

Salvation of Gentile and Jew

The Eschatological Significance of Israel's Future Restoration

by Tim Gallant

Introduction

Some years ago, during my seminary career, I wrote an extensive paper on Romans 11.¹ In that paper, I defended the position that Paul anticipates a widespread turning of Israel to Christ prior to the Second Coming. I dealt extensively with the alternative views known to me. These included the simple “the Church is Israel” view (often associated – somewhat misleadingly – with John Calvin); the view that Paul is affirming a perpetual remnant of believing Jews (advocated by Hoeksema, Hendriksen, and others); along with the view I espoused.

In the intervening years, I have remained satisfied with my exegesis of Romans 11. Nonetheless, there have been two developments which have led me to write further on the subject: 1) new understanding regarding the structure of Paul’s underlying logic; and 2) awareness of a fourth alternative, in the form of the preterist reading of Romans 11 put forward by James B. Jordan.²

It should therefore be understood that this paper is intended to be complementary to my earlier work. Because there is such extensive argumentation available in “All Israel,” I have not deemed it necessary to reproduce much of the argument here. What I do wish to accomplish in this essay, primarily, is to interact with Jordan’s thesis, and along the way explore the further understanding at which I have arrived in the intervening period.

Jordan’s Preterist Reading

James Jordan’s position, in a nutshell, summarizes into two theses: 1) the salvation of “all Israel” mentioned by Paul in Romans 11.26 occurred with a widespread conversion of Jews just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70; and 2) the post-AD 70 reality is that there is no special place whatsoever for non-Christian Jews. In fact, as far as anything meaningful on a biblical level, there really is no such thing as Israel, except within the Christian Church, which itself is the real Israel.

To demonstrate this position, Jordan argues the following:³

1. Romans 11 is “the only place in the New Testament where a future conversion of the Jews is predicted.... Nowhere else is anything said about a future conversion

¹ “All Israel: The Saved in Romans 11.26.” Now available on the internet at: http://www.biblicalstudiescenter.org/interpretation/rom11_26.htm

² “The Future of Israel Reconsidered: Another Look at Romans 11.” *Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper No. 18*. (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1994)

³ I am not here attempting to be exhaustive, but to provide a fair representation of the major points Jordan makes in defense of his position.

- of the Jews” (1-2). The implicit thought is that the usual interpretation of the chapter makes the chapter anomalous.
2. As one committed to preterism, Jordan thinks that “most of the predictions in the New Testament concern the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70” (3).
 3. The Jews were never a strictly ethnic entity; rather their identity derived from a covenantal arrangement, and in fact, the nation consisted of many (an overwhelming majority, Jordan suggests) that had no Abrahamic bloodlines at all (4-5).
 4. Correspondingly, the new covenant order is with the Church, just as previously “Hebrews” gave way to “Israel,” which in turn gave way to “Jews,” in successive dispensations of God’s covenantal economy. Meaning: the Church is “it.”
 5. There was a transitional period from AD 30-70, within which the old Jew-Gentile order gave way to the new order, a new order in which there is no Jew nor Gentile, since all are one in Christ Jesus. This transitional period, as indicated by its 40 year length, was a “wilderness period.” “By AD 70, it was time to enter the promised land, and the old Jewish people ceased to exist, being transformed into Christians, their new name” (6).
 6. Paul’s “no Jew or Gentile” theology undercuts any notion of a special future for Israel. The “whole point” of Paul’s gospel mystery “is that in Christ there is no longer any distinction, as there was in the Old Covenant, between priestly Israelite and non-priestly God-fearing gentile.... Thus, the meaning of the mystery runs against any notion of a continuing distinction between Jew and gentile” (9).
 7. Paul’s motivation in evangelizing Gentiles is to provoke the Jews to jealousy. Jordan suggests this only makes sense for the first-century situation, where Jews were still steeped in the Old Testament promises. Modern Christians cannot provoke modern Jews to jealousy because they “do not have what Modern Jews want.... Talmudic Jews are looking for a completely different kind of kingdom” (9). “Modern Jews are not in the least provoked by the fact that non-Jews believe the Gospel. Modern Jews get angry with [when?] *Jews* convert, not when ‘Gentiles’ do” (19).

