- All Israel will be saved—who is Israel?
- Ethnic Israel (Jews) or Elect Israel (Jews and Gentiles)?

The Ethnic Israel Option

This class has been designed to provide you with a biblical case for a broader view of Israel, a covenantal view, without disparaging the dispensational view. We could have said the “traditional” view, but that wouldn’t be accurate, because the dispensational view only came into popularity 150 years ago. Before then, the covenantal view was preferred.

Dispensationalism has its roots in Ireland (Darby) in the 1820s, with an emphasis on literally interpreting biblical prophecy. Darby came to America where his emphasis was embraced by fundamentalists here who were battling the rise of liberalism. Scofield and others became major proponents who systematized dispensationalism.

Zionism within Judaism also rose to popularity in the 19th Cent., seeking a national homeland for Jews to protect against anti-Semitism. Dispensationalism supported a Zionist goal, seeing it as necessary to literally fulfill the prophecies about Israel. This is still an influential view.

The reestablishment of national Israel in 1948 cemented the majority Evangelical opinion toward this Dispensational understanding. Before the Balfour Declaration (1917), the land had been inhabited by Palestinians under the Ottoman Empire for over 400 years.

The Elect Israel Option

Rom 11:25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 **And in this way all Israel will be saved...**

- 11:12 fullness of Israel = 11:25 fullness of the Gentiles
- 11:26 “and in this way all Israel will be saved” = fullness of Israel, not every Jewish person; just like “fullness of Gentiles” doesn’t mean every Gentile will be saved (2:28-29; 3:29-30; 4:16-17).
- Rom 9-11 feels randomly inserted in the letter, but it is entirely logical (8:38-39; 9:6-7).
- Paul is focused on the present condition of Israel, not the future (11:30-31).
- Does “until” imply an end to the partial hardening of Israel, leading to revival? Perhaps, but that isn’t the way the word is used in the NT (1Cor 15:25; Mt 24:38).
- Does “all Israel will be saved” mean that ethnic Israel will have a unique salvation experience when Christ returns (Rom 1-10)?
- Does “all Israel” refer to elect Jews or to elect Jews and Gentiles?
 - Elect Jews makes sense in light of Paul’s explanation of how the remnant will be moved to jealousy by believing Gentiles.
 - Elect Jews and Gentiles makes more sense, in light of v. 25b, “a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved...”
 - What do the saved Gentiles “come in” to? A: into Israel.
 - Robertson: “Nothing in this chapter [Rom 11] says anything about the restoration of an earthly Davidic kingdom, or of a return to the land of the Bible, or of the restoration of a national state of Israel, or of a church of Jewish Christians separated from Gentile Christians. On the contrary, the redefined Israel of God includes both Jews and Gentiles in one body.”

Despite the conviction of many, “all Israel will be saved” likely does not mean a revival among ethnic Israel before the return of Christ. It more likely means the gathering of elect Jews and Gentiles. This does not only have theological implications, it has political and geopolitical ones.

- Chuck Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*
- The Evangelical community has a default dispensational view. Politicians who wish to appeal to this block will have to “Stand with Israel.”
- There is an incentive to overlook bad behavior from national Israel for fear of offending those who are pro-Israel. This has led to a lack of accountability in their retaliation toward Hamas.
- American endorsement of national Israel has alienated us from the surrounding Muslim nations, who view us as a Christian nation. Therefore, our missionaries are viewed with greater suspicion and the Gospel gets an unappealing “Made in USA” label slapped on it. This is so tragic because the area we are talking about is the original epicenter of the Gospel. It is homegrown to them, but they view it as foreign.