

Israel's Apostasy and Blindness Not Permanent

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

Arno Clemens Gaebelein delves into Romans 11, discussing the blindness of Israel and the distinction between the believing part of the nation and the unbelieving remainder. He emphasizes that the judicial blindness upon Israel is not permanent, drawing insights from Old Testament Scriptures to show that God's ultimate plan includes restoration and future blessings for Israel. Gaebelein highlights the importance of understanding the prophecies regarding Israel's temporary state of rejection and the hope for their eventual redemption, contrasting the current condition with the promised blessings foretold in the Scriptures.

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Transcript

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continued unbelief." - q: "Will all Jews be saved?" a: "The Bible teaches that God will have mercy upon all Jews, but it does not teach universal salvation." - q: "What is the significance of the Jewish race?" a: "The Jewish race is a supernatural witness to the truth of God's holy Word, as their entire history was divinely foretold thousands of years ago." - q: "Will God bless Israel?" a: "Yes, the Bible teaches that God will bless Israel in the future, as He has promised through the mouth of His holy prophets." quotes: - "God hath given to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, unto this day." - "Let their table be for a snare, and for a gin, and for a falltrap, and for a recompense to them; let their eyes be darkened not to see, and bow down their back alway." - "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath He covered." applicationPoints: - "We must not assume that Israel's blindness is permanent, but rather that it is a temporary condition that will be followed by restoration." - "We must not use Israel's blindness as an excuse for our own unbelief, but rather as a reminder of God's sovereignty and mercy." - "We must trust in God's promises of restoration and future blessing for Israel, and look forward to the day when they will be fulfilled." keywords: - "Israel's blindness" - "Judicial blindness" - "Temporary blindness" - "Old Testament Scriptures" - "Law, Prophets, and Writings" - "Restoration of Israel" - "Future blessing of Israel" - "Jewish race" - "Supernatural witness" ---

The next answer to the question of Romans xi and argument of Israel's position in God's purposes is taken from the Old Testament Scriptures.

"What is it then? What Israel seeks for, that he has not obtained; but the election has obtained, and the rest have been blinded, according as it is written, God has given to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, unto this day. And David says, Let their table be for a snare, and for a gin, and for a falltrap, and for a recompense to them; let their eyes be darkened not to see, and bow down their back alway" (verses 7-10).

It is here where commentaries have their say about the blindness of Israel and how God has completely given up the Jews. What a strange way some persons have in interpreting the Word of God. Some labor to prove that in the beginning of this chapter Paul means the "spiritual Israel"--the church--and not the literal Israel, but when the same expositors reach the verses which are before us now, they are quite correct and orthodox in saying it is the literal Israel. Such method of Bible exposition has done great harm in confusing Christian believers, besides being dishonoring to God's Word. When the apostle speaks here of the election he means the believing part of the nation at all times, the remnant past, the remnant future, and all those who believe now in the Lord Jesus Christ. When he speaks of the rest being blinded he means the remainder of the nation, which is unbelieving. As they refused Him who spake, judicial blindness was put upon them. Now this judicial blindness must not be looked upon in a way as some have done, and then by inference to build upon it such abominable doctrines as universal salvation. They reason God blinded them and they are not responsible for what they cannot see. God will have mercy upon them all, and all Jews will be saved at last, all who died with this judicial blindness upon them. We shall take up this phase of error later in our exposition.

The judicial blindness is certainly not to be understood that every Jew is born with this blindness upon him. Far be this thought! Every generation of Jews, in refusing the light which shines for all, in sharing the sin of their fathers in rejecting their Messiah, in continuing in their evil ways of unbelief, is put under the sentence of this judicial blindness. The Jew may see if he so chooses and he may refuse the light. God declared in His Word beforehand what would happen to them in this respect.

Before us are three quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. The Hebrews divide the Old Testament into three parts: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Holy Spirit here quotes from each of these divisions. The passages quoted prove that such a judicial blindness was to come upon them according to God's sovereign dealings. Now the most significant fact is that in none of these passages to which the Holy Spirit calls our attention the teaching is advanced that this blindness is to be permanent and final. There is no prophecy in the Scriptures which declares that the present blinded condition of Israel is their permanent and final condition.

