

Has God Rejected Israel?
Romans 11:25-32, Zechariah 13:6-9

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It's often argued that the Futurist view of prophecy is a modern view, therefore it has less merit.

What is the Futurist view of prophecy? It believes that the majority of the prophecies in the Bible still await a future, literal fulfillment.

Even though we can find 1st and 2nd century writings that agree with the Futurist view, it wasn't the focal point during the Reformation Period and didn't regain popularity until the last 100 years.

In fact, the great theologians of the Reformation Period rarely addressed prophecy because most held the Preterist view which believes all prophecy has already been fulfilled.

Even though Reformation theologians didn't write extensively on prophecy, if we look at the focus of these reformers, we can see why prophecy had such a low priority.

But why were these theologians called reformers? Well, during the 16th century the Church split because theologians began questioning the Church of the day and the Church of scripture.

They came to the conclusion that the two didn't agree. Therefore, the focus of the Reformation was to straighten out doctrinal differences, so these theologians were known as reformers.

Martin Luther was one such reformer. He was excommunicated because of his famous stance in 1517 when he nailed his 95 thesis on the Church door Wittenburg.

When he published those 95 errors he saw in the Church, he created a firestorm.

When debating Church leaders, he pointed at scripture and stated, *"Here I stand, I can do no other."* Church traditions had replaced scriptural doctrine.

When the two disagreed, the Church of the day would not budge from tradition. In protest to these violations of scripture, the Protestant movement was born.

The focus of the Reformers was on the doctrines of the Church and the doctrines that applied to salvation and Christian living. Understanding prophecy took a back seat.

If the Church had confusion within its doctrine, all other issues, including prophecy, were meaningless.

After the foundational doctrinal issues had been hashed out, we then see doctrines concerning prophecy beginning to reemerge.

As the 20th century dawned, modern technology and the First World War began to shed light on prophecy. The book of Revelation speaks of world conflicts, but until World War I this was unheard of.

Also, we should remember that, at the beginning of the 20th century, Israel was no longer on the scene. Seventy or so years ago, when people looked at prophecy and saw Israel mentioned, it never quite fit.

That why many Church leaders tried to fit the Church into Israel's roles. The problem with this is that many, many scriptures have to be explained away in order to rationalize this view.

Whenever Israel was mentioned by name, people claimed that it was symbolic of the Church.

Even though, some teachers did go out on a limb and actually claim that Israel was Israel and not the Church, they were just ignored.

Why? Because seventy some odd years ago, this was an impossible idea. How could a nation that was destroyed and scattered 2,000 years ago revive and return to their homeland?

How could a people who were hated by the world and had no political clout possibly gain the power to reclaim their land? It was a preposterous idea.

Yet theologians like H. A. Ironside claimed that this would happen. Ironside looked at the scriptures and stated that the only way prophecy could be fulfilled is that Israel must return to their homeland.

If the Bible's true, he claimed, then Israel must become a nation again. He made these claims in 1919 and published them in his lectures in 1930.

But Ironside wasn't alone in his belief that Israel would be restored.

Listen to these quotes:

- *"About the time of the fall of the Othman empire and of the Christian Antichrist, the Jews shall turn to the Lord, and be restored to their own land. Innumerable are the prophecies concerning the conversion and restoration of this people."* Thomas Newton in 1760
- *"Till the Jew is brought back to his own land, and the temple and its sacrifices are restored, the prophetic part of the Apocalypse does not begin."* Robert Govett in 1861
- *"In Scripture the glory and resurrection of the Church of the firstborn ones is always connected with the time when Israel (who will have returned to their own land in unbelief) shall know the Lord."* George Muller in 1875

- *"The 144,000 must be literal Israelites. From other Scriptures we learned their return to the Land. They arrive in unbelief (Ezek.37:7,8). Israel means Israel, unless expressly stated otherwise."* William Frederick Roadhouse in 1932
- *"A future restoration awaits the Jews and will be to the world a glorious demonstration of the truth of prophecy."* Samuel Wakefield in 1869

As we can see, even though allegorizing Israel in prophecy was the common doctrine of the day, many preachers of the Word took scripture literally because it was stated literally.

Samuel Wakefield's claim that the rebirth of Israel would be a glorious demonstration of the truth of prophecy was well stated. In 1948, those who believed God's Word were proven to be the true prophets.

Even so, it's still commonly taught that God has cast Israel aside because of their rejection of Christ. These "nay-sayers" forget that both Jews and Gentiles worked jointly to crucify Jesus.

This was no coincidence. Jesus died at the hand of sinners – all sinners. No man is innocent because *"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."*

The same Cross of Christ that bought our redemption also pays the redemption of the Jews who receive it. Some will receive it now and be a part of the Church; some will receive it when Jesus returns.

Today, we'll look at what the scriptures say about God's plan for the Jews.

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Did God Rejected Israel? Let me tell you, God never rejected Israel; Israel is the one who rejected God.

Romans 11:1 answers this question specifically when Paul says, *“I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.”*

The entire chapter of Romans 11 deals with the question about Israel’s future. Remember, God called Israel to be a light to the Gentiles.

In fact, Romans 11:29 tells us that the calling of God is irrevocable. Israel cannot revoke God’s mercy nor His call to them as a nation.

As we get into this portion of our prophecy study, let’s begin by examining the foundation laid by scripture concerning Israel’s separation from God’s plan.

