

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Ignored and Misunderstood Scriptures (Romans 11:28)

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. (Romans 11:28 KJV 1900)

In this unusual verse Paul concludes an extended line of reasoning regarding God's judgment against first century religious Jews who knew and rejected Jesus as their Messiah, as God manifest in the flesh. Many contemporary Christians hold to a humanistic view of God and of salvation that wholly rejects the truth that Paul states in this verse. Ask the modern pastor, "Can one person be both an enemy of the gospel and saved?" You'll get your answer. Paul categorically stated that such was the case with these Jewish people of who he writes in this chapter, a theme which he started in the ninth chapter, if not from the beginning of the Roman letter.

Lingering in the background of this verse and question is the related question; does God intend to restore Jewish people to the faith before the Second Coming? I've heard bizarre explanations that teach this idea, and I've heard well reasoned explanations. I am inclined to question the idea, but I hold my view with a loose grip. My purpose in raising the question in this study is to urge believers to study and to "rightly divide," rightly interpret the Scriptures. Let Scripture say what it says; don't force it to say what it does not say. One such example follows.

Most people who hold to the idea of an end-times Jewish restoration appeal to this chapter for their proof, usually to the following specific verse.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (Romans 11:25 KJV)

In this verse Paul explains the current blindness of that generation of religious Jewish people to Jesus. It is my view that he says far more about first century judgment than end times restoration. The primary reasoning in this chapter is with contemporary Gentiles who had benefitted from this judicial blindness of the Jews, a people who, by their history and knowledge, should have believed in Jesus when He came. Instead, they rejected and despised Him, orchestrating and celebrating His crucifixion.

A study of Acts will provide documentation of what this verse teaches. Before His ascension,

Jesus taught the disciples that they would be His witnesses in an ever-expanding spiral outward from the epicenter in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:8)

On the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2, we read of Jewish apostles preaching to Jewish believers who gathered in Jerusalem for a Jewish feast. This wholly Jewish scene begins the spiral which continues through the next several chapters. Then we read of a fierce persecution against the church in Jerusalem.

...they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. (Acts 8:1b KJV)

Albeit by persecution, the testimony of the gospel went to Samaria, precisely as Jesus taught in Acts 1. Later in Acts 8, beginning with Verse 27, we read of the Lord sending Philip to preach to an Ethiopian eunuch who had been to Jerusalem to worship and was returning to his homeland when Philip interrupted his journey, preached to Him, and baptized him. The gospel is advancing precisely as Jesus taught.

Then in Acts 10 we read of Peter preaching to Cornelius and his household, a Gentile Roman military officer.

All the while the gospel is advancing according to the precise map that Jesus revealed in Acts 1, the apostles and early preachers continue preaching to religious Jews in Jerusalem. Although many of them believed and embraced the faith¹, the majority of them continued to reject the message and to despise Jesus.

Eventually the Lord's long-suffering reached even His limit.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of

¹ Acts 21:20. James tells Paul that many thousand Jews have believed, but they continue to respect the law. They were likely among those who, confused regarding Moses and Jesus, taught the divisive error in Antioch Church (Acts 15) and the Galatian error (Book of Galatians).

everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. (Acts 13:46-49)

From the beginning the door of faith was open to Gentile believers (Ephesians 2:17), but with this passage, we read that it was fully opened to them. The Lord sent the gospel first to the Jewish people, but their repeated rejection of it brought the judgment described in these verses on them. Notice the fully opened door to Gentile believers in these verses, *“For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”* It is quite possible that these verses identify the precise fulfillment of the passage from Romans 11, *“...until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”*

Oddly most contemporary explanations of this verse describe the waning end of the Gentile era, not its flourishing beginning. The language describes a time when the fulness of the Gentiles has “come in,” not has expired and gone out. God’s judgment against the Jews was not a perpetual judgment that continues to this day. It was a specific judgment against the generation of that day, the same generation of Jews who witnessed Jesus’ teachings, miracles, and life, and yet despised and rejected Him, and demanded His crucifixion. I have known a number of Jewish believers in my lifetime, and each of them manifested the same faith in Jesus—and the same joyful blessings as we Gentile believers experience. They show no signs of being under a divine judgment that would hinder their faith in Jesus.

In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus affirms this generational judgment.

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matthew 23:38-39 KJV)

Jesus focused the entirety of Matthew 23 against first century Jews who witnessed His coming and despised and rejected Him. (Matthew 23:35-36) Most of this chapter records His righteous judgment against them. The actual judgment was against that generation. However, Jesus also imposed a lingering warning and potential judgment that would extend past that generation, and apply to Gentiles as well as Jews.

Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Who came **“in the name of the Lord”**? Jesus is our only right answer. Whether that generation or one who hears the gospel today, God’s proclamation of the gospel is always preached with the contingency of belief attached. No one who hears, refuses to believe or to practice it shall be blessed in it. Only born again children of God who hear the message, and who believe it and begin a new way of life according to its teachings ever truly “See” Jesus’ face and realize the rich blessings of the gospel.

If we understand and accept this basic principle of gospel blessings, we understand the premise of the gospel from the time of Jesus till the Second Coming. In all this time, gospel blessings have flowed from the Lord’s mercy seat to individual believers who believed the message of the gospel and strived to follow it in their personal lives. The Lord dealt with whole nations in the Old Testament, including His whole nation of Israel. However, all the New Testament passages that teach us the principles of gospel blessings are framed around individual believers who believe and try to live the teachings of the gospel, of **“Jesus and the resurrection.”** This basic principle eliminates the premise of the gospel being restored to a whole nation or culture en masse, as well as logically cut off wholly from another nation or culture. Not one person has ever—or shall ever—enjoy gospel blessings apart from personal belief in Jesus. New Testament teaching repeatedly emphasizes that any consideration of race or culture, in addition to this faith has been removed. For example—

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. (Ephesians 2:14-15 KJV)

If the Lord were to restore the Jews as a whole culture en masse, He would need to restore the middle wall of partition which He “broke down” and abolished by His coming. I find no indication in Scripture that He intends to reinstate cultural or racial barriers or preferences.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (Romans 11:26 KJV)

God’s temporal gospel blessings rely on the response of born again people to the gospel, resulting in various “Grafting” processes that link believers to the root of blessing, Jesus Himself.

(John 15:1-8) However, God's ultimate saving grace relies on the finished work of Jesus who, in His coming and sacrifice for His people, turned "...**away ungodliness from Jacob,**" His spiritual people, not His national Old Testament people (Romans 2:28-29). Accordingly, divine mercy created a unique class of people, saved people who, by divine mercy and Jesus' sacrifice for them, are "Beloved for the fathers' sakes," but whose unbelief makes them "enemies concerning the gospel."

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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