

WILL THE NATION OF ISRAEL RETURN IN MASS TO GOD?  
Robert Stapleton

The question of a mass return to God by national Israel is one that is at the very forefront of religious teachings today. As a matter of fact recent Presidents of the United States, such as Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, saw this as the impetus for the development of our Foreign Policy with Israel. The whole concept is advocated in thousands of books and articles written annually by those who have one thing in common, a belief in Premillennialism. This theory has as its origin the misunderstanding of certain Old Testament Scriptures relative to the Abrahamic promises and to their fulfillment. Once one properly understands these passages their understanding of this theory will be forced to be changed drastically. Further, a misunderstanding of Romans 11:26, which is tainted by one's premillennial leanings, adds to the confusion. Here, too, once one approaches Romans chapter eleven with a proper understanding of the Abrahamic promises, they will have fewer problems in understanding what Paul had in mind in his Roman letter.

In study of the Old Testament it is quickly seen that God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would inherit the land known of as Palestine (Genesis 13:14,15; 15:18). There can be no question about this. The problem lies in a failure to see that this promise has already been fulfilled. Should one remove his "premillennial colored glasses" long enough to look carefully at Joshua 21:43-45; 23:15; Judges 2:6; Nehemiah 9:22-24; 1 Kings 4:21 and; 1 Kings 8:56 they would see that "the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it..." (emphasis mine, R.W.S.). Should it be argued that Israel later lost the land and, therefore, the promise was nullified, several things must be carefully considered. First, the promise made to Abraham and his descendants was not an unconditional promise. Faithfulness to God was bound upon Israel and failure in this area was to result in their perishing "quickly from off the good land which he (I.e. God, R.W.S.) hath given unto" them (Joshua 23:16). Secondly, even though Israel did initially lose a portion of the land, it was later regained by David (2 Samuel 8:3). Therefore, since Israel had already experienced fulfillment of this promise, there is no promise left to be fulfilled at some time in the future.

Seeing that this is true, then we find ourselves approaching the book of Romans, and especially chapter eleven, a little differently. But even if we miss the above point we are able to understand Paul and what he meant when he said "And so all Israel shall be saved..." by a careful study of certain pertinent passages both within and without the book of Romans. It must be seen that salvation is conditional, irregardless of what those who believe in unconditional election teach. Really, there is one passage in the New Testament that is a bombshell in regards to this theory of a mass return of the Jews to the Lord. That passage is John 8:24 where Jesus stated, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." So long as the present day Jew continues to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, there is absolutely no way that they can be saved. By the way, while we are speaking of the present day Jew it should be kept in mind that they are at a loss in being able to trace their lineage back to a date prior to 70 A.D. which would have a great deal to do with an inheritance from a tribal perspective.

To properly understand what Paul speaks of in Romans 11:26 we must first see exactly who Israel is in this passage. Once we have done this our work is made much easier in coming to grips with what he speaks of. Beginning in Romans chapter two we see that the Jew, then, was not just one who had

followed a few externals relative to circumcision. Instead, he was one who had sought to comply with the proper inward changes related to turning to God (Romans 2:28,29). Moving on to chapter nine we see the point raised that "not all Israel...are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). This gets us to the spiritual concept of the promise relative to man being blessed in Isaac (Genesis 21:12). So what we are beginning to see is a narrowing down of exactly who Israel is. We are not looking at a physical kingdom but, instead, a spiritual one. We are not looking at a nation-wide blessing but, rather, a blessing to those, and only those, who turn to the Lord spiritually.

Moving on to chapter eleven we get to the very heart of the matter. According to Paul, there are those who "God hath not cast away" (Romans 11:2). These are the "remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5). Further, these are those who have been "grafted in" because of their having abided "not still in unbelief" (Romans 11:23). When this is connected to such passages as Galatians 3:25-27 we start to get the point that only those who approach the Lord in faith and obedience (Hebrews 5:9), are true children of God. Therefore the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 would be those spiritual Israelites who have been "grafted in" by their faith. Actually, this is seen by noticing that the word "so" is an adverb meaning "in this manner". Thus, "in this manner" (i.e. by faith and obedience) "all Israel shall be saved". Only those who have had their sins taken away (Romans 11:27), can be the spiritual Israel who will be saved. Connect this to such passages as Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; et al. and you will get the true picture. The "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 would, then, be none other than the spiritual Israel, the church or the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:21-23).