# ISRAEL: BELOVED FOR THE FATHERS' SAKES

**"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. 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: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief" (Rom 11:25–30)**.

There is perhaps no more remarkable exhibition of the faithfulness of God in the annals of human history than his continued dealings with the children of Israel. Kingdoms have arisen in the plenitude of their power, extended their dominions over vast territories, and disappeared into the sepulcher of antiquity. Empires whose monarchs once commanded the obeisance of nations survive principally in the inscriptions of ruined monuments and the recollections of historians. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, however, remain a recognizable people, notwithstanding centuries of dispersion, persecution, national humiliation, and repeated attempts to destroy them. Their continued existence presents a consideration of extraordinary consequence to every Christian who professes confidence in the words of God.

The apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, provides the doctrinal explanation in the eleventh chapter of Romans. Israel, notwithstanding its present rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, has not been irrevocably forsaken by the God who established his covenant with the patriarchs. The nation is presently characterized by spiritual blindness, but that blindness is neither universal nor perpetual. A remnant exists according to the election of grace, while the nation itself awaits a future restoration which will culminate in its recognition of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the apostle declares, with a precision which ought to preclude Gentile arrogance, that the Jews are **"enemies"** concerning the gospel, but **"beloved for the fathers' sakes"** concerning the election **(Rom 11:28)**.

These two declarations must be maintained together. To acknowledge the latter while disregarding the former is to obscure the present spiritual condition of unbelieving Israel. To emphasize the former while denying the latter is to contradict the apostolic testimony concerning the inviolability of God's promises. The Christian is not authorized to compromise either truth in accommodation to contemporary opinion, national prejudice, or an inherited theological system. Both propositions stand upon the authority of the same Bible, and neither may be sacrificed without impairing the integrity of the whole.

The difficulty begins when the promises made to Israel are transferred to the church, as though the introduction of the body of Christ had extinguished the national identity and prospective inheritance of the descendants of Jacob. Such an interpretation confounds two entities which the apostle carefully differentiates. The church is composed of Jews and Gentiles who have believed the gospel and have been made members of one body in Christ **(1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:14–16)**. Within that spiritual body, the former divisions of race, gender, and servitude confer no superiority or inferiority upon its members, although these earthly characteristics and circumstances are not

thereby corporeally abolished **(Gal 3:26–28; Col 3:10–11)**. Israel, considered nationally, remains the people to whom God made definite covenants concerning a land, a kingdom, and an everlasting inheritance. The spiritual blessings enjoyed by Christians do not authorize the appropriation of every territorial and national promise originally addressed to Abraham's posterity.

The Abrahamic covenant supplies the foundation of this differentiation. When the Lord called Abram from his country and kindred, he declared, **"I will make of thee a great nation,"** and added, **"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen 12:2–3)**. The promise was afterward enlarged and specified. Abraham was commanded to survey the land in every direction, and the Lord assured him, **"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen 13:15)**. The geographical boundaries of this inheritance were subsequently delineated in Genesis 15:18–21, where the Lord solemnly ratified his covenant with Abram. Of considerable doctrinal importance is the unilateral character of this transaction. Abram had been placed into a deep sleep, and it was the Lord alone, represented by the smoking furnace and burning lamp, who passed between the divided pieces of the sacrifice **(Gen 15:12, 17–18)**. The fulfillment of the covenant thus rested upon the immutable promise of God rather than upon the reciprocal performance of Abraham or his descendants. The same covenantal assurances were afterward reaffirmed to Isaac and Jacob **(Gen 26:3–4; 28:13–15)**.

These assurances were neither indefinite expressions of benevolence nor figurative representations of heavenly felicity alone. They concerned an identifiable people and a geographical inheritance. The land was not promised to Abraham's descendants because they possessed an inherent superiority over the other families of the earth. Nor was the covenant an encomium upon their anticipated moral excellence. Its foundation was the gracious determination of God, whose purposes do not depend upon the caprices of human approbation.

Moses reminded Israel that the Lord had not chosen them because of their numerical preeminence. They were, indeed, the fewest of all people. Their election was traced instead to the Lord's love and to the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers **(Deut 7:7–8)**. The same principle remains operative in Romans 11. Israel's unbelief is neither extenuated nor concealed, but its present disobedience cannot annul the covenant which God established with Abraham. The apostle's conclusion is categorical: **"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom 11:29)**.