Look at Romans 11:25-32, *“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, 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. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.”*

The first point to note is found in verse 25. Israel *“experienced a hardening”* or, has been blinded, *“until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”*

The Bible clearly states that Israel is not blinded forever, but until a specific point in time.

In unmistakable terms, the Bible tells us the mystery of God's plan for Israel. This was done so that we shouldn't be *"ignorant."*

The Bible declares that all of Israel will be saved and their deliverer, Jesus Christ, will turn away their ungodliness.

What the phrase, *"all Israel,"* means has yet to be fully revealed. We know that no one can be saved outside of repentance and receiving forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

But the details as to how God will execute this promise hasn't been given. I believe, based on other passages we'll study, that this refers to those who are alive when He returns.

In fact, this passage in Romans even explains why God blinded/hardened the nation. God committed all Israel to disobedience so He might have mercy on them.

Why does God's plan give all of Israel mercy? Romans 11:34, *"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"*

We can't know the mind of God, but we can know what He's revealed to us in His word. In other words, who can second guess God? We're not His counselors, He's ours.

An atheist once said that God was wrong because He doesn't do what makes sense to the atheist. Should we assume that God must be wrong because He doesn't do what we would do?

The Bible says that God executes His purposes, and no one can hinder Him and no one can say, *"What have you done?"* (Daniel 4:35b)

God planned all things before the foundation of the world; therefore, we can safely assume that His plan is perfect.

We know by the testimony of scripture that not only has God not rejected Israel; He has a plan for them.

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Now, let's look at what scripture has revealed about that plan.

As we go through this, it'll become clear as to why many teachers predicted Israel's return and why others struggled to make sense of prophecy when they believed the Church was Israel.

First, you must understand that God wasn't surprised when Israel rejected Him. The Bible predicted both, the rejection of the Messiah and the scattering of His people.

Look at Zechariah 13:6-9, *"If someone asks, 'What are these wounds on your body?' they will answer, 'The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.' 'Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!' declares the LORD Almighty. 'Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land,' declares the LORD, 'two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"*

This prophecy is partly fulfilled and partly yet to be fulfilled. When Jesus was taken captive in the garden, His disciples scattered, and He was left to face the cross alone.

When the Shepherd was stuck, the disciples ran away to fulfill this prophecy, but on an even larger scale, the *"lost sheep of Israel"* were also scattered.

When they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, they struck the Shepherd that protected them. Once Israel was willingly outside of God's protection, He allowed their enemies to come in and scatter them.

When the Shepherd, Jesus, was crucified, the hand of God turned against His people as described in verse 7. Verse 8 refers to the remnant that God will return to His land.

Before Israel rejected their Messiah, God said they would smite the Shepherd. Then He would cast them out of the land and scatter Israel, but He didn't say that He would reject them.

God said He would take Israel through the refining fire and one day they would be called His people again. They'll see the scars and will be told by Christ, "*The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.*"

At that time, they'll recognize Him and return to Him. In verse 9, the remnant will repent and say, "*The LORD is our God.*"

Hosea 9:17 says, "*My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.*"

Understand that the passage says that Israel "*will be wanders among the nations.*" It doesn't say that Israel will be absorbed into the nations.

God promised to scatter Israel because of their unbelief and rejection of Him. But He also promised to extend grace and restore them in the end.

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In fact, Ezekiel gives the most vivid description of Israel's restoration found in the Bible.

In Ezekiel 37, God gave the prophet a vision of a valley of dry bones and then asks Ezekiel in verse 3b, *“Can these bones live?”* That’s what’s known as a rhetorical question.

Look at Ezekiel 37:4-12, 14, and 21-22, *“Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’” So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.”*

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14: *“I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.”*

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21-22: *“and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms.”*

This passage describes the restoration of Israel. The Bible tells us that they'll turn to the Lord and keep His commands. Then, God will be in their midst and will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them.

This covenant has never come to pass because it's an everlasting covenant. What's an everlasting covenant? It's a covenant that will never come to an end.

The only way Israel can keep all of God's commandments is to repent and accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

If you follow the logic of Ezekiel, Israel is first assembled as dry bones. Afterward, they're given flesh but will have no breath of life. Then God will breathe life into them, and they'll live again.

The breath of life is the Holy Spirit of God. Israel may be in their land now, but they'll not be alive until they're as the Church of Jesus Christ is.

Roman 6:11 puts it this way, *"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

Slide 5

Conclusion

There's no legitimate argument to identify these prophecies talking about anyone but the Jewish people.

The Church was never scattered. The Church never died. God said, *"This is the whole house of Israel"* and *"I will bring you back into your land."* How can anyone say this isn't clearly stated?

How can anyone who believes the truth of scripture say that God has rejected Israel forever?

Half of the unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies must remain unfulfilled or explained away if Israel's been rejected forever.

We've seen the bones assembled and the gathering of Israel to their home against all odds.

The assembling of the bones and re-gathering from the winds of the earth was proven true in 1948 when they were recognized by the world as being a nation once again.

What has yet to be fulfilled is Ezekiel 37:26-28, "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever."

We know that this is a future event because God promised that the peace He'll bring will never end.

There's a trial by fire between the rebirth of Israel and the day when Jesus Christ will make a true covenant of peace, creating His tabernacle in their midst, and be acknowledged as the God of Israel.