

# The Future of Israel

## Romans 11:1-5

### Introduction

One of the branches of theology that attracts a lot of attention these days is that of eschatology – a study of end times

Are we living in the end times?  
How much time before Christ returns?

Will Christians live thru the tribulation – or will the church be raptured beforehand?

Kendall Easley: ‘Many Christians have fretted about how the tribulation might affect them. my beloved father-in-law Bob was one of them. In the late 1970s he became convinced that he needed to stockpile food for the family. He didn’t want us to starve to death in case of severe famine or in case Christians were forbidden to purchase anything during the coming days of crisis. He invested a substantial amount of savings into hundreds of cans of specially processed food, everything from whole wheat flour to peanut butter to dried banana flakes.’

‘Supposedly he gathered enough to feed us for three years. All the goods had a guaranteed shelf life of at least ten years. Bob died in 1982, leaving in his garage row upon row of cans untouched. Finally, in 1997 – they were all disposed of – a total loss.’

Clearly Bob did not hold to a pre-trib rapture! [could’ve saved himself some money if he had!]

We come this morning to the topic of the future of Israel

Which is no small issue in our day and age  
Will Israel as a nation play a role in the end-times events as they unfold

Some media personalities – such as Tucker Carlson [who is Episcopalian] have argued in recent days that dispensationalism [a particularly popular perspective of end times] is partially to blame for America’s support of the nation of Israel – and involvement in the Iran war

Senator Ted Cruz is one proponent in U.S. government who is an ardent defender of Israel - - - blends his Bible beliefs into his foreign policy.

He believes that the Bible teaches that we ought to support Israel due to promises which God made to Abraham

Senator Cruz told Tucker that he grew up in Sunday School where he learned that He who blesses Israel will be blessed of God and He who curses Israel will be cursed of God - - - and therefore sees a mandate to support Israel

While Cruz could not give chapter and verse

The Promise is found in the first statement of the Abrahamic Covenant

**Genesis 12:3 - 'And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'**

Al Mohler weighed in on the Wretched podcast with Todd Friel – and says that the modern state of Israel has come to be in the providence of God – and that Israel is a holding vessel for the fulfillment of God's future promises

He said it is possible that God could scatter Israel once again – and put the promises yet future – but that for the Christian - - - that does not seem likely - - - as we watch the puzzle pieces come together

Much OT Bible prophecy [written roughly 2000-3000 years ago] operates on the assumption that there would be [in the last days] a great regathering of Israelites to the land of Israel - - - and ultimately a final deliverance of the Jews from their enemies occurring with the return of the Lord Himself at the close of the Tribulation period

At this time – Israel will experience a national repentance – they will look upon Him whom they have pierced

**Zechariah 12:10 - 'And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.'**

The Apostle John echoes / and renews this promise in the NT book of Revelation

**Revelation 1:7 - 'Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen'**

The great albatross that has been hung around the neck of the Jews for nearly 2000 years has been that they killed the Christ

They not only crucified Jesus – but said – 'let His blood be on us and on our children'

As a nation – they suffered the destruction of their temple / a scattering of the people in judgment

While the Jewish people – as a whole – have not repented or sought God's forgiveness in the matter - - - Biblical prophecy tells us there will come a day when Israel will repent – and embrace their Messiah

A national conversion of Jews will take place at the close of the tribulation period

One of the crucial texts in this debate is found in Romans 11

Romans 11:25-27 - 'For I do not want you, brethren to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'

What is the future of Israel?

Romans 11 will help us answer that question

### I. Is God Finished with the Jews? - v. 1

Jesus once said to the twelve apostles

Matthew 19:28 - 'And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"

Is that literal Israel? - - - or a spiritualized entity referring to the church?

What do we make of such promises?

History is ultimately - - - His Story - - - and God can write the script however He wants – and we are wise to get on board with that

When the UN decided to sanction the creation of the modern Jewish state of Israel – did they make a mistake? – or were they providentially directed by the hand of God to do so?

Why did the idea of a Jewish state meet with such acceptance in the United States and Great Britain – two nations where biblical literacy was the highest – and many of its peoples grew up in Christian churches?