The history of Israel demonstrates that covenantal election does not exempt a nation from the Lord's judgment. The God who promised the land also warned his people concerning the consequences of idolatry, rebellion, and apostasy **(Deut 4:25–28; 8:19–20; 28:15–68; 29:24–28)**. The northern kingdom was carried into Assyrian captivity because its inhabitants forsook the commandments of the Lord, served other gods, and refused the admonitions of his prophets **(2 Kgs 17:7–23)**. Judah followed a similar course, notwithstanding the repeated warnings of Jeremiah and the other prophets **(2 Chr 36:14–17; Jer 7:8–15; 25:3–11)**. These judgments were neither unforeseen disasters nor evidence that the Lord had relinquished his covenant. They were the very consequences which he had announced well in advance.

The books of Kings and Chronicles furnish abundant testimony concerning the nation's recurrent apostasy. Jeroboam established the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, thereby causing

Israel to sin **(1 Kgs 12:26–33; 14:16)**. Ahab **"did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him,"** serving Baal and erecting an altar for that abominable idol in Samaria **(1 Kgs 16:30–33)**. Rehoboam's Judah built high places, images, and groves, while sodomites were found in the land **(1 Kgs 14:22–24)**. Manasseh rebuilt the high places, erected altars unto Baal, worshipped the host of heaven, and even caused his son to pass through the fire **(2 Kgs 21:2–9)**. The Bible repeatedly declares that these monarchs did **"evil in the sight of the LORD,"** a condemnation extending to the idolatrous practices which they encouraged among the people **(2 Kgs 13:2, 11; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:7–18)**.

Nor were these offenses overlooked because the perpetrators belonged to the chosen nation. The Lord raised up prophets to denounce their transgressions, warned them of impending destruction, and executed judgment when they refused to repent. The very people whom he called his own were subjected to captivity, devastation, and the loss of their national independence. Still, their wickedness did not transform the Abrahamic covenant into an obsolete arrangement. God continued to acknowledge his promises to the fathers, even while chastising the descendants who had so grievously departed from his commandments **(2 Kgs 13:23; Neh 9:26–31)**.

The instruments employed in those judgments were never granted an unrestricted license to afflict the Lord's people. Assyria was designated the rod of his anger, but the Assyrian monarch, having exalted himself in the pride of his heart, was himself appointed to punishment **(Isa 10:5–15)**. Nebuchadnezzar was called the Lord's servant and commissioned to bring Judah into captivity **(Jer 25:8–11; 27:6)**. The same God declared that Babylon would afterward be punished for its iniquity **(Jer 25:12–14)**. Indeed, the Lord rebuked Babylon for showing his people no mercy, notwithstanding that he had delivered them into its hand **(Isa 47:6)**. Zechariah recorded the Lord's indignation against the heathen who had helped foster Israel's affliction **(Zech 1:15)**. The sovereignty of God in chastising his people affords no vindication of the cruelty, arrogance, or malice of those who presume to accomplish their destruction.

The calling of Cyrus presents another aspect of this divine sovereignty. The Lord designated the Persian monarch as his shepherd and addressed him as **"his anointed,"** although Cyrus did not know the God of Israel **(Isa 44:28; 45:1–5)**. His appointment concerned the overthrow of Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem, demonstrating that the Lord can employ a Gentile ruler to advance his purposes without pronouncing that ruler saved or universally righteous. Whether the instrument is appointed to chastise Israel or facilitate its restoration, the authority remains God's, and the human agent remains accountable to him.

Even within the Mosaic warnings there remained an assurance of restoration. Deuteronomy 30:1–5 contemplates Israel's dispersion, eventual return unto the Lord, and regathering from among the nations. The promise is not exhausted by the return from Babylon, for its language embraces a comprehensive restoration associated with renewed obedience and the repossession of the inheritance. The very passages which establish the certainty of Israel's punishment also testify that judgment will not constitute the final disposition of the nation.

The present spiritual condition of Israel must be considered in this historical and prophetic context. The Jewish nation, in its unbelieving condition, does not acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Christ, the incarnate Son of God, or the only Savior of sinners. This rejection is

not a matter of trifling theological disagreement. It concerns the identity and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom no descendant of Adam, whether Jew or Gentile, can obtain salvation. The apostle Peter declared to the rulers of Israel, **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)**. Paul affirmed that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation **"to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16)**.

The rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ introduced a further and fearful chapter in Israel's history. When the multitude before Pilate cried, **"His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt 27:25)**, they uttered an imprecation of dreadful consequence. The destruction of Jerusalem and the national sufferings foretold by the Lord invite sober consideration of that declaration, especially in light of his own sorrow over the city **(Matt 23:37–39; Lk 19:41–44; 21:20–24)**. Paul declared concerning those Jews who opposed the gospel that **"the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess 2:14–16)**. The nation had been warned repeatedly concerning the consequences of rejecting the word of God, and its history bears witness to the gravity of those warnings.

The administration of divine judgment belongs to the Lord, not to the Christian who observes it. No individual possesses authority to impute the guilt of those assembled before Pilate indiscriminately to every Jewish person of succeeding generations, or to represent the atrocities committed against Jewish men, women, and children as acts which their human perpetrators were entitled to commit. The Lord himself declared, **"Vengeance is mine; I will repay" (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19)**. Those who persecute Israel remain answerable for their own conduct, whatever judgments God has announced concerning the nation. The Christian's commission is to preach the gospel, bear witness to the truth, and manifest compassion toward those whose spiritual blindness he deplores. He must neither presume to occupy the judgment seat of God nor cultivate fellowship with the enemies of Israel in their hostility toward the Jewish people. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, how he said, **"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34)**.

A Christian's affection for the Jewish people must never be mistaken for acquiescence in their unbelief. To profess an ardent regard for Israel while withholding the gospel would be a deplorable contradiction. The greatest blessing which can be desired for any Jewish person is not political ascendancy, territorial security, or national prosperity considered independently of spiritual restoration. It is reconciliation to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul himself supplied the proper disposition when he wrote, **"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom 10:1)**.

The apostle's affection was not weakened by his knowledge of Israel's resistance to the gospel. He understood the nation's privileges, its zeal, and its ignorance of the righteousness of God. He could acknowledge that many of his countrymen were opposing the very message through which salvation was offered, while continuing to desire their conversion with profound solicitude. His earlier declaration that he experienced **"great heaviness and continual sorrow"** for his brethren according to the flesh **(Rom 9:2–3)** discloses a disposition utterly incompatible with the contempt sometimes exhibited toward the Jewish people by those professing the name of Christ.

There is an additional consideration which ought to humble every Gentile Christian. The apostle warns against boasting over the natural branches of the olive tree. Some were broken off because of unbelief, and believing Gentiles have been made partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Paul admonishes, **"Boast not against the branches" (Rom 11:18)**. The mandate is not incidental to his argument. It is one of the principal reasons he discloses the mystery concerning Israel's partial blindness. Gentile believers are not to become wise in their own conceits, imagining that the present administration of God's grace has rendered his ancient promises nugatory.

The language of Romans 11:25 is especially consequential. **"Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."** The expression **"in part"** forbids the supposition that every Jew is necessarily hardened against the gospel. Paul himself was an Israelite, and the early disciples were Jews. The expression **"until"** establishes that the present condition has a divinely appointed termination. Israel's blindness is neither absolute nor interminable. The present dispensation, during which God is calling out a people for his name from among the Gentiles **(Acts 15:14)**, will not continue without conclusion.

The declaration which follows is equally unequivocal. **"And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26)**. The apostle is not teaching that every Jewish individual throughout history will be saved irrespective of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, nor that the nation of Israel possesses an alternative means of reconciliation apart from him. He is announcing the future deliverance and conversion of Israel as a nation, represented by the surviving remnant at the conclusion of its prophetic history. The Deliverer will come out of Sion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The nation which rejected the Lord Jesus Christ at his first advent will acknowledge him when he appears again.

The difference between the present regathering of Jews to their ancestral homeland and the promised spiritual restoration of Israel is indispensable. The reestablishment of a Jewish state in 1948 constitutes a momentous historical development, particularly when considered alongside the prophetic declarations concerning Israel's return to the land. The existence of a modern Jewish government does not demonstrate that the nation has already entered into the fullness of its promised restoration. The spiritual condition contemplated in Ezekiel 36:25–27 includes cleansing from uncleanness, the reception of a new heart, and the operation of God's Spirit within the people. Such promises plainly transcend the establishment of civil institutions or the recovery of political independence.