The three quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures teach us much on these lines. The first is taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, "Yet the Lord hath given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deut. xxix:4). It is well known how the whole future of Israel is predicted through Moses in the closing chapters of the last Book which he wrote by divine inspiration. Their whole history is outlined. They were to be a people blinded, forsaking God, to be scattered in consequence of it into the corners of the earth. Their whole career of decline and apostasy is prophetically revealed. But alongside of all these prophecies of what should befall them, which were so literally fulfilled, we find prophecies relating to their restoration and future blessing. There is not a word anywhere in the writings of Moses which declares that God would ever leave them under the curse and in the condition into which He in His governmental dealings had to put them.

If we turn to the prophets, we find that Isaiah xxix:10 is quoted: "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath He covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed." How all this has been fulfilled in the judicial blindness, which has come upon Israel! Eyes and they see not and ears and they hear not; they read their own Scriptures and worship the law as the very breath of God and still they see not Him who is the End of the Law; nor do they hear His voice as He speaks in the Book. Their own Scriptures are indeed a sealed Book to them. But is this condition to prevail forever? Is there no hope for a change? Does Isaiah or any other prophet utter nothing but curse and blindness upon a disobedient people, for whom there is no hope? It is far different. Not alone does Isaiah and the rest of God's prophets reveal that the apostasy and judgment of Israel is only temporary, but their writings are full of glorious visions of that which is yet in store for this nation. It is true a Christian exposition of the Scriptures, lacking the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit has made sad havoc with these visions. These visions of a glorious future are almost universally applied to the church, and the blindness and curses left to the Jews. Such unreasonable method of Bible interpretation still upheld results in the greatest confusion.

We do not need to go outside of the chapter from which we have quoted to show that the judicial blindness is not the final state of Israel. In the closing verses of Isaiah xxix we have Jehovah's comfortable word to Israel:

"And in that day the deaf shall hear the words of the Book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off" (verses 13-20). This is a prophecy relating to the future. "That day" is the day of our Lord's manifestation in power and glory, and to the blind and deaf people blessings are promised. Throughout Isaiah's vision we find hundreds of promises which belong to Israel and which were never fulfilled in the past.

The third division of the Hebrew Bible, the Writings, is represented in the passage before us by a quotation from the Book of Psalms: "Let their table become a snare before them, and their very welfare a trap; let their eyes be darkened, that they see not, and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let the fierceness of thine anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; let there be no dweller in their tents" (Psalm lxxix:22-24).

David uttered these words through the Holy Spirit. The connection in which they stand is very significant. It is not David who relates his sufferings here, but the Spirit of Christ testifies beforehand concerning the sufferings which are in Christ and the rejection of the Messiah by His own people. "Reproach has broken my heart and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm lxxix:20). All this was fulfilled in Christ. This very prophecy He remembered on the cross when He said, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, "I thirst."

The words of imprecation, which follow and which are quoted in our chapter, show what was to come upon the people who treated Him thus. Even so it has been. But shall they ever remain in that condition of rejection? Shall that awful cry "His blood be upon us and upon our children" continually be executed upon all future generations, or is a day coming when that precious blood in its atoning power will cover all Israel and blessing will take the place of the curse? We only need to turn to the close of this Psalm to find an answer once more. "For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah; that they may dwell there and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein" (Psalm lxxix:35, 36). Here the future of Zion and the nation is given. The whole Book of Psalms is full of the praises of His redeemed people Israel, brought back to God and into their own land, with Jehovah as King dwelling in their midst. These praises are, of course, all future; but these Psalms tell us that God has not finally cast away His people. We learn therefore that the threatened and predicted blindness of Israel, predicted in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, the entire Old Testament, has come to pass. But this blindness is not complete nor final. The Lord who brought blindness upon Israel will yet bless His people Israel with peace and do all He spake through the mouth of His holy prophets.

In connection with this we desire to point out what a witness the Jewish race is to the truth of God's holy Word. It is a supernatural fact, which no infidel can explain, that thousands of years ago, the entire history of this remarkable race was divinely foretold. The curse which rests upon them, the condition of their land and the city of Jerusalem, and much else, bear witness that the Bible is the Word of God, that the rejected Jesus is their promised Messiah.

And the Word of God, which has been so literally fulfilled touching the curse, will some blessed day be as literally fulfilled in blessing.

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