

Romans 11: Church Grafted Into Israel

(This is taken from a correspondence with a dispensational believer)

I'll begin at the beginning, the first two scriptures you present in Matthew 10:5 and 28:19 and compare with Romans 11:25

In Matthew 10, the message of grace and the coming of Messiah are to the Jews FIRST. Jesus Himself makes this very clear in the very next verse that those of dispensationalism conveniently and frequently leave out. Let's read how this should be IN CONTEXT:

Matthew 10:5-6

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This is the fulfillment of the promise of God to "His people." The house of Israel was then, still is and will forever be God's Chosen People. What has changed is they are no longer "exclusively" His People. Gentile believers are "grafted in" to His Chosen People Israel through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The time of the Gentiles was not until "after" God sent His Holy Spirit. The ministry of Jesus was to the Jews FIRST. Listen to what JESUS SAYS:

Matthew 15:24

But He answered and said, "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"

See, no confusion when you allow GOD to do the talking. Jesus came to the Jews FIRST. The earthly ministry of Jesus was to His People the Jews ... the house of Israel.

Matthew 28:19 is *after* Calvary (the death, burial and resurrection) is it not? Jesus has died for the sins of humanity, His blood establishing the promise of God's "New Covenant" with His People Israel AND is also to include the Gentiles, but still not yet.

There remained a few things to occur ... receipt of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The nations in verse 19 is the Greek word "ethnos" where we get the term ethnic. Jesus was telling His disciples to go and make other disciples (pupils) from all ethnicities. This was no longer to be "ONLY" to the house of "ethnic" Israel. In verse 18 the full context is established that Jesus has received "all authority" in heaven AND earth from the Father.

Matthew 28:18-20

- 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority** has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
- 19 **Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
- 20 **teaching them** to **observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you

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always, even to the end of the age."

There are four commands Jesus gives His Disciples:

1) GO; (2) MAKE DISCIPLES; (3) BAPTIZE THEM, and (4) TEACH THEM ALL I HAVE COMMANDED YOU.

Jesus for the first time was *commanding* them that **Gentiles** are now to become ***inheritors with Israel to the promises of God***. He prefaced this by establishing with them He has the authority from the Father to do so. The Father's will through Jesus is to "**graft in**" the **Gentiles with Israel**. This grafting into one body is developed in Romans, Hebrews and other Epistles. (see study on Israel and the Church at The Lord's Children bible study website)

You now lead me to Romans 11 where the Apostle Paul explains just how the Gentiles are brought in and their relationship to Israel. Because of the import of this chapter, let's go through this with care.

Romans 11:1

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Paul was explaining in chapters 9 and 10 how Israel has turned their back on the Father by rejecting Jesus. This was prophesied to be, so Paul connects how Israel's rejection of their Messiah Jesus is part of God's prophesied plan for His People through the Old Testament Scriptures. In chapter 9 Paul presents a clear explanation between ethnic Israel and TRUE Israel. **True Israel are those who are circumcised in and by the Holy Spirit** indwelling the elect, those chosen by God. Ethnic Israel (a favored term adopted by dispensationalists) is not "excluded" from the plan of God but for the moment are "stumbled" to give room to the "grafting in" of the Gentiles.

We need to clarify terms to avoid confusion. For our purposes here, Israel does **not** mean **National Israel**, the geo-political Nation/State in the Middle East bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. The prophetic books speak to Israel, the lineage and descendants of Jacob regardless of where they live or reside. Prophecies and promises concerning Israel refer to descendents of Jacob, not *national* Israel. **The church is now included with and part of Israel** and in this sense is referred to as **Spiritual Israel**. However, dispensationalism divides Israel of prophesy into two separate entities with two separate plans of Salvation, one for *ethnic* Israel and another for *spiritual* Israel. This distinction is false, misleading and contrary to the Word of God.

Prophecies and promises concerning Israel **include both** Ethnic and Spiritual Israel. The Old Covenant prophecies and those of Jesus are not meant to be understood as an exclusive reference to ethnic Jews or the national Israel. The church and Israel are one. Let's continue and see how the Apostle Paul develops this point.

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Paul begins in chapter 11 by asking a rhetorical question, "Has God rejected His People?" which Paul immediately answers, "May it never be!"

Romans 11:2

God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in [the passage about] Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

This is God's plan before creation! The church is God's "called out ones" from both Old and New Covenants. Spiritual Israel (New Covenant) and "His People" ethnic Israel (Old Covenant) is **not** some after thought by God, "Oh No ...they've rejected Me! ... what shall I do now? Let me think.... I know ... I'll create a church, yea, that's what I'll do... I'll begin a church to correct this thing." No way ... No how. This was God's plan and design before the beginning of creation. The destiny of the church and Israel are intimately connected for they are one in the eyes of God.

Romans 11:2 says God has NOT rejected Israel ... repeat, NOT REJECTED ISRAEL. The problem with some theologies is they don't give God enough room to speak. The real key to understanding scripture is to let scripture speak to us ... not us to it.