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones provides a vivid illustration. The prophet was shown bones exceedingly dry, afterward brought together, covered with sinews and flesh, and finally animated by breath. The Lord identifies them without ambiguity: **"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel" (Ezek 37:11)**. The vision culminates in the promise that God will bring his people into their own land, place his Spirit within them, and establish them under one king. The prophecy embraces both national restoration and spiritual renewal. To terminate its fulfillment at the establishment of a secular state is to truncate the vision before its appointed fulfillment.

The Christian should not imagine that the interval between Israel's present condition and its eventual deliverance will be one of uninterrupted advancement. The prophets describe a period

of unparalleled affliction preceding the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jeremiah calls it **"the time of Jacob's trouble,"** but immediately adds the consolatory assurance, **"but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer 30:7)**. Both clauses are necessary. The tribulation will be real, the suffering will be terrible, and the national chastisement will be attended by tremendous destruction. The Lord has not decreed the extinction of Jacob. His purpose is to preserve a people through whom the covenant promises will receive their appointed fulfillment.

Moses had already anticipated the Lord's dealings with Israel in the latter days. The thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy recounts the nation's ingratitude, corruption, idolatry, and consequent exposure to judgment **(Deut 32:15–26)**. The Lord's indignation against his people is neither arbitrary nor disproportionate to their apostasy. The chapter does not conclude with the irrevocable destruction of Israel. The Lord will judge his people and repent himself for his servants when he sees that their power is gone **(Deut 32:36)**. His chastisement will expose the impotence of their idols and vindicate his own authority.

The warning in Hebrews 10:26–31 acquires additional significance when considered within this prophetic framework. The passage speaks of fearful judgment, the fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries, and the declaration, **"The Lord shall judge his people" (Heb 10:30)**. Its language recalls the warnings of Moses and bears upon the dreadful consequences of rejecting the truth when the final crisis of Israel approaches. The Christian must rightly divide the word of truth, refusing to confound the doctrinal circumstances of the church, whose salvation rests securely upon the finished work of Christ, with the conditions attending Israel's future trial under the Antichrist.

Isaiah announces that the nation will undergo a severe reduction. **"For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return" (Isa 10:22)**. The prophet's language is noteworthy for its conjunction of destruction and preservation. The multitude of Abraham's descendants does not exempt them from the judgment pronounced upon their rebellion. The remnant is not an accidental residue which survives contrary to the purposes of God. Its preservation is integral to the very prophecy which announces the consuming judgment.

This theme reaches a particularly solemn treatment in Zechariah 13:8–9. The Lord declares that two parts in the land shall be cut off and die, while the third shall remain. The surviving portion will be brought through the fire and refined as silver and gold. Its ultimate confession is equally important: **"The LORD is my God."** The passage does not simply anticipate the physical survival of a remnant. It describes the purification and reconciliation of those who endure unto the end **(Matt 24:13–14; Heb 3:6, 14)**.

Here the Christian encounters one of the most sobering features of Israel's prophetic future. The Great Tribulation will be a period of extraordinary cruelty and devastation. Our Lord described it as a time of affliction unparalleled in the history of the world and declared that, except those days should be shortened, no flesh would be saved **(Matt 24:21–22)**. The prophetic picture is not one of a nation enjoying immunity from persecution because of its covenantal ancestry. It is one of a people subjected to fearful chastisement and satanic adversity, preserved from complete annihilation by the intervention of God.

Psalm 16:4 deserves careful consideration within this prophetic sequence. **"Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips."** In its doctrinal application to Israel's future persecution, the verse anticipates the consequences of idolatrous allegiance and the abominable worship associated with the coming Antichrist. The man of sin will exalt himself above all that is called God and demand an allegiance which belongs exclusively to the Lord **(2 Thess 2:3–4)**. The prophetic warnings concerning idolatry assume a dreadful significance in the final crisis, when submission to the beast will involve more than political accommodation. It will constitute an act of worshipful apostasy that leads to an eternity in the lake of fire **(Rev 14:9–11; 20:15)**.

The reference to blood offerings in Psalm 16:4 also invites examination alongside the passages which describe the consumption of human flesh. Psalm 14:4 speaks of workers of iniquity who **"eat up my people as they eat bread,"** while Psalm 27:2 portrays enemies advancing to eat the flesh of the righteous. The historical record establishes that cannibalism occurred during Israel's earlier judgments, when the inhabitants of besieged cities were reduced to the most appalling extremities **(Deut 28:53–57; 2 Kgs 6:28–29; Lam 4:10)**. Such passages demonstrate the literal horrors which have attended the nation's chastisement.