Response

I have a great deal of respect for James Jordan, and I am happy to recommend his contributions to the Church’s understanding of Scripture. Moreover, it is to be conceded that there are many compelling aspects to his thesis. It has the attraction of providing a rather simple solution to some thorny problems – not least, the issue of how there can be some sort of continuing covenantal status for Israel if (in general) it is apostate, and especially since the Church is the one institution with which God is now dealing.

Nonetheless, I must confess that there are some features here which do not quite ring true for me, and I do not find his position compelling.

It is not possible to give equal treatment to every matter that Jordan raises, but I do hope to give greater weight to the weightier matters, which will (I hope) help us to keep things in perspective.

1. Is Romans 11 an Anomaly?

It is on this very first point that I wish to focus my attention, because if the passage is not such a “sore thumb,” then it will be all the less possible for us to adopt (what I must call) an idiosyncratic reading.

The precondition for the eschaton in Romans 11

This was, in truth, my weak point in my earlier paper, because I had written in a brief course of time and focused upon one chapter. Moreover, there was one element in Romans 11 that I had not grasped (and that element makes its presence felt at least three times). It was only after reading Arland Hultgren’s *Paul’s Gospel and Mission*⁴ and Terence L. Donaldson’s *Paul and the Gentiles*⁵ that I was triggered to do further reflection. And that further reflection opened up another text that brought things together very clearly.

In Romans 11, at least four times Paul asserts that the salvation of the Gentiles has occurred precisely because of Israel’s recalcitrance:

11.11: “through their fall... salvation has come to the Gentiles.”

11.12: “their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles....”

11.15: “their being cast away is the reconciling of the world....”

11.30: The Gentiles “have now obtained mercy through their disobedience....”

Why is it said that salvation comes to the Gentiles through Israel’s fall? Certainly, this would be understandable, if all that was intended was that Israel had to reject her Messiah long enough for Him to be crucified, since that is the ground of salvation. But Paul is clearly saying more than that. He is saying that Israel’s *persistent* disobedience, resulting in her being *cast away* (11.15) is necessary for Gentile salvation.

Why?

The answer is that Paul’s fundamental presupposition is that Christ’s return to bring about the general resurrection rests upon the recovery of Israel to faith as its *necessary and sufficient* precondition. That is to say: if Israel as a whole turns to Christ, *there is no more history as we now know it*; it will be time for the resurrection, final judgment, and consummated kingdom. And a necessary corollary of that is simply this: If Israel had immediately repented, *there would have been no Gentile Church*. That is why Israel’s fall has resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles, the reconciliation of the world: it has provided “temporal space” for the Gentiles to be saved.⁶

⁴ *Paul’s Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

⁵ *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997)

⁶ Note that this is the only view that “works.” Paul says that the fall of Israel is necessary, not merely for a “political” resolution of the Jew-Gentile distinction, but for Gentile *salvation* (11.11), period. Israel’s salvation somehow would have precluded the salvation of the Gentiles. It is hard to see how this is explicable unless Israel’s salvation closes the door on the present age.

This, then, is the meaning of 11.15: “For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” Many commentators have rightly recognized a reference here to the general resurrection. Recognizing that Israel’s restoration is a precondition for that resurrection renders this verse readily transparent: Israel’s “acceptance” (the opposite of being “cast away”) will trigger the resurrection.⁷

Jordan takes “life from the dead” in 11.15 to refer to a typological resurrection: “a political resurrection that finally overcomes the Jew-Gentile bipolarity for all time” (17). But it seems clear to me that this reading is far less satisfactory than the one I have proposed: 1) The only parallel with the language he can draw upon is not in Paul, but in Revelation.⁸ He offers no evidence that Paul himself employs the resurrection language in this fashion. 2) Jordan’s reading, unlike mine, is not internally transparent. The best that he can argue is that the salvation of many Gentiles was necessary to provoke a mass

⁷ If Paul wishes to refer to the general resurrection, why does he use the phrase “life from the dead” (*zôe ek nekrôn*) rather than “resurrection” (*anastasis*)? Simply, *zôe ek nekrôn* is quite close to the more usual *anastasis ek nekrôn* to begin with. In truth, the LXX sometimes employs *anastasis* to translate “life” (see e.g. Is 26.19, which renders “your dead shall live” as “the dead shall resurrect/arise”), so it could be said that Paul’s usage here is Hebraic.

