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Is God Through With Israel? - Part 2

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Paul brings up five different things in chapter 11 that convince me God has not done away with Israel. I know some of you do not agree with that. That is your prerogative. But we have looked at two of them and we are going to try to work our way through. I want to get to chapter 12 of Romans, but I just cannot run through this. We have got to take it slow. I want to remind you that chapters 1-11 come before chapters 12-16. Chapters 12-16 are the practical application of what we have learned from chapters 1-11. If you don't have a grip on what he has said in 1-11, you will never appreciate fully what he says from chapter 12 through chapter 16.

We see the first two pieces of this puzzle becoming very clear. Is God finished with His people? May it never be! "I am an Israelite," Paul says. Look at the example of the way God converted me." But not only that, look at the remnant of Israel that God has always kept for Himself. But He is not finished yet. In verses 11-24 you see the nation of Israel itself: The man from Israel, the remnant from Israel and now the nation of Israel itself. You have to watch the context here very carefully. He is talking about the whole nation, "they," "them" and "their" is referring to the nation of Israel.

Not only is he talking generally about the nation of Israel, but he is also talking about all the Gentiles in the world. He is not pulling out individuals, he is not talking about a remnant here. He is talking about nations. He is talking about the nation of Israel and all the Gentile world as if it is a whole.

Let's look at it. I think it is good to remind ourselves of what God had promised to Abraham. Go back to Genesis 12. I want to show you what God promised to Abraham, making sure you remember that God is a faithful God and always honors His promises. Genesis 12:1 says, "Now the Lord said to Abram,..." Remember, there was no nation of Israel at this time. There weren't any Jews. Abram was a Chaldean from the city of Ur and God singled him out. As a matter of fact, in Genesis 11 the nations were spread all over the earth and the languages were changed. All of them had the root of disobedience in them. Out of the middle of all these pagan people, God reached down and said, "I am going to make a nation for Myself." He singled out a man by the name of Abram. He became Abraham in chapter 17. Then he had Isaac, his son. And then Isaac had two sons, but Jacob was the next one the promise was passed to. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Israel had twelve sons, and that is your nation of Israel.

God said, "I have a way, a plan. I love humanity and I am going to unveil that marvelous plan of redemption." So in verse 1 it says, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you [That land is significant even to this day]; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make you a great nation.'" There is Israel right there. A nation, singular. A great nation. He promised him a nation. He has many promises that go along with that promise of a nation.

God goes on to say, "and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse." Look at the last part, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." There is your promise to the Gentile world. Not only was Israel a promise to Abraham, but He says, "Through you and through your descendants, all of the families of this earth will be blessed." That was written into the promise made to Abraham. Go over to Genesis 28. He picks up again on that phrase, "all the families of the earth will be blessed." Genesis 28:14 reads, "Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Now, I want you to jump to Acts 3. The Apostle Peter is preaching to these Israelites there. Boy, is he ever different after Pentecost. Acts 3:25 says, "It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers [He is reminding them of the covenant], saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" Now that is as clear as the nose on your face. Israel has always wanted the blessings of God at the expense of anybody else. They called the Gentiles "dogs" in the Old Testament. Even in the four Gospels, they were dogs. Jesus came for the House of Israel.

But you see in Acts, Israel rejected Christ as their Messiah, which was the ultimate of rejecting righteousness by faith. They still wanted their standard. They still wanted religion. They wanted to justify themselves. And when that happened, God opened the door and let the Gentiles in. That is not just because they rejected Him. That was a promise given to Abraham a long time ago. But in the economy and the genius of God, He decided to do it the way He did it. He is just simply fulfilling what He says He is going to do.

God used the Gentile nations to prove that the people of Israel were sinners, even in the religious masks they wore. Paul says back in Romans 2:1, "Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things." One of the things that religious Jews loved to do was judge the Gentiles. They were always pointing fingers and judging the Gentiles. In chapter 2 Paul tells them, "You do the same things. You have all the teachings, all the promises and all the privileges, but you are sinners, just like they are. You don't show yours like they show it. Yours is more inward than outward, you have just masked it."

In 3:23 he sums it all up when he says, "for all [Jew and Gentile] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He uses the Gentiles, first of all, to prove that the people of Israel were sinners and that they were lost and needed

Christ. This time he uses the Gentiles to assure Israel of a future restoration that is going to come one day. The very fact that Gentiles are coming in now gives Israel hope that one day they will be brought in and God will honor His promise to the nation which He gave to Abraham.