Isaiah 6:13 introduces another consideration. The prophet declares that a tenth shall remain and that this portion shall return and be eaten. Within the prophetic interpretation under consideration, the reference to a tenth is associated with the principle of the tithe, while the language of consumption is understood to foreshadow the literal destruction and eating of Jewish victims during the Great Tribulation. When read alongside the drink offerings of blood in Psalm 16:4, the passage is taken to anticipate a form of cannibalistic, sacrificial worship in which persecuted Jews are slain and their flesh and blood consumed. This is an interpretation drawn from the conjunction of the passages, not an explicit description of such a ceremony in Isaiah 6:13 itself. Its horrifying implications are further associated with the souls beneath the altar who were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held **(Rev 6:9–11)**, and with those beheaded for refusing the worship and mark of the beast **(Rev 20:4)**.

Revelation 13 describes the coercive character of that dominion, including the demand that the inhabitants of the earth worship the beast and the imposition of economic restrictions upon those who refuse his mark. Revelation 12 depicts the dragon's persecution of the woman and the preservation of a remnant during the appointed period **(Rev 12:6, 13–17)**. Within this dispensational interpretation, Israel becomes the principal object of satanic persecution as the conclusion of the age approaches. The adversary who has sought repeatedly to frustrate the purposes of God will make a final attempt to destroy the people through whom those purposes are to be vindicated.

The historical persecution of the Jewish people, including the monstrous extermination undertaken by Nazi Germany, affords a grave reminder of the capacity of human wickedness for systematic cruelty. The Great Tribulation, however, is portrayed in the Bible as a persecution of still greater severity, extending beyond the geographical confines and political circumstances of any preceding catastrophe. The Lord Jesus Christ himself declared, **"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt 24:21)**. The prophetic testimony contemplates a concentration of satanic power,

compulsory worship, economic coercion, slaughter, and the threatened extinction of the Jewish remnant. The terrible sufferings of earlier generations, however extensive, do not exhaust the meaning of that prediction. Its unparalleled character rests upon the Lord's own declaration, not upon speculative numerical comparisons with the victims of former persecutions.

The preservation of the remnant is a matter of considerable doctrinal importance. Satanic persecution will not accomplish the extinction of Israel, because the covenantal purposes of God cannot be defeated. The surviving Jews will be brought through the ordeal, and the Lord will accomplish in them that spiritual transformation which neither national pride nor political organization could produce. Their eventual acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ will vindicate the promises made to their fathers and demonstrate that divine chastisement has not nullified divine faithfulness.

Zechariah 12:10 supplies the decisive revelation concerning Israel's recognition of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord declares that he will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications, and **"they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."** The corresponding testimony in Revelation 1:7 announces, **"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him."** The mourning which follows is not the sorrow of a nation defeated by superior military power alone. It is the contrition of a people brought to recognize the identity of the one whom their forefathers rejected. The crucified Jesus is revealed as the promised Deliverer, and national repentance accompanies the recognition of his person.

The connection with Romans 11 is unmistakable. The Deliverer who turns away ungodliness from Jacob is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel's salvation does not proceed from the vindication of Judaism apart from Christ, nor from the establishment of a political order independent of redemption. It is accomplished through the Savior whose blood provides the only sufficient atonement for sin. The covenantal promises reach their fulfillment, not in the perpetuation of unbelief, but in the nation's reconciliation to the very Savior whom it once rejected. The prophets repeatedly describe this restoration as the turning again of Jacob's captivity. Jeremiah promises that the Lord will bring again the captivity of his people Israel and Judah and cause them to return to the land which he gave their fathers **(Jer 30:3)**. The same prophet announces the new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, under which the Lord will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more **(Jer 31:31–34)**. These promises embrace a restoration far exceeding the termination of the Babylonian exile. They anticipate the final establishment of Israel under the righteous government of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The expression concerning the turning of captivity occurs throughout the prophets and Psalms, bearing witness to the restoration which follows national humiliation. **"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream" (Ps 126:1)**. Zephaniah announces the regathering of the dispersed and the restoration of their fortunes before their eyes **(Zeph 3:19–20)**. These passages are not disconnected fragments of prophetic optimism. They belong to the same magnificent undertaking whereby the Lord will recover his people, purge their iniquity, and establish them in the inheritance which he promised to Abraham.