In addition, it may be that Paul intends, by employing a less usual construction, to evoke a secondary resonance. Already in ch 8.32, Paul has alluded to Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac in the divine sacrifice of the Son (compare to Gen 22.12: even as Abraham has not “withheld” – or spared – his son, neither has God spared His own Son). Hebrews 11.19 indicates that Isaac was (in type) raised up from the dead.

This Isaac typology must be compared to, and combined with, the corporate-individual dynamic of the Servants identity in Isaiah 40ff. The Servant is blind (Is 42.19); similarly, Paul describes Israel’s eyes as unseeing and darkened in Rom 11.8, 10. (This sightlessness is the cause of their stumbling, as the logic of the movement from 11.10 to 11.11 implies.) Isaiah 42 continues on and says that it was Yahweh Himself who “gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers” (Is 42.24). God poured “the fury of His anger” upon him, “yet he did not know; and it burned him, yet he did not take it to heart” (42.25). The blind Servant is given up to judgment. This is in the same chapter that says the Servant “will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (42.1); Yahweh will give the Servant “as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles” (42.6) – ironically, “to *open blind eyes*.” Through the blindness of the Servant, the nations will be brought to sight.

I therefore suggest that the temporary hardening (blinding) of Israel fits into the Isaac typology. Just as God has not withheld His divine Son, the Servant, but “given Him up for us all” (Rom 8.32), so too He has not withheld His son Israel, the Servant, but cast him away for the reconciling of the world (Rom 11.15a). But as is the case with Christ, His purpose is not that Israel stumble so that he should fall ultimately and finally (11.11). As with Isaac and as with Jesus, Israel too will be given life from the dead (11.15b).

This illustrates Paul’s paranetic concern in Rom 11 quite well. The Gentiles are tempted to boast against the natural branches (11.18, 20, 25a), when in fact they ought to be humbled. God has sacrificed His firstborn for the time being, so that the Gentiles may be saved. God has not withheld His Isaac, for the life of the world.

In any case, whether this is in the background of the phrase in question in any way, I think it is a valid analysis of the total picture Paul is presenting, and fits nicely into the biblical typological pattern.

⁸ It is well beyond my purpose to evaluate whether Jordan’s reading of the Revelation texts is correct. Even if it is, that demonstrates nothing regarding Romans 11. In truth, given the typological relationship between AD 70 and the consummation which Jordan himself propounds (and with which I concur), one would rather *expect* that a restoration in the one case would imply a greater restoration in the other, just as AD 70 implies a more large-scale judgment at the end.

of Jews to jealousy. But it is not at all clear why the initial wave of Jewish conversions was not sufficient to create a Jew-Gentile Church where the “bipolarity” was overcome.

But there is more: my line of thought above explains why 11.25 is so necessary: “blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” This is not a mere coincidental sequence; rather, blindness has happened to Israel, precisely *so that* the fullness of the Gentiles *could* come in. The frequent complaint that Paul’s conclusion in 11.25-26 (or at least, the “future conversion” interpretation of it) is unprecedented and anomalous thus falls to the ground. Paul has prepared us precisely for this future conversion.