Well, let's look at verse 11. The first thing he begins to speak of is that future restoration. He calls it a future fulfillment. In Romans 11:11 he says, "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous." Now watch this. The word "stumbled" means to sin, to fall into sin. Figuratively where did they fall into sin? They rejected righteousness by faith. Yes, they stumbled.

Then the word "fall" means to fall from a high place to a low place to where you are out of sight. Even though they stumbled, even though they fell, did they fall out of sight? Did they fall from being the apple of God's eyes in the Old Testament to where they are no longer in His sight? What does he say? "May it never be!" Yes, they missed it, but are they still in God's eyes? Yes, He still sees them. They didn't fall so as to fall out of His sight.

It says, "But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous." Now what was their transgression? I am going to keep asking it like a broken record. What was their transgression? They rejected righteousness by faith, which means they rejected Christ being their redeemer. Who needs a redeemer? They wanted Him to come and set up a kingdom and kick everybody else out. They are already righteous by their own standard. They have justified themselves. You see, they missed it. They are blind to the fact that they are sinners like anybody else, even though they are privileged by what God had given to them.

The word for "transgression" there is *paraptoma*. It is the word that means a fault, a mistake or an error. What was the error of Israel? What was the mistake of Israel? What was the fault of Israel? We already know. So God let the Gentiles in. Why? In order to make them jealous.

Now I want to tell you something. When God does something like that and you see that God wants somebody to be jealous, it is not like when you and I want somebody to be jealous. I remember when I first started dating. I would call up the girl and talk her out of the date. I just had no confidence at all. "You don't really want to go out with me next week, do you? No, okay good. I didn't want to go either." I remember trying to impress the girls and always trying to make the other guys jealous of me because this girl might like me.

If I was going to make you jealous, that would be the end, the goal. If I make you jealous and you are now jealous, good. Then I just walk off. That is because I have a sinful body and the nature of the flesh in me, and it is rotten to the core. So if I make you jealous and you are now jealous, I have succeeded. But you see, when God makes somebody jealous, that is not the end. That is the means to an end. God doesn't just make people jealous, God is a redemptive God.

So if God makes Israel jealous, it is for a redemptive purpose. He made them jealous when they started seeing the Gentiles come in. Can you imagine if they hung around us for a while and watched the victory we have and the power of the Holy Spirit of God and watched the joy we get out of praising God and the joy we get out of the word? They would say, "That is not right! These are our blessings. These are all our blessings. Why are you getting these blessings?" Oh, the genius of God. He had already promised the Gentiles would come in. Israel was supposed to take the message to the Gentile world, but they didn't. They turned it upside down and used it for themselves. So God said, "Alright. I will accomplish two things. I will bring in the Gentiles, the church of Jesus Christ, that parenthesis that stands between the 69th week and the 70th week of Daniel which we are in right now, full of Gentiles. There are a few Jewish people, but it is full of Gentiles because the doors are open to the Gentile world right now. He accomplished that purpose. His promise is being fulfilled. But since Israel has rejected Him, He is accomplishing something else. He is bringing a jealousy to them. He wants them for Himself. He loves Israel, folks. Don't ever think for a second that God does not love Israel. But He is making them jealous by all the Gentiles that are coming in.

So, we see then that He has got something on His mind. Look in verse 12 of chapter 11. It says, "Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" He says "their transgression be riches for the Gentiles." It is hard for us to admit, but everything we have spiritually and eternally is a result of how God worked through Israel. As Gentiles we don't like to say that. We would rather say, "No, it is because of our faith." No sir, it is because of God's faithfulness and God's plan and God's purpose in our life. So, it became riches for the world and riches for the Gentiles. One day the nation through which these blessings came, however, is going to accept Him and be born again because it was through them that we heard to begin with. The seed came through them and that is how we know of salvation.

Well, verse 12 also says, "how much more will their fulfillment be!" I thought that was interesting. The word "failure" and the word "fulfillment" in that verse are exact opposites of each other. It is a beautiful picture here. The failure means the fact that they have slipped. It has the idea of being in a high place, but you have slid down to a lower place. But the word "fulfillment," *pleroma*, has the idea of being brought back up to this place and everything you lost fully being restored and being abundant in that. So there is the picture right there. Even though they slipped and failed and because they failed now we get to get in on all those blessings which were promised to Abraham. One day their fulfillment will be that they will be brought back up and everything they lost will be given back to them in abundance. Now, to me that indicates the fact that something is yet to happen in Israel.