The Second Advent constitutes the crowning event. Zechariah 14 describes the gathering of nations against Jerusalem, the Lord's intervention on behalf of his people, and his standing upon the Mount of Olives. This assembly of the Gentile powers will not occur independently of divine sovereignty. The Lord himself declares, **"my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger" (Zeph 3:8)**. The nations which presume to accomplish the destruction of Israel will thus find themselves assembled for their own judgment at the hands of the Lord. Zechariah proceeds to announce, **"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth" (Zech 14:9)**. The restoration of Israel is inseparable from the personal return and earthly reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom promised through the prophets will not be realized through the progressive amelioration of human institutions or the triumph of an enlightened civilization. It will be established by the King himself.

Ezekiel 37:21–28 describes the restored nation dwelling in its land under one shepherd, with an everlasting covenant of peace and the Lord's sanctuary in the midst of his people. Amos declares that Israel will rebuild its wasted cities, plant vineyards, and inhabit the land from which it shall no more be uprooted **(Amos 9:14–15)**. The prophetic assurances concern an actual nation, an identifiable territory, and a future kingdom under the government of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their fulfillment will demonstrate that the Lord has neither forgotten his oath nor relinquished the inheritance which he bestowed upon the descendants of the patriarchs.

What, then, ought to be the attitude of Christians toward Israel in the present hour? The answer must be governed by the apostolic injunction rather than by the changing sentiments of nations. We are not commanded to approve unbelief, defend unrighteousness, or excuse wrongdoing because it is committed by those descended from Abraham. The same God who condemned the idolatry of Jeroboam, the abominations of Ahab, and the wickedness of Manasseh remains the righteous Judge of all the earth **(1 Kgs 12:28–33; 16:30–33; 2 Kgs 21:2–16)**. His covenantal promises cannot be invoked as a dispensation from moral accountability.

The repeated declaration that a king **"did evil in the sight of the LORD"** is sufficient evidence that Israel's covenantal standing did not require God's approval of its conduct. Even the most abominable departures from his commandments did not authorize the Gentile nations to assume the prerogatives of divine judgment. The Lord could denounce Israel's apostasy, deliver the nation into captivity, and afterward punish the very powers which had oppressed it **(Isa 10:12; 47:6; Jer 25:12; Zech 1:15)**. It would be a reprehensible presumption for professing Christians to make common cause with Israel's enemies in their hostility toward the Jewish people, or to transform legitimate moral disagreement into public denunciations which encourage their persecution.

Christians must likewise refuse to indulge contempt for the Jewish people, deride their national identity, or regard their present blindness as proof that God has permanently cast them away. Paul asks, **"Hath God cast away his people?"** and answers, **"God forbid" (Rom 11:1)**. He then affirms, **"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Rom 11:2)**. The apostle's testimony leaves no legitimate ground for the conceit that Gentile believers have supplanted Israel in every aspect of the promises made to the fathers.

The difference between the Jewish people and the policies of a modern government remains essential. Governments are composed of fallible individuals, and their decisions are subject to moral examination. The Christian may assess the conduct of the State of Israel, as that of any other nation, in light of justice, truth, and the sanctity of human life. Criticism of a governmental policy is not equivalent to denial of the Abrahamic covenant, and confidence in that covenant does not require indiscriminate approval of political action. The manner, occasion, and consequences of such criticism nevertheless demand circumspection. A Christian ought not employ the nation's imperfections as a pretext for publicly aligning himself with those who seek its destruction.

Of greater concern is the disposition which begins by questioning a political measure and ends by cultivating contempt for an entire people. The apostolic warning against boasting over the natural branches is pertinent whenever professing Christians permit national animosities, inherited prejudices, or theological arrogance to obscure the continuing purposes of God. The Jews remain, in Paul's language, beloved for the fathers' sakes. Their present unbelief furnishes a reason for earnest evangelistic concern, not for derision or malevolence.

