

Some Thoughts on Romans 11

by Art Katz

Israel's restoration through the Church is the climax of the ages, precipitating the Millennial Kingdom and the glory.

Scripture: Acts 15:16

Topics: "Christian Conduct", "Godly Fear"

Description

Greek Word Studies for a sermon on conduct (anastrepho) emphasizes the importance of one's behavior, manner of life, and deportment in relation to others. The term 'anastrepho' conveys the idea of turning back and forth in a place, spending time there, and describes one's whole conduct in life. It signifies the general ordering of one's conduct in relation to others, specifically referring to conduct in the sphere of godly fear. The sermon highlights the biblical perspective on conduct, emphasizing the need for a reverential fear of God, which motivates a life of God-honoring choices and denial of fleshly indulgences.

Transcript

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I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy (11:11).

In one of the most remarkable strokes of the divine genius, God turns the tragedy of divine judgment, Israel's casting away, as the very means for the 'grafting in' of the Gentiles so as to redound finally in Israel's return. "What seemed their loss may thus conceivably accomplish a far wider measure of good than even consistent loyalty could have achieved," in that the apostolic proclamation of the gospel was free from the nationalistic pride and legalistic insistence that would likely have repelled Gentiles were it promulgated by the Messiah-accepting nation itself.

The tendency now against which Paul battles is for the Church created through their defection to see itself as having replaced fallen Israel. Therefore the genius of "the amazing doctrine" that places the premium of their return upon the Church created out of their rejection. This mandate of obligation to the Jew, in every

locality where the Church itself should be established, brings an ultimate dimension of demand, which if accepted and fulfilled, provides that dynamic that makes the church the Church! It is exactly for this reason that Paul's apostleship, contrary to his enormous rabbinical qualification, is to the uncircumcision rather than to his own!

Paul regards arousing his own (Jewish) people to envy as an aspect of his ministry to Gentiles. It is an example of the continuing interaction between Jews and Gentiles which he perceives, and which is interwoven into his mission strategy.

The key to Israel is the Gentile Church. And the key to the Church, is this dynamic of obligation which it would never have chosen for itself, and yet is alone calculated to save itself from the religious self-centeredness and even 'spiritual' egocentricity that would have been its apostolic ruin For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should become wise in your own conceits" (v.25)!

That this 'mystery' has been lost to the historic and contemporary Church's consideration is evident from its condition. The dimensions of this can never be deduced. Mystery can only be revealed. But revelation itself waits upon a certain disposition of spirit of brokenness and humility towards the Jew and Israel even in (especially in?) their fallenness for which the God of revelation yet waits. Does not God's mercy toward her wait upon a changed heart attitude in the Church according to Psalm 102?

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof (vv.13-14).

Notice that the affection is not for some etherealized, romanticized or idealized Israel, but for the grit of the actuality of the nation [not her archeology!] as she in fact is and is unhappily increasingly becoming! The present Israel, in her abject and melancholy condition, is not to be blithely sweep away in that apt turn of phrase that prefers "the Jerusalem that is from above" by disdaining the one that is presently below. It is not even because Jesus once trod her dust but because we have come down and surrendered to the embrace of the whole nation in the totality of her entire history of shameful apostasy as in her moments of glory being completely identified with her in her humiliation as being altogether our humiliation as the Israel of God. Could this be part of the "fullness of the Gentiles" (v.25) that releases "the deliverer to come out of Zion" to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob"?

Our further incentive, and altogether related to and intrinsic to the above, is our apostolic jealousy for our God's honor; for "when the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory"(v.16)"so [because of that] the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth His glory"(v.15)! In summary then, the issue of eschatological climax that concludes the age and issues in the Lord's coming and Kingdom is an Israel restored through the mercy of God released by the response of the Church toward her! It is a "set time" in the sense of something positioned yet waiting upon an attitude of heart on the part of God's servants of the deepest kind that cannot be feigned or simulated!

The issue of God's mercy is the issue of God, for nothing so reveals Him in what He is in Himself than His mercy. Israel's qualification for His mercy is her disqualification, for

It is only in the context of disobedience that mercy has relevance and meaning. Mercy is of such a character that disobedience is its complement or presupposition and only as exercised to the disobedient does it exist and operate. . . It is by the mercy shown to the Gentiles. . . that Israel's conversion is realized.

If all mankind is to have hope, [and it is for all mankind that Israel is the paradigm or model] it is not enough for God's mercy to be stated abstractly as a principle. It has to be showed in that nation most disobedient and least deserving that mercy might be mercy and God be God! This is the mystery of Israel's calling and election and indeed our own! The accent now falls upon the determinate action of God. He "hath shut up all unto disobedience". . . "that He might have mercy upon all"(Rom. 11:32).

What is the significance for the world in Israel's restoration? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead (v.15)?

Seeing that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"(v.29), "There cannot be irremediable rejection of Israel; the holiness of theocratic consecration is not abolished and will one day be vindicated in Israel's fullness and restoration". "The ingrafting of Israel is for this reason the action which of all actions is consonant with the unfolding of God's worldwide purpose of grace". "If God could use the tragedy of Israel's rejection to bring salvation to the Gentiles, with what further blessing could he not enrich the world through Israel's acceptance and fullness?"

One recent commentator speaks of Israel's return as "The eschatological miracle. . . when the full number of Gentiles come in; like a nuclear reaction reaching critical mass, this will finally provoke the Jews to jealousy and to belief in Christ in large numbers. The latter in turn will signal or correspond with life from the dead, the resurrection of all believers, and thus with the return of Christ."

Conclusion

Israel's last days restoration through the Church is the climax of the ages. It precipitates the Millennial Kingdom and the glory. The role of the church in this is supreme and ultimate requiring a sanctification of a final and ultimate kind. Its fulfillment of the mandate of Israel can be only upon the ground of resurrection itself. By this mandate through the Word of the Lord, the Church is itself provoked to a ground which it would not otherwise have sought nor obtained and that prepares it now for its own Millennial destiny an blessedness. Thus has Israel, even in its apostasy and fallenness, played a critical though unwitting role in the divine saga that concludes the age and introduces the ages to come in which it will be eternally grateful for the role of the Gentile Church toward itself that obtained their mercy.

"O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. . . For of him, and through him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

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