In verse 13 Paul makes sure you understand he is talking to the Gentile world. Paul, a converted Jew, is saying to the Gentile world in Rome in verse 13, "But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry." Now that is a tough verse. When you first read it you think, "What is he saying?" The word "magnify" is the word that means to render something splendid. Do you know what he is saying here? He is saying, "Gentiles, I love you. I love you. God has assigned you to me. And I am going to be faithful to Him until the last day. But my prayer is all along, the more of you that come to know Christ, the more of you that come into His kingdom, the more my kinsmen according to the flesh will get more jealous and more jealous and more jealous. And if I can just see some of them come to know Christ, oh, what a splendid ministry I could have, not only to the Gentile world but also to see my people come to know Christ because of that jealousy that they were provoked to by watching you being saved."

Verse 14 says, "if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them." That is the heartbeat of Paul. He never forgot his people, folks. God assigned him to the Gentile world. That was not Paul's idea, that was God's idea. But Paul never forgot the burden that he had for his own people. Verse 15 continues, "For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" Do you see what he is doing here? He is picturing a future fulfillment of something to happen in the nation of Israel. He is saying, "Right now, God has turned His back on them and He has put His face toward the Gentile world. But one day He is going to look back at them and there is going to be a fulfillment. There is going to be a time that they are brought back to where they used to be. They are going to have an abundance of the blessings of God." It will come the same way, by faith. It is the same way we go in. It will be by faith.

In one day a whole nation will be born again. It will be like people being raised from the dead, life from the dead. Boy, what a beautiful picture. I mean, right now, as far as the gospel is concerned, as far as Christ is concerned, they are dead. As a nation they said, "No sir, He is not the Christ. We are already righteous. We live up to the law. We go every day and do what it says. We are waiting on the king to come and set up his kingdom." They have missed it. So God looks over here. They are dead as far as the gospel is concerned, as far as salvation is concerned. But one day it will be life from the dead. God will raise that nation back up. It will be like a born again experience for a whole nation in one day.

Well, the second thing Paul mentions is not only a future restoration, but he talks about a future grafting in of Israel. Now, I am going to have to walk with you through this. You are going to have to stay with me because this is not easy. I want you to think. I am going to try to take as many verses as I can because sometimes when you get a question if you just keep right on going, it answers it. Alright. Stay with me now.

The tree that he is going to start talking about in a moment, the original pure olive tree, is the one that sprang forth from Abraham. The wild olive is what you and I came from. Now I want you to think about that. Next week when you act like a maniac on the highway to somebody remember something, you have the roots of a wild olive tree. That is the Gentile world, folks. If you want to track your heritage back, go back to chapter 1 and verses 19-32, it is not very good. It is a wild olive tree.

So remember, he is talking about two nationalities of people. He is talking about Israel as a nationality and he is talking about the Gentiles as the Gentile world. Keep that in mind. He starts off talking about some dough in verse 16: "And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also." Now I think what he is referring to there is out of Numbers 15:17-21. In other words, if the first part is holy, set apart unto God, then the rest is also that way. When you offer something to God, the first part automatically means He possesses the rest. Numbers 15:17 says, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, "When you enter the land where I bring you, then it shall be, that when you eat of the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord. Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a cake as an offering; as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up.'" Then in verse 21 it reads, "From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering throughout your

generations."

Now, Paul is saying something here. It is kind of like the feast of the first fruits. They took out a sheaf of the harvest, the first sheaf that would come in and they would wave it before the Lord. That was a picture of the fact, "We are giving this to you, but it is symbolic of the fact the rest is also yours." So Paul says, "If the first part of the dough is holy, the rest of the lump is also." Holy means set apart unto God, God's possession, God owns it. It is God's.

Now you have to remember there are two parts. Abraham is the first part of the dough. Some people say it is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is fine with me, but all the deposits were originally put into Abraham. So you want to take it right to the very beginning, which starts with Abraham. All the promises were given to him. What was in that promise? We read it a while ago. There are two parts to that dough, aren't there? There is the dough that comes out of the natural Israel; in other words, the descendants, the nation. There is also the dough that comes out of the spiritual Israel. So you have two things that were promised to Abraham. Since Abraham was God's, the rest of it is also God's. God owns it all. God is over it all. It has been given back to Him.

The second part of the verse says, "and if the root be holy, the branches are too." Here is where you have to take it a step further. The root would have to be Abraham. How did he become the root? By faith Abraham believed and righteous was reckoned unto him. Now, if that root be holy, then the rest of the branches that come out are God's. But there is a certain tree here. It is a tree that grows up out of faith. God intends to have branches of Jews on that tree who come to know Christ, to have branches of Gentiles who come to know Christ. It is the tree of the everlasting covenant. But you have to remember, because Abraham is the root, out of him comes a nation that is also going to be attached to that tree for a particular period of time.

