

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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JANUARY 2007

WILL ALL ISRAEL BE SAVED?

According to most prophesy preachers Romans 11 predict a future conversion to Christianity by the Jews as a nation. Some scholars (a minority) hold that verse 26 refers to the church, the new Israel of God. In general most of the references to Israel in the New Testament scriptures do refer to the church. However in context throughout this passage "Israel" is referring to the physical Jew. It is odd that this is the only place in the N.T. where the future conversion of the Jews is predicted. Therefore, let's look at Romans 11 as predicting an event that was future to Paul, but not future to us, that is, this passage predicts a conversion of many Jews just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

It is significant to me that Paul uses the term "Jews" in Romans 3:9, 29; 9:24 as in all his epistles: I Cor. 1:22-24; 9:20; 10:32; 12:13; II Cor. 11:24; Gal 3:13-15; I Thess 2:14. The word "Jews", not "Israelites" is used throughout the gospels and Acts and in Rev. 2:9; 3:9. Yet in Romans 9, 10, 11 "Jew" is only used one time (9:24) and "Israel" is used throughout these chapters. (9:6, 27, 31; 10:19,20; 11:2, 25, 26)

There are three terms describing the descendants of Abraham: 1. "Hebrews", first used of Abraham (Gen. 14:13) and generally used by the nations referring to the Jews. 2. "Israelites" (Israel) upon the giving of the covenant, is used of the covenant people who were called to be a priesthood to the rest of the world (Exodus 19:5,6; Deut. 4:1-8) and 3. "Jews". The first use of the word "Jew" is found in II Kings 25:25 where they were being taken captive by the Babylonians. It is then used throughout Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and the New Testament. We see that the term "Jew" replaced "Israel" during the exile and continued to describe them until 70 A.D. when they were destroyed as a nation. In a loose sense we can say with James Jordan that "the Hebrews ceased to exist when they were transformed into Israelites. The Israelites ceased to exist when they were transformed into Jews, and the Jews ceased to exist when they were transformed into Christians." James Jordan: *Biblical Horizons* (#28, August 1991 pp.1) When Paul used the term "Israel" in Romans 9-11 he is referring to those who have been faithful to the Old Testament covenant, of whom he has a desire to see saved. The term "Jew" then refers to those who claimed to be a covenant people, but who in essence were not. From the beginning of the nation "Israelites" were defined by covenant, not by blood or race. In Paul's writings in Rom 9-11 the "Israelites" were those who adhered to the covenant at Sinai. The "Jews" were those who had become unfaithful to the covenant. However, throughout the N.T. the word "Jew" is used to describe those claiming to be real descendants of Abraham.

How do the Scriptures define a Jew, and who is a modern Jew? We think of Jews as the descendants of Abraham, but Genesis 14:14 speaks of 318 fighting men who were a part of Abraham's household as they were "born in his house" All of

his household (servants etc.) was to be circumcised (Gen. 17:12-14) and thus became a part of the covenant, but they could not have been his descendants. When Israel came out of Egypt there was "a mixed multitude" (Ex. 12:38) that came with them. Esther 8:17b states: "And many among the peoples of the land (Gentiles) became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them". An important man in Israel's history, Caleb, a Kenizzite was a converted Jew (Gen. 15:19; Josh. 14:6) and became a part of the tribe of Judah (Num. 13:6). This means that in the time of Christ very few Jews were actually descendants of Abraham. This is why the genealogies of Christ are so important. He is, according to prophesy, established as a descendant of Abraham and David.

Who then is a modern Jew? I'll quote two sources that say it very well, my late friend Curtis Dickinson and a noted scholar on Jewish history, James Jordan. But before quoting them let me give two definitions from Webster of two words used in the quotes: Talmud: *The authoritative body of Jewish traditions comprising the Mishnah.* Mishnah: *The collection of mostly halakic (the body of Jewish law supplementing the Scriptural law) Jewish traditions compiled about A.D. 200 and made the basic part of the Talmud.* Curtis Dickinson: *The Witness* "Modern Israel has no relationship to Biblical Israel. It was not established by Semites, but by descendants of the Khazars, who converted to a form of Judaism (based upon the Talmud, not the Bible), in the 8th century and eventually found all over Europe. These were not Jews 'returning to their homeland', but political Zionists whose ancestors had never been in the land of Palestine. Many Christians ignore these facts and promote the effort to 'rebuild the temple' thinking this will fulfill prophesy and hasten the return of Christ" James Jordan: *Biblical Horizons*: "Modern Jews are people who chose to think of themselves as descendants of Israel. Most modern Jews are not Semites, but are a Judaism of the middle ages. Arthur Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe* provides much information on this. Modern Jews do not worship the God of the Old Testament. They are either secular humanists, or else Talmudist, and the Talmud has no more relation to the Old Testament as does the Koran or the Book of Mormon. Like the Koran and the Book of Mormon, the Talmud and the Mishnah are designed to add to and reinterpret the Old Testament in such a way as to obliterate completely the revelation of God through Jesus Christ. The 'god' of Judaism is as much a fiction as the 'god' of Islam and the 'god' of Mormonism. Modern Jews are a separate nation of people with self-identity, spread out among many nations".