Confirmation in Acts

As I have indicated, this insight also opens up “outside support” for the “future restoration” view of Romans 11. That support primarily derives from Acts 3.19-21. Peter, preaching to “men of Israel” (Acts 3.12), says this:

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (NKJV)

Peter’s argument predicates several things upon the repentance of his hearers (each of the verbs is an aorist, most naturally taken as referring to punctiliar rather than continuing action):

- your sins may be blotted out
- times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord
- the Lord may send Jesus Christ

Clearly, the sending of Jesus Christ here refers to the final, eschatological return – the Second Coming, because in this context Peter says that the heavens must “receive” Him until the time of restoration in question. Acts 3.20-21 thus looks back to the promise in 1.11 that Jesus would return in the same manner the disciples had seen Him depart.

Given the weight of these results, Peter is clearly not saying that (all) these things are promised to a few individuals. The return of Christ will not occur simply because a handful of Jews repent. His hearers are thus representative of the nation as a whole; Peter is calling upon them as men of Israel, which as a whole must repent, so that the promises at last may come in their fullness.⁹

⁹ This has very interesting parallels to the widespread Jewish thought that the Messiah’s coming was preconditioned upon Israel’s faithfulness. The Pauline and Petrine notion of conversion as the precondition for Messiah’s return shows that the Israelite anticipation was not completely wrong, but it failed to account for the impossibility: what Israel was essentially looking for was the “Second Coming,” but apart from Messiah’s prior work, the Second Coming was fundamentally impossible. Christ had to “come ahead of Himself” in order to prepare a people for the age to come. Further reflection upon all of this would, I believe, be very fruitful, in terms of both Old Testament and Pauline exegesis.

Now, if all of this is so, this passage is clearly parallel to Romans 11. If the conversion of Israel is a precondition for the Second Coming, and the Second Coming is a certainty, then the conversion of Israel is a certainty. *Romans 11 is not an anomaly.*

This observation leads us back a few chapters to the question of the disciples prior to Jesus' ascension: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1.6). This has frequently been scorned as a bad question, despite the fact that Jesus does not treat it as such. He does not imply that the kingdom will not be "restored" to Israel; instead, His reply would seem to presuppose the opposite, because He makes it sound like a matter of mere timing: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1.7).

Further, it is interesting that the disciples ask, "will you *at this time*?" Why? Because Jesus has just finished telling them that they are about to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.5), which was regarded as *an eschatological event*. This view was correct; Hebrews 6.5 identifies the gifts of the Spirit as "the powers of the age to come." The point is that many of the tensions we see in the New Testament arise precisely because of the two-stage character of the coming of the eschatological promises. The disciples' question presupposes that the outpouring of the Spirit is an eschatological event; it also presupposes that the restoration of Israel was likewise an eschatological event.¹⁰

Confirmation in Matthew

One more New Testament passage leads us in the same direction, however suggestively. At the culmination of His great tirade against "Jerusalem" (i.e. the Jewish leaders, since personified Jerusalem is distinguished from her children in verse 37), Jesus says in Matthew 23.38-39: "See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

Jesus does not say that they shall see Him no more. Nor yet, as might be expected, does He say they shall see Him no more until He comes in *judgment*. To be sure, one could suggest that the "until" might be expressing a condition that never does become fulfilled. But given what we have already seen in Acts 3, that seems intrinsically unlikely. Moreover, that suggests that Jesus is implying, "You really never will see Me again," and that does not seem to be His intention.

It seems more likely that Jesus is implying that at some future point Israel's leaders will recognize Him for who He is and finally confess what the children confessed at His triumphal entry (Mt 21.9). And that confession is precisely the precondition for His return – His being "seen again."

¹⁰ Rather than presupposing that they must have meant something misguided by "the kingdom," we rather ought to acknowledge that surely they had learned something about what that kingdom involved, after having spent this much time with Jesus – not least, after having their misunderstanding shattered by the cross and resurrection. Instead of thinking that it was the disciples who were so dull – who scarcely showed themselves dull in the handling of things with replacing Judas later in the chapter, but still preceding Pentecost – perhaps it is time we attributed our unclarity to our own assumptions rather than to theirs.

While not all of the above passages are as clear as Romans 11 and Acts 3, the total picture is nonetheless highly coherent. There is a witness across several writers (Matthew, Luke, and Paul) and speakers (Jesus, Peter, and Paul) testifying to the idea that when Israel turns to Jesus, He will return in glory, bringing all the grand covenant promises to their final consummation: resurrection and the “restoration of all things” (cf Acts 3.21).