The prospect of Israel's future affliction ought to awaken compassion rather than a spirit of morbid satisfaction. The prophetic judgments are not furnished to gratify curiosity concerning the sufferings of others. They reveal the holiness of God, the enormity of apostasy, the malignant purposes of Satan, and the invincibility of the Lord's covenantal faithfulness. A Christian who contemplates the coming distress of Jacob without sorrow has failed to imbibe the apostle's own disposition toward his kinsmen according to the flesh.

The prophet Elisha furnishes an affecting example of the disposition which ought to characterize those who contemplate Israel's impending sufferings. When Hazael stood before him, the prophet steadfastly regarded the man and began to weep. Asked to explain his tears, Elisha disclosed the atrocities which Hazael would afterward perpetrate against the children of Israel **(2 Kgs 8:11–12)**. The prophet understood that dreadful suffering lay before the nation. He did not receive that knowledge with satisfaction, nor did his recognition of divine judgment extinguish the tenderness of his heart. He wept. Surely those who profess to understand the prophetic destiny of Israel ought to exhibit something of the same compassion. The knowledge of impending judgment is no warrant for indifference toward its victims, much less for fraternizing with those who delight in their affliction.

There is something deeply incongruous in professing devotion to the Jewish Savior while harboring animosity toward the people from whom, concerning the flesh, he came **(Rom 9:5)**. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, fulfilled the promises made to the fathers, and will return to occupy the throne appointed to him. The believer's regard for Israel should arise neither from sentimental nationalism nor from an indiscriminate admiration of Jewish traditions, but from reverence for the God who chose the patriarchs and will fulfill every promise which he made to them.

The church should not imagine that its present privileges constitute an occasion for boasting. The Gentiles who were once strangers from the covenants of promise have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ **(Eph 2:11–13)**. Their admission into spiritual blessings is an exhibition

of mercy, not evidence of inherent superiority. Paul reminds his readers that they obtained mercy through Israel's unbelief **(Rom 11:30)**. Thankfulness, rather than arrogance, should characterize their conduct.

The Christian's responsibility is plain. We are to preach the gospel without respect of persons, pray for the salvation of Jewish people, reject every form of ethnic hatred toward them, and maintain confidence in the literal fulfillment of God's promises. We are to recognize Israel's present spiritual condition without pretending that its unbelief has annulled the Abrahamic covenant. We are to contemplate the approaching judgments with reverence, and the promised restoration with an assurance founded upon the veracity of the Lord.

There is, moreover, an admonition for the Christian in the very history of Israel. If the Lord has so faithfully preserved the promises made to Abraham through centuries of rebellion, dispersion, and national adversity, how unreasonable it would be to suppose that his faithfulness toward those redeemed by the blood of Christ is uncertain. The believer's confidence does not rest upon the caprice of human institutions or the transitory favor of the world. It rests upon the immutable character of the God who cannot lie **(Tit 1:2)**.

This consolation must not obscure the difference between Israel's national restoration and the eternal security of the church. The Christian is saved by grace through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the body of Christ possesses its own heavenly calling and inheritance. Israel's future dealings under the judgments of Daniel's Seventieth Week belong to another dispensational setting. To confound these administrations is to impair both the assurance of the Christian and the proper interpretation of the prophetic promises.

The restoration of Israel stands as a magnificent testimony to the fidelity of God. The nation may remain in unbelief, the Gentiles may become wise in their own conceits, and the nations of the earth may assemble against Jerusalem. The Antichrist may persecute the remnant, and the appointed chastisement may reduce the multitude to a comparatively small surviving company. The Lord will preserve those whom he has purposed to deliver. The Deliverer will come, ungodliness will be turned away from Jacob, and the covenant promises will receive their consummation in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When that day arrives, the nations will discover that the purposes of God were never contingent upon their acquiescence. The promises made to Abraham were not rhetorical embellishments, nor were the prophetic assurances concerning Zion allegorical descriptions of the church. The Lord who scattered Israel will gather the people again. The God who chastised Jacob will restore the surviving remnant. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was rejected at his first advent, will be acknowledged at his second, and the throne of David will be occupied by the King whose kingdom shall have no end **(Lk 1:32–33)**.

Until that day, the Christian must refuse both the presumption which excuses Israel's unbelief and the arrogance which despises Israel because of it. The apostolic testimony admits neither extreme. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for our sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. And the reason for that extraordinary conjunction is neither political expediency nor national merit, but the unalterable faithfulness of the Lord.

**“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29)**.

**“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” (Ps 122:6)**.