Dispensationalism is not the key to understanding Scripture ... SCRIPTURE IS ... under the direction and control of the Holy Spirit. Dispensationalism wrongly divides the Word of God. (see the studies on Dispensationalism at The Lord's Children website).

Israel has been rejecting God throughout their history. The Old Covenant gives us ample illustrations of Israel rejecting God ... God bringing them back.... They reject God again... God brings them back to Him again... and again ... and again.

Romans 11:5

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to [God's] gracious choice.

Just as in times past a remnant of Israel remains by the GRACE of God. God's will for Israel remains... but not completely. He desires the whole house of Israel be saved ... but NOT YET. Not yet? ... Why? ... Listen to the next three verses...

Romans 11:6-8

- 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.
- 7 What then? **What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;**
- 8 just as it is written, "**GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.**"

The first Christians were **ALL JEWS** saved through God's grace, but not because they were Jews by birthright. Israel is the elect of God "the saved" by grace and grace is the

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election of God, "the saved." They are God's people because HE, GOD, CHOSE THEM, not because THEY ARE GOD'S PEOPLE BY ETHNICITY. Apart from "God's choosing" they, like we and all humanity are wretched and depraved people. Israel's heart is hardened toward God for God says they may not boast of themselves (Rom 9:30-10:21) ... they are in a stupor with eyes that do not see nor ears that hear. Why? So the **Gentiles** could be "**grafted into Israel**" as we will see. This is God emphasizing that Salvation is by GRACE and not by man ... not our works ... not our ethnicity ... not by obedience ... not by birthright ... nor anything else man can do or be ... but only through God and His grace.

Romans 11:11

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation [has come] to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

This is such a key verse. Paul asks another rhetorical question, "Did Israel stumble so they would fall?" and again he answers it, "May it NEVER BE!"

The stumble of Israel is not final nor is it "completely" in the future. History shows us that there is a gradual opening of the eyes of Israel but their "coming in" will not be complete until the Gentiles "coming in" is complete. This is happening as history unfolds ... neither Israel nor the Gentile are complete ... **Gentiles are not completely saved ... nor is Israel completely lost.**

Romans 11:12

Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

The first (ethnic Israel) shall be last, and the last (Church) shall be first. The dispensationalists really begin to run off on their tangent here with their "Israel will not be saved until the Millennium begins" mantra. So far, what Paul is teaching is...

1) A majority of ethnic Israel has rejected Christ ... no dispute;

2) Their rejection is for the "bringing in" or "grafting in" of the Gentiles ... the dispensationalists are "forced" to reject this because they see the "church," God's "called out ones" "spiritual Israel" as being different from God's people, "My People." The church is Spiritual Israel.

3) Israel will be saved, that includes both ethnic and spiritual Israel. This includes the Jews and Gentile believers - God's people. The distinction is made only to illustrate that ethnic Israel, as a whole, is rejecting Jesus as their Messiah/Savior. While it is open to all Gentiles, all have not accepted Jesus as their Savior/Messiah either. Neither the fullness of the Gentile nor the fullness of the Jew has come yet. Both Jew and Gentile are being brought into the one body and one spirit – True Spiritual Israel, the Church. The two terms are synonymous. Just as salvation remains open to the Jewish people,

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ethnic Israel, though all have not accepted ... is remains open to the Gentile nations, though all have not accepted.

Paul in the next few verses clearly teaches he is speaking to THE GENTILES. It appears that some of these Gentile were being "puffed up" with the fact that they are saved ... and the Jews are somewhat being "left behind" which is why Paul is clarifying this issue here. Yes, this division started a long time ago and unfortunately has not left us even today.

Paul speaks to the **unity of Israel and the Church** in God's plan of Salvation in the next few verses:

Romans 11:16-18

- 16 If the **first piece** of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.
- 17 **But if some of the branches were broken off**, and you, being a wild olive, **were grafted in among them and became partaker with them** of the rich **root of the olive tree**,
- 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

These three verses is but another nail in the coffin of dispensational theology, but alas, not only the Jews have a hardened heart it seems.

Verse 16 once again shows the pre-eminence of Israel as the first to be offered the gift of life ... they are HOLY or the leaven of holiness that leavens the whole lump to be holy (the dispensationalists will go to Corinthians to dispute this on the basis that an analogy can only have one meaning, but this verse, and a few others prove them wrong) for Jesus is the ROOT that supports the OLIVE TREE. Ethnic Israel and Spiritual Israel are both of the same tree, just different branches. **Ethnic Israel is the natural branch** and **Spiritual Israel (the church) is the wild branch grafted in**. We have been grafted into the olive tree. We are both branches supported by the root, Jesus. Both the branches and the root are part of the same tree. There can be no argument on this point, can there?

We see that there are only ONE people of God. Just like there is only ONE God, One Spirit ... there are only ONE people, the Elect of God, those He chose for Salvation. The distinguishing characteristic is no longer the circumcision of the flesh (Old Covenant Israel) but the circumcision of the heart (New Covenant Israel). No ethnic group is granted preference (Jews) nor is any ethnic group excluded (Gentiles - non Jews). All God's chosen are one people in the eyes of God. The church and Israel are one.