It seems to me that this, by itself, strikes a very damaging blow against Jordan’s thesis. As long as it appears that Romans 11 is an isolated anomaly, it may seem easy to pick on it. (Nonetheless, I must observe that Jordan does no real exegetical labour in Romans 11 in his paper, spending just two pages dealing with it directly. I encourage the reader to compare this to my “All Israel” essay and consider whether Jordan has done enough to provide a plausible alternative, much less an exegetical demonstration of his case.) But Romans 11 does not, after all, stand alone. Peter and Jesus likewise speak in terms which very evidently presuppose that there will be no final state without a widespread conversion of Israel which precipitates it.

Nonetheless, I now wish to pass – rather more rapidly – through some of Jordan’s other supports for his thesis.

2. Preterism

As a preterist, Jordan suggests that “most of the predictions in the New Testament concern the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70” (3).

I have little to say to this, other than that it is far too doctrinaire. Surely even Jordan does not think that *all* of the predictions in the New Testament concern AD 70. We cannot approach a prophetic text with the assumption of what it must be (or even is probably) referring to.

3. Israel’s Covenantal Identity

Jordan points out that Israel was never strictly defined by ethnicity; from the beginning, people without Abrahamic blood could be incorporated into the people.

What is interesting in this case is that I agree with him on this point 100%. And I am ready to acknowledge that, on certain levels, this makes my position more complex than his. It is much easier to posit that one covenant has superceded another, and in the process, the people have simply been redefined without any remainder.

But simplicity is not demonstration. And in truth, underneath the system’s apparent simplicity, loose threads are left hanging. Even Jordan is forced to put forward a transitional period during which the old covenant’s leftovers get sorted out. But I am not entirely convinced that a transitional period can dispel all the difficulties. In Romans 11, Paul speaks of “natural branches” that have been cut off, and can be “grafted in again” (11.23). It seems to me that if all we have is a people who are genuinely in covenant, no remainder, it becomes senseless to continue to speak of “natural branches.” Once cut off, they should no longer be branches, at least not “natural” ones. Furthermore, Paul’s firstfruit/lump and root/branches metaphors (11.16) indicate that he can conceptualize a sort of “outer ring” that a “no remainder” position cannot adequately account for. I realize that Jordan is simply suggesting that the “outer ring” is temporary and ceases to

exist after AD 70. But Paul's purpose in identifying that "outer ring" is to claim that it will be regrafted, and even though Jordan has a mini-conversion event prior to AD 70 in his scheme, I frankly do not believe that it does justice to what Paul anticipates happening. Even Jordan cannot think that the preponderance of Jews converted just prior to AD 70, or even anything remotely resembling it. But as I have shown in my larger paper, that is really what the logic and language of Paul's argument requires.

4. The Wilderness Years

I just alluded to Jordan's position of the transitional period being "the wilderness years." And to some degree, I can understand that and even agree. Certainly, the 40 year period between AD 30 and AD 70 lends itself well to that conception.

Yet... I'm not satisfied by the thought that this is a clean-cut wilderness period which ends in AD 70 with a crossover into the Promised Land. To maintain his position, Jordan has to affirm that the wilderness language of Romans 8 (led through a period of suffering by the Spirit of God) refers to AD 30-70, and that the groaning of the whole creation in birth pangs for the revelation of the children of God is answered by the new post-AD 70 situation. Not to put too fine a point on it, I regard this to be an impossible position. The "redemption of the body" (8.23) refers in context to the removal of mortality, just as Christ was raised from the dead (8.11).