Twice Paul mentions "the fall" of Israel. Just what was this falling? At Mt. Sinai all the people accepted the Mosaic Covenant (the Law). It was not long, however, before a number of the people were objecting to one of the most distinctive features of the Covenant, that of offering sacrifices. During the time of the Patriarchs the people could offer sacrifices to God on altars they erected. But under the covenant only the priests were ordained and anointed for this purpose. Sacrifices had to be made in the tabernacle and they could no longer offer them on their "high places" There was

a rebellion because of this demand of God. Korah, Dathan and Abiram led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron and insisted that because all the congregation was holy and had as much right to leadership as Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:1-11). This was a rebellion concerning the priesthood (ver. 10). A rejection of the priesthood was a going back to the older method under the Patriarchs. Although Korah and his followers were destroyed, an attitude that rejected the Covenant Priesthood persisted throughout the Old Testament. This is evident by the many references to their sin of worshiping in the "high places". This type of worship was acceptable under the old system, but rejected under the Mosaic Covenant. Another form of their rejection of the Covenant was their continual desire to return to Egypt. This can be compared to the Judaizers in Paul's day. There were Jewish Christians who instead of accepting the New Covenant insisted that Paul was changing the rules (comparable to accusations brought against Moses) and that they did not have to give up the old Jewish ways to become a Christian. Just as many of the Israelites in Moses' day wanted to return to Egypt the Judaizers in Paul's day wanted to return to Judaism. This was the "falling away" referred to many times in the New Testament. This brings us to the subject of the remnant (9:27). The "all Israel" (11:26) who will be saved were the Jews that accepted the New Covenant and left the old ways of Judaism. Just as many of the people after the destruction of Korah and his followers continued to reject the temple worship and worshiped in the high places (until the exile), so also after the destruction of the Judaizers (the Jews) in 70 A.D., many people continue in the heresies of the Judaizers by following the Talmud today.

In verse 25 Paul speaks of "the fullness of the Gentiles coming in". This has been a subject of much speculation among prophesy preachers. Note that it has to do with "this mystery". Ephesians 3:6 shows the mystery is revealed to be the Gentiles become fellow heirs, fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promises. The mystery was God making known the riches of His glory to the Gentiles (Col. 1:27). "The fullness of the Gentiles" then would have come in when this was accomplished. There was also the "fullness of the Jews" (ver. 12) which would mean that the believing Jews would be united with the Gentiles in the New Covenant and God's "New Man" would become a reality (Eph. 2:14-18).

Paul would not live to see this fullness take place as it was future to him but past to us. Luke 21:24 indicates that the times (fullness) of the Gentiles would be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. After the destruction of Jerusalem (the destruction of the old Jewish system) there is no longer Jews and Gentiles, but believers and unbelievers Christians and non-Christians.

Paul's ministry to the Gentile was to bring them to salvation, but it was also designed to provoke Israel into believing (11:13,14). During Paul's ministry to the Gentiles this "provoking" could be taking place, but is not possible today. Modern Jews are not a bit provoked that non-Jews believe the Gospel. Modern Jews get angry when Jews convert to Christ, but not when Gentiles do. (This shows that Romans 9-11 has to do with the early days of the church and is not future).

DO WE GET THE MESSAGE?

In the year of King Uzziah's death, the Lord commissioned the prophet Isaiah to go and warn the people of the wrath to come. He said (an up to date translation) "Tell them what a worthless lot they are. Tell them what is wrong and why, and what is going to happen unless they have a change of heart and straighten up. Don't mince words. Make it clear that they are positively down to their last chance. Give it to them good and strong and keep on giving it to them. I suppose I ought to tell you." He added, "that it won't do any good. The official class and their intelligentsia will turn up their noses at you, and the masses will not even listen. They will all keep on in their own ways until they carry everything down to destruction, and you will probably be blessed if you get out with your life".

Isaiah wanted the job, in fact, he asked for it, but these last words raised the obvious question: Why, if all that were so, if the enterprise were to be a failure from the beginning, was there any sense in starting it? "Ah", the Lord said, (another up to date translation) "You don't get the point. There is a remnant there that you know nothing about. They are obscure, unorganized, inarticulate, each one trucking along as best he can. They need to be encouraged, because when everything has gone to the dogs, they will be the ones who will rise up and build a new society. That's your job, so get to it!"

Isaiah's age was characterized by indifference. They were not indifferent to religion. In fact they were very religious, and very much engaged in their religion. In the opening chapter of Isaiah's prophesy he describes them as a nation whose "whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint" (Isa. 1:5). They were busy offering God "multiplied sacrifices, burnt offerings and multiplied prayers." They appeared before Him and trampled His courts by keeping "new moons, Sabbaths, assemblies and appointed feasts" (1:11-15). Their problem, as ours today, was they were so busy going to church that they could not be impressed with the idea of a living God, a Sovereign high and lifted up, ruling the world and life and men's consciences. They were incapable of being touched with the reality of God.

About 125 years after Isaiah, God called Jeremiah and gave him virtually the same message. Things hadn't changed much. In fact they had gotten worse. The Northern Kingdom was gone and Babylon had headed toward Jerusalem, destroying everything in its path, yet they still did not listen to Jeremiah. His task was further complicated because a whole new generation of false prophets had arisen. God said of them: "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land, prophets prophesy falsely and the priest rule on their own authority, and My people love it so" (Jer. 5:30,31).

In a day when success is measured by the number of people responding to the message, and the message is aimed at getting people to respond, what do we learn from these two prophets? One thing for sure is that they were not to preach in order to get people to respond, but in order that they might hear the truth.