Dispensationalism is sometimes singled out for its hermeneutics [science of interpretation] in its approach to Scriptures

Charles Ryrie once defined the dispensationalist's approach to the Bible as 'literal unless absurd'

i.e. – the dispensationalist believes the Bible is the Word of God – and does not want to explain away or spiritualize certain promises in Scripture that according to the plain meaning of language point to a future redemption of Israel

Floyd Hamilton is one who writes from the Amillennial perspective

Floyd Hamilton: 'Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the OT prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the pre-millennialist pictures.'

i.e. – we know a literal interpretation leads to this but . . . that is unacceptable

Lorraine Boettner [post-mill]: 'It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom.'

John MacArthur [dispensational]: 'Both of these writers required a severe alteration in hermeneutics in order to avoid a premillennial conclusion, which apparently, in their view is a fate worse than death. To protect some kind of preconceived theological position, it is necessary for them to change the rules of interpretation. However, if we're going to change the rules we better have clarity from the Lord that those rules need to be changed. But there's no evidence God has called us to do that.'

Here [in Romans 11] Paul raises the issue of the Jews – God's chosen people of the OT

It is clear that He is talking about ethnic Israel – as he distinguishes that he too is a descendant of Abraham / of Benjamin – and he will ultimately take us up to the end times - -  
- the days of Christ's return

Paul is not telling us that Israel is saved in its current form – far from it

Paul has explained to us why the Jews in their present state were rejected of God – and why the Gentiles have been brought into the church

The Jews sought to establish their own righteousness thru the Law – and have rejected the gospel of Christ – a partial hardening has occurred

What about the OT promises made to Israel – to someday return them to the land / to forgive them of their sins / to be ruled over by Christ Himself? [should we just forget that?]

In answering the question about the future of Israel – Paul presents two aspects of Israel's current state of unbelief and rejection by God:

- 1) Their present rejection by God is **partial** – not total [some Jews have believed such as Paul – the 11 disciples / etc.]

2) Their present rejection is **temporary** / not permanent [until the fullness of the Gentiles are brought in]

God has a plan / a program

One of the things passages like this remind us of – history is not random - - it is moving towards the consummation – the return of Christ to rule and reign over His people

Has God cast off His people? The Amillennialist says, “Yes!” / ‘Yes – I say!

Paul answers differently, ‘God forbid!’ [μει γενοιτω] – a phrase he uses several times in Romans [Rom. 6:1,2]

The rejection of Israel was not total nor final – it’s temporary until the Son of God returns

Paul regards himself as exhibit A – evidence that God has not completely rejected the nation

Why would God choose a Jew to be His special apostle to the Gentiles if He had fully cast off Israel?

The church was launched by Jews! / Our Scriptures were written by Jews [with the exception of Luke / Acts]

Paul cites his conversion as evidence that clearly God has not cast off His people in a final or complete way

What promises have been made to Israel that have not been fulfilled?

Ezekiel 36:24-28 - “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. “And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. “And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

That is a description of a national conversion – a return to the land of Canaan

Some people want to strip these prophecies of their Jewish element – and apply them singularly to the church

Kim Riddlebarger - [a covenantalist]: 'The NT writers claimed that Jesus was the true Israel of God and the fulfillment of OT prophecies. So what remains of the dispensationalist's case that these prophecies will yet be fulfilled in a future millennium? They vanish in Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled them.'

The problem is that that view runs into a direct collision with the entire chapter of Romans 11

J.C. Ryle was an Anglican preacher in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

J.C. Ryle [Anglican 1816-1900]: 'Time would fail me, if I attempted to quote all the passages of Scripture in which the future history of Israel is revealed. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel . . . all declare the same thing. All predict, with more or less particularity, that in the end of this dispensation the Jews are to be restored to their own land to the favor of God . . . to my eyes, the future salvation of Israel as a people, their return to Palestine and their national conversion to God, appear as clearly and plainly revealed as any prophecy in God's Word.'

He then refers to the OT texts

Ryle: 'One common remark that applies to them all. They all point to a time which is yet future. They all predict the final gathering of the Jewish nation from the four quarters of the globe and their restoration to their own land . . . the Jews will probably first be gathered in an unconverted state, though humbled, and will afterwards be taught to look to Him whom they have pierced., through much tribulation.'

That's an amazing statement made in the 1880's

He says – this is how I think this will play out – 'they will be gathered first in an unconverted state - - - then they will look upon Him whom they pierced.'