I suggest that the current age of the Church is marked by tension that is too conveniently dissipated by means of a systematic AD 70 construct. Yes, there is genuine wilderness typology in those forty years in the first century. But the culmination of those forty years was not a crossing of Jordan into Canaan. That crossing cannot occur until the resurrection of the body, because the second baptism in Scripture involves physical death (Jesus was baptized with water first, but the "baptism I must be baptized with" that remained to Him was the cross [Lk 12.50].) As Paul indicates in Philippians 3.20-21, our citizenship is not in this world as it presently is, but in heaven, from whence we await our Saviour's return – meaning, the moment when our bodies are conformed to His glorious resurrected body. If our citizenship is not yet on earth, we are not yet in Canaan; we are still in the place between the Red Sea and the Jordan. There is therefore a genuine wilderness-ness that is inescapable until the time of Christ's return, no matter how much weight we may wish to place upon AD 70.

5. Paul's Mystery

In Jordan's view, the "whole point" of Paul's gospel mystery "is that in Christ there is no longer any distinction, as there was in the Old Covenant, between priestly Israelite and non-priestly God-fearing gentile.... Thus, the meaning of the mystery runs against any notion of a continuing distinction between Jew and gentile" (9).

It seems to me that in the above, Jordan tries to cast the net too widely when identifying the "whole point" of Paul's mystery.

Is the "whole point" of Paul's *mysterion* that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, *period*? Whichever place we turn in Paul to read of the *mysterion*, I do not believe that is the case. The only place there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile is *in Christ* (Gal 3.28; a passage, incidentally, which does not use *mysterion* terminology),

and outside of Christ, until the consummation, the present age still exists, although its form is already in the process of passing away (1 Cor 7.31). Therefore, this part of Jordan's argument rests on the supposition that this present age really does not exist.

Even beyond this, we must not absolutize Galatians 3.28. In Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile – or male and female, for that matter. That warns against getting carried away. Paul's concern is not the abolition of all distinction altogether, but the abolition of any thought of any covenantal advantage of one group over another, because together they form one man (i.e. Christ, the *totus Christus*).

This is illustrated by Acts 21.21. James and the elders in Jerusalem tell Paul that the zealous Jews among them "have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs." The way they bring up the issue indicates they do not believe these reports to be the truth of the matter; and the way in which Paul responds confirms their belief. Paul was adamant that Gentiles not be circumcised, but there is no evidence he has any agenda to destroy Jewish identity. The absolute flattening-out of Jew and Gentile is not his goal. He is concerned with unity and covenantal equality, not undifferentiation.

Moreover, we must not flat-line the *mysterion*. While it may be suitable to speak of Ephesians 3 in terms somewhat similar to Jordan (albeit with the "in Christ" qualification), the real point at issue is whether that is exactly what Paul is saying in Romans 11 when he uses the terminology. And I suggest that this is not the case. The mystery, as expressed in Romans 11.25 is, in Paul's words, "that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." As I understand him, Jordan wishes to go behind that several stages: there will be an influx of Israelites prior to AD 70; this influx will produce a situation in which a Jew-Gentile Church can now be united in an undifferentiated way; and therefore the *mysterion* is fulfilled.

I suggest that this is too speculative. It is not Paul's clear point in the context at all. The context does indeed concern itself with the salvation of both Jew and Gentile (11.30-32). And Paul is speaking about one olive tree, to be sure (11.16-24), but that is about as much as can be said. For he still is distinguishing between natural and wild branches, and he doesn't indicate that the *mysterion* is pointed at altering that.

The truth of the matter is that the *mysterion* is dealt with too restrictively if it is boiled down to "no distinction," period, between Jew and Gentile. The breadth of Paul's usage indicates that he uses it to refer to Gentile salvation – even without explicit reference to Jews (e.g. 1 Cor 2.1, 7).

Within the context of Romans 11.25, he is probably referring to the manner in which Gentiles are saved: i.e. precisely through the partial hardening of Israel. And that leads us right back to my major thesis in this paper. The salvation of the Gentiles has been made possible because Israel did not immediately repent. (This means that I do not take the restoration of Israel itself – which Paul is presupposing - to be the *mysterion*. The way that Israel enters the mystery here is from the other end: she had to be hardened temporarily for the sake of the fulfillment of Gentile salvation.)