Now watch what Paul does with this. I personally think it is just genius what we are about to read but I don't want to lose you. Verse 17 says, "But if some of the branches were broken off,..." Now somebody broke them off. What branches would be broken off? Well, they would be the part of Israel, the physical part of Israel that were kin to Abraham. They didn't believe like Abraham believed, so God cut them off that tree. The tree then is a tree of faith. It is an everlasting tree. It is the tree of salvation and it starts with Abraham. It starts right here. There is only one covenant of grace. There is only one salvation to every man and that is through Jesus Christ. It started with Abraham. Now watch. He goes on to say, "and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches [He is talking to the Gentile world now]; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you."

Now let's talk about the branches that were broken off. That is Israel that did not believe. But an amazing thing happened. When they were broken off, God, the husbandman (the one who tends the vineyard), goes over here, takes the wild olive tree, takes a branch off of it and starts grafting in the wild olive branches. Now first of all, that is contrary to nature. You don't do that. You don't take a branch off a wild one and graft it into a good one. If you want to help the wild one, you take a branch off the good one and graft it into the wild one. Remember, Israel was supposed to do that, but Israel didn't do it. Israel rejected. So God, the one who controls this whole thing, was the one who grafted, took them off the wild tree and grafted them into this tree, this tree of faith. That is salvation. That is the spiritual Israel that God is talking about back in chapter 9.

But remember physical Israel, that came out of Abraham, was also in the promise that God gave. He had to break them off because they disbelieved. Remember that. Don't forget them. We are going to come back to them. Right now it is these Gentiles coming off the wild olive tree being grafted into that tree. Now Paul anticipates a reaction by the Gentiles. He is right. Verse 19 reads, "You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.'" Do you see the arrogance in that? Oh, that is how the Gentile are sometimes. "Why, we are the only ones!" Paul is saying, "You had better be careful about what you are saying because God is not finished with those branches He broke off. You think they were broken off just so you could come in." No, no.

Look at the next verse. He gives a gentle warning here. Verse 20 says, "Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."

"Now, how are you going to interpret that?!" I am going to tell you. There are a lot of folks out there who say this passage shows that a Christian can lose their salvation. I want to take you back to the context. Which branches were broken off by God? The unbelieving branches. He is not talking about individual Christians who are Gentiles or Jews. He is talking about the Gentile world and he is saying, "Listen, right now in the economy of God's grace, the offer is on the table for the Gentile world to come to know Christ just like the offer was given to Israel. They rejected it and

God cut them off. If you reject it as a Gentile world, then God is going to cut the Gentiles off." Is He going to do that? Yes, sir. That comes up in the next passage of scripture. It says when the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. That is when God slams that door. Right now it was open to Israel. Israel had to be cut off as a nation because they rejected Him. God turned to the Gentile world and offered it to them. But one day He is going to cut them off and then He is going to turn back to Israel.

How do I know that? Keep following the verses. It is so simple. Look at verse 22: "Behold then the kindness and severity of God." Boy, that is a beautiful picture of the character of God. The kindness of God. Oh, don't you love to talk about it? The severity of God. That is what I don't like to talk about. Buddy, if you ever reject the kindness of His offer, He cuts you off. It says, "Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you [Gentiles], God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off." That is not referring to individual believers, but to the Gentile world in general.

Verse 23 goes on to say, "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again." Does that mean that God is finished with Israel? "After all," you might say, "they rejected Him. We are spiritual Israel." Yes, we are part of the root of that tree. We have been grafted in. Yes, we are part of the tree of salvation. But friend, don't forget, those unbelieving branches who are physical descendants of Abraham, who are part of the covenant God made with him, have been cut off. But God is able to graft them back into that plant again. I don't know how anybody can miss that. To the Gentiles who reject Him, they are cut off and not grafted back in. Why? Because they were never part of that tree to start with. But to Israel as a nation (I want to herald it to any Jewish person) God is not finished with Israel. God loves them. God gave a promise to them. But in the economy of His grace, they have rejected Him. So God allows the Gentiles in.

"Are any Jews coming in right now?" There are a lot of Jews who are coming in right now. But the focus is the Gentiles. When the fulness comes in, as we see next, then the focus is going to be Israel again. "Are there going to be any Gentiles who will come in?" I don't see why it should be any different. There may be some that come in, but the focus is going to be Israel once again. One-third of that nation, Zechariah says, will be all that is left, but God is going to bring them through the fire and they are going to be born again in a day. They are going to mourn over Him who they pierced. God has a coming day, a grafting in, a fulfillment, a restoration for the nation of Israel.