We have witnessed such a re-gathering taking place with the re-establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948

## II. The Remnant - vv. 2-5

Here Paul brings up the topic of the remnant

A remnant is a scrap [perhaps] of carpeting cut off from the main piece – that's a remnant – we didn't need it!

Paul says there is a remnant of the faithful in Israel at the present time [just like in Elijah's day]

In Elijah's time there was a wholesale apostasy of the nation – Ahab and Jezebel were on the throne – Jezebel introduced the worship of Baal into Israel

If we remember the story – Elijah had called for a contest with the prophets of Baal – 450 of them were brought together – epic showdown on Mt Carmel [I Kings 18]

Both sides were to set up altars for sacrifice and call upon their deities to respond with fire

The prophets of baal raved and cut themselves / cried out to Baal for much of the day – no fire from heaven – total bust!

Then it was Elijah's turn – he doused his altar and sacrifice with water - - - called upon the Lord – and fire from heaven came down and consumed the offering and the altar

Then the people fell down and said – 'The Lord – He is God'

Elijah called for the prophets of Baal to be put to death

In the aftermath – Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah - so Elijah fled for his life

Elijah complained to God that there was no one else who was following the Lord

**I Kings 19:10 - 'And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars, and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life to take it away.'**

God responded with – 'I have 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal'

i.e. – Elijah – you are not the only one

**MLJ: 'In the time of Elijah, almost everybody was on the wrong side; the king and queen, and all the prophets.'**

The remnant idea – shows up in Scripture in different ways

God preserved a remnant of humanity thru the flood with Noah and his family

God had made promises to Adam and Eve - - - promises of redemption thru the seed of the woman – [to crush the serpent's head]

If God had obliterated the entire human race including Noah at the flood – those promises would have failed – God could not do that – not His nature

He preserved a remnant thru Noah and his family

The promise has been fulfilled with the coming of Christ

Paul says that he and other Jewish believers were part of a remnant within the nation at the present time

The fact that there are Jewish Christians today – bears witness to the fact that God has not cast off His people completely – guys like Joel Rosenberg / Arnold Fruchtenbaum / John Feinberg

Frederick Godet: 'The Israelites contemporary with Jesus might reject Him; and an indefinite series of generations may for ages perpetuate this fact of national unbelief. God is under no pressure; time can stretch out as long as He pleases. He will add, if need be, ages to ages, until there comes at length the generation disposed to open their eyes and freely welcome the Messiah. God foreknew this nation as believing and saved, and sooner or later they cannot fail to be both.'

Paul ends this chapter in doxology – 'Oh the depth and riches . . .' – v. 33

All theology when seen in its true light – leads us to praise God

The amillennialist is missing out on a portion of doctrine that leads us to praise our God

God is faithful to His Word – God does not lie

Matthew 5:18 - 'For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.'

Isaiah 40:8 - 'The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.'

Jeremiah 31:31-32 - 'Behold, days are coming declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt . . .'

Jeremiah 31:33-34 - "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them,

and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Jeremiah 31:35-37 - 'Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever." Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done," declares the LORD.'

God says – 'Do you see the sun in the sky / the moon at night?'  
Then my promises still hold on behalf of My people Israel

We [the church] are grafted into promises made to Israel – the New Covenant!

When Israel is redeemed – they will come to inherit the promises made to them from the beginning

Richard Sibbes: 'The faithful Jews rejoiced to think of the calling of the Gentiles and why should not we rejoice to think of the calling of the Jews?'

## Conclusion

Jesus Christ is going to return

Israel will look upon Her Messiah whom they had pierced – the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon them – they will repent and embrace the Messiah

Dwight Pentecost: 'Will you imagine, please, a stage that is hidden by a curtain that is drawn. There's a lot of activity going on behind the curtain. If there's a little crack between the bottom of the curtain and the floor, you can see feet rushing around, you can hear furniture being moved, you can hear things going on. You can't see, but you know that the stage manager is in control and is directing to make sure that every person and every prop essential to that drama is in place.'

'I think that's the day in which we're living. The one who designed all human history and showed us how it will culminate in the enthronement of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords is getting the stage set. And the only thing that keeps that curtain from going up is the stage manager. He is just looking over, making sure everything is set, and in His appointed time He'll say 'lift the curtain'. That'll be when we're translated into glory and this drama will unfold.'

The way we are ready for Christ to return – is to know Him as our Savior – to walk with Him