6. Jealousy

Finally, Jordan suggests that the modern Church has nothing with which to provoke modern Jews to jealousy, since they (unlike first-century Israel) are not rooted in the Old Testament (9). Indeed, the only provocation of modern Jews is when one of them converts to Christianity (19).

I suggest that Jordan is ignoring the fact that first-century Jews were not, *generally speaking*, jealous of Christians either. They were angered by Christianity. And they were not looking for what Christians had – rather, they were still looking for what Christians *anticipated*.

The more fundamental problem here is that – uncharacteristically - Jordan is taking the provocation to jealousy on some sort of psychological level, and that is not how the biblical language is functioning. In speaking of provoking his kinsmen to jealousy (Rom 11.11), Paul was alluding to Deuteronomy 32.21 – which speaks of a scenario of outright idolatry, not of adherence to “Old Testament religion.” He was presupposing a setting of radical unfaithfulness that well covers the modern Jewish situation.

According to Promise

Throughout this paper, I have argued that the position of the New Testament presupposes that the precondition for the Second Coming is the restoration of Israel. I wish that I had time to provide a detailed accounting of the Old Testament prophetic evidence that must lie behind such a presupposition, but such is not possible in this paper. Perhaps that will transpire in a future project.

I do wish to point out, however, that when the Old Testament anticipates the eschatological salvation of Gentiles, it portrays them *alongside* of Jews. In other words, the two are never melded together into an indistinguishable mass (see e.g. Isaiah 49; 60.4ff; 66.18ff). Notwithstanding the occasional rhetoric that Jesus is the one last Jew, the promises could not have been fulfilled without Jews entering the new covenant from the old; and since the promises entail eschatological fulfillment, the Church on the last day will need to be comprised of Gentile *and* Jew. Equal, one in Christ, completely integrated. But Gentile and Jew, nonetheless. Galatians 3.28 can be absolutized with regard to Jew and Gentile no more than it can be absolutized with male and female. Simply because all the nations of the earth are blessed in Abraham does not mean they are no longer nations.

As for the content of Romans 11, it is to be underscored that the remnant motif fulfills a particular purpose in the chapter. And that purpose is only met in the case of an essentially national restoration of Israel. As Dan Johnson correctly recognizes, “The remnant is the adumbration of the salvation of all Israel.”¹¹ In appealing to the “jealousy” text of Deuteronomy 32.21, Paul is pointing us to the entire context. What immediately follows could well describe what did happen in AD 70: “For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; it shall consume the earth (or, *land*) with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains” (Dt 32.22). But that is not the end of the story; after untold disaster, Yahweh will judge His people and have

¹¹ "The Structure and Meaning of Romans 11" (*CBQ* 46:91-103; Jan. 1984), p. 92.

compassion on them when they are powerless (Dt 32.36). As the Song of Moses concludes:

Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land His people. (Dt 32.43)

Paul quotes that same passage in Romans 15.10, indicating that the hope of Israel cannot be fulfilled (post-AD 70 or not) in the salvation of the Gentiles alone. The eschatological goal is the salvation of the Gentiles *with* Israel. The remnant is intended as a promise of greater things (i.e. the restoration of the nation), and when those greater things arrive, the time will come for the eternal glory. That is the eschatological structure of Scripture.

Conclusion

In defense of his view that all Israel will be saved, Paul writes that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom 11.29). It seems to me that on a view where God saved an influx of Jews for the sake of promises to Israel (of which Rom 11.29 is clearly speaking), and then slammed the door (even if by way of destroying the evidence), then that calling really was revocable after all. Once admit that Paul is talking about Israelites in Romans 11 (and how can that be escaped?), and the way is closed to any other view. Israel remains “enemies for your sake, but concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers” (11.28).

Yes, God judged Israel in AD 70. But we are talking here about “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” We are talking about God, who “has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all” (11.33, 32). It is not up to us to tell God He has revoked His mysterious gifts and unfathomable calling. He has wounded; He will also bind up (cf Hos 6.1).

Tim Gallant

November 2005