Then he says in verse 24, "For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?" Now what is he saying when he says "grafted"? You wouldn't have to be grafted into it if He already had you there. But you have been cut off. He says you are going to be grafted right back in to that tree. Has God finished with Israel as a nation? I think not. You say, "I don't agree with you." That is fine. There is a lot of disagreement on this.

As a matter of fact, I divide chapter 11 into five parts: the man from Israel, the remnant from Israel, the nation of Israel, the mystery of Israel and then the wonder of Israel.

Did you ever watch that TV special called, "*A Christmas Story*"? It took place in the late 40's or early 50's. That is when I grew up. I remember the old cars. Going to church my Daddy would push in the clutch and I would shift gears. We had an old Studebaker. That thing looked like a bullet. Daddy told me I couldn't drive until I was 15. However, when I was about 11 or 12 I got out in the yard one day after he was gone to work. I would get out there and play with that straight shift. I would push that clutch in and I would put it in reverse. Mama didn't hear me. I had the car running and I would back that thing up. I remember the car felt like it raised up and I thought, "Well, that is a neat feature." I would put it back into first and it would go forward and I would put it in reverse and it go back up again. Finally I heard something and I got out of the car and walked around and saw my bicycle! I had been backing over my bicycle! That thing looked awful.

One of the biggest things you could ever want when you were growing up during that time was a BB gun. Man, we would have BB wars. We would load up with BB's and hit the woods and we would have the good boys and the bad guys and we would go after each other. Well, in this movie "*The Christmas Story*", the story was about a young little boy who wanted a BB rifle for Christmas. He did not deserve it. He tried everything in the world he could do to get it. He even tried Santa. You know, some people will try anything. That didn't work. I mean, he tried everything to get that BB rifle. Well, it came time for Christmas, and he just knew that his Daddy had sort of promised it to him because he and his Dad were real close.

Christmas came and the presents were all under the tree and everybody got what they wanted. He kept looking and kept looking and kept looking but it wasn't there. He was the only one in the whole family who didn't get what he

wanted. Finally, it was over and he was so disappointed. What he thought had been promised to him wasn't there. The Dad was sitting over on the couch. He smiled all the time. A lot of time passed by and finally he says, "Well, what is that over there behind the radiator?" He said, "I believe I see something else over there." The little boy's eyes lit up. He ran over, got that package, opened it up and there was that BB rifle. Boy, the Dad is just grinning.

Now I know that is a trite illustration and some of you are going to say, "Well, that is not very spiritual." Do you know what I think? I think right now Israel is saying, "You know, I don't understand. The Gentiles are getting all the presents. I thought they were ours. God, didn't you promise?" Then one day God is going to say, "Oh, yeah. There is one more present right over here. Israel, my beloved, come to Me."

Habakkuk says, "I saw Him come forth from Edom, from Paran, from Mt. Timan, down in Jordan." Do you know what is down in Jordan, folks? It used to be part of Israel. Down in Jordan is a little place called Petra or in the Old Testament, Bazra, and right there is a city, a rock city. Remember He says in Matthew 24, when you see all these things, flee Judea and go to the mountains. Have you been there lately? They flee down to Petra and they see Him coming. Habakkuk says, "Oh, I saw Him come for the salvation of His people." God has not forgotten them. Oh, folks. Do you see it?

Do you know how far it is from Petra to Megiddo? Two hundred miles. What does it say in scripture? The blood will be up to the horses' bridles after that battle for how far? For two hundred miles. When He goes down and gets that third of Israel that is left, He brings them to Himself and honors a promise that He made to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 17, 18 and 28. You see, these people who say that the branches have been cut off forget that He says, "Yes, that is right, but they are going to be grafted right back into their very own tree as a nation."

Well, it's good. I can't wait until we get into chapter 12. The first thing he says in 12:1 is, "therefore." Do you know what he is saying through all these chapters, folks? Salvation is God's business and don't you mess with it. I know we think we are smart. I know we are educated and all this kind of stuff. But I want to tell you something, we came out of dirt and don't ever forget it. We don't deserve anything but hell itself. Wake up every morning and say, "Dear God, how in the world could you love me?" We live under grace and not under law. Understand what God is going to do with Israel whether we like it or don't like it. God is a faithful God. He keeps His word.