

Seminar No. 11

Israel's period of blindness

Step 1:

Memorise: Romans 11:25

Step 2:

Study the following Scripture: Romans 11 and the additional notes

Step 3:

Exegete *Romans 11:25* as the primary Scripture portion assigned to this lesson.

Step 4:

- Find the following themes in these passages: His Divine Plan. (v. 25-32); His Divine Character. (v. 33-35); His Divine Nature (v. 36).
- Explain how Israel is different to the Church in terms of origin, calling and the promises made.
- Define the "fullness of the Gentiles" phrase in 11:11, 15 and 25.
- Explain how God will restore Israel and how will it benefit the Gentiles (11:15).
- Explain the metaphor of the "olive tree" in this chapter.

Additional Notes:

THE JEW, THE GENTILE, AND THE CHURCH OF GOD

**Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God -- I
Corinthians 10:32**

Whoever reads the Bible with any attention cannot fail to perceive that more than half of its contents relate to one nation: the Israelites. He perceives, too, that they have a distinct place in the dealings and counsels of God. Separated from the mass of mankind, they are taken into covenant with Jehovah, who gives them specific promises not given to any other nation. Their history alone is told in Old Testament narrative and prophecy; other nations are mentioned only as they touch the Jew. It appears, also, that all the communications of Jehovah to Israel as a nation relate to the Earth. If faithful and obedient, the nation is promised earthly greatness, riches, and power; if unfaithful and disobedient, it is to be scattered 11 among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deut. 28:64). Even the promise of the Messiah is of blessing to "all the families of the Earth."

Continuing his research, the student finds mention in Scripture of another distinct body, which is called the church. This body also has a peculiar relation to God and, like Israel, has received from Him specific promises. But similarity ends there, and the most striking contrast begins. Instead of being formed of the natural descendants of Abraham alone, it is a body in which the distinction of Jew and Gentile is lost. Instead of the relation being one of mere covenant, it is one of birth. Instead of obedience bringing the reward of earthly greatness and wealth, the church is taught to be content with food and raiment, and to expect persecution and hatred; it is perceived that just as distinctly as Israel stands connected with temporal and earthly things, so distinctly does the church stand connected with spiritual and heavenly things.

Further, Scripture shows the student that neither Israel nor the church always existed; each had a recorded beginning. The beginning of Israel he finds in the call of Abram. Looking then for the birth of the church he finds (contrary, perhaps, to his expectations, for he has probably been taught that Adam and the patriarchs are in the church) that it certainly did not exist before, nor during, the earth life of Christ, for he finds Him speaking of His church as yet future when He says (Matt. 16:18), "Upon this rock I will build my church." Not, have built, nor am building, but will build.

He finds, too, from Ephesians 3:5-10, that the church is not once mentioned in Old Testament prophecy, but was, in those ages, a mystery "hid in God." Scripturally, he finds the birth of the church in Acts 2, and the termination of its career on the earth in I Thessalonians 4.

The student also finds, in the scriptural division of the race, another class, rarely mentioned, and distinguished in every respect from either Israel or the church: the Gentiles. The comparative position of the Jew, the Gentile, and the church may be briefly seen in the following Scriptures: the Jew (Rom. 9:4-5; John 4:22; Rom. 3:1-2); the Gentile (Eph. 2:11-12; Eph. 4:17-18; Mark 7:27-28); the Church (Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 5:29-33; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Comparing, then, what is said in Scripture concerning Israel and the Church, he finds that in origin, calling, promise, worship, principles of conduct, and future destiny that all is contrast. Compare first the calling of Israel with that of the church.

ISRAEL

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee (Gen. 12: 1).

For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness (Deut. 8:7-9).

And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses (Gen. 24:34-35).

The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways (Deut. 28:7). And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath (Deut. 28:13).

CHURCH

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3: 1).

For our conversation is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head (Matt. 8:20).

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (I Pet. 1:4).

Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place (I Cor. 4: 11).

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! (Mark 10:23).

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (James 2:5).

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service (John 16:2).

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:4).

Of course it is not meant that a godly Jew did not, at death, go to heaven. The distinction is that the incentive to godliness in his case was earthly blessings, not heavenly. It should be needless to say that, in this dispensation, neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved otherwise than by the exercise of that faith on the Lord Jesus Christ whereby both are born again (John 3:3, 16) and are baptized into that "one body" (I Con 12:13) which is "the church" (Eph. 1:22-23). In the church the distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears. (I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14. So in writing to the Ephesians the apostle speaks of them as "in time past Gentiles," Eph. 2:11; 1 Cor. 12:2, also says, "ye were Gentiles.")

The contrast between Israel and the church further appears in the rules given for the conduct of each.

ISRAEL

When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee . . . thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them: thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them (Deut. 7:1-2).

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Exod. 21:24-25).

CHURCH

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matt. 5:44).

Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat (I Cor. 4:12-13).

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also (Matt. 5:39).

See also: Deuteronomy 21:18-21 and Luke 15:20-23.

In the appointments for worship we still find contrast. Israel could worship in but one place and at a distance from God-only approaching Him through a priest. The church worships wherever two or three are gathered, has boldness to enter into the holiest, and is composed of priests. Compare Leviticus 17:8-9 with Matthew 18:20, Luke 1:10 with Hebrews 10:19-20, Numbers 3:10 with I Peter 2:5.

In the predictions concerning the future of Israel and the church, the distinction is still more startling. The church will be taken away from the earth entirely, but restored Israel is yet to have her greatest earthly splendor and power. See what Scripture says as to

ISRAEL

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33). (Of these seven promises to Mary five have already been literally fulfilled. By what rule of interpretation are we authorized to say the remaining two will not be also fulfilled?)

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written: After this I will return, and

will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15: 14-16).

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 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. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? 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" (Rom. 11:1,11, 24-26).

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.... And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 41:10 - 12).

"For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob" (Isa. 44:1).

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into the land that I gave unto their fathers" (Jer. 16:14-15). "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5-6).

"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Jer. 32:37,38).

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more" (Zeph. 3:14-15).

THE CHURCH

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:15-17).

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. 3:20, 21).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7-9).

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

It may safely be said that the Judaizing of the church has done more to hinder her progress, pervert her mission, and destroy her spiritually than all other causes combined. Instead of pursuing her appointed path of separation from the world and following the Lord in her heavenly calling, she has used Jewish Scriptures to justify herself in lowering her purpose to the civilization of the world, the acquisition of wealth, the use of an imposing ritual, the erection of magnificent churches, the invocation of God's blessing upon the conflicts of armies, and the division of an equal brotherhood into "clergy" and "laity."