Unfinished Business
Series: The Best Is Yet to Come
Selected Scriptures
Alliance Berean Church

The former king of Prussia, Frederick the Great, was said to have asked his chaplain for **one clear and compelling evidence** for the truth of the Bible. Without missing a beat, the chaplain replied, "Your Majesty, I can give it to you in one word: **Israel**." Just Israel.

If you're familiar with Jewish history, you know why he said that. Outside of Scripture, it doesn't make any sense at all for the Jews to still **exist** today, let alone be **thriving as a nation** in their homeland. It's nothing short of **miraculous**. No other people has been so **vilified and persecuted and scattered** as they have. None other the **repeated target of genocide**—from Pharaoh in Exodus, to Haman in Esther, to Pogroms in Russia, to the Holocaust, to modern day terrorist organizations like Hamas who say things like, "From the river to the sea [Jordan to Med], Palestine will be free!" they're not talking about establishing a Palestinian state where everyone can exercise *freedom of religion*. They're talking about eradicating the Jews.

Yet even with all of these things against them, *they seem not only to survive, but to end up on top? With every attempt to destroy them, they come away with another Jewish holiday like Purim or Hannukah celebrating God's preservation of them?* It so mesmerized **Mark Twain** that he **asked**, *What is the secret of Jewish immortality?* We'll answer that today as we continue this series called ***The Best Is Yet to Come***, a series focusing on future events, which naturally includes **the topic of Israel.** It's difficult to understand the **full picture of prophecy** without Israel.

It's also hard to think of a more **relevant and controversial** topic to discuss than Israel. With the **October 7th massacre** by Hamas a couple of years ago where they brutally murdered around **1,200 Jews**—which cancelled my study trip to Israel btw!—A lot of people, Christians included, are **wondering how we should think about and relate to Israel**: *Should we support Israel? Is God done with Israel? Or is there a future for them?* They're good questions, but they're **not new** questions. People had the same questions when the Bible was being written because **Israel, for the most part, had rejected Christ**, and the church was becoming **increasingly Gentile** (non-Jewish). Most of the persecution in the newborn church was coming from Jews. Well, in **Romans 9-11**, specifically Romans 11, Paul addresses these questions and reveals that **God has unfinished business with Israel,** and it relates to us too.

Lord as the apostle ends this chapter with, saying your wisdom and ways are unfathomable, but I pray that by Your spirit through your word you'd help us to understand a little better or be reminded of your relationship with Israel. Even if we don't see eye to eye on all these things, I pray that things that matter the most would stick and you have something for everyone to glean from and grow spiritually. In Jesus name.

1. The Present <u>Preservation</u> of Israel. (Rom. 11:1-10)

Romans 11:1: *"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." 4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. 7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 8 just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day." 9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. 10 "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever."*

Paul

So in response to the claims or rumors going around that God had completely rejected Israel, Paul says, *May it never be!* This is the strongest negation in Greek. It's like saying, *No way Jose! Don't even think such a thought!* The old KJ: **God forbid!** And he points to himself as proof. He says, "**Look at me! I'm an Israelite.** And by God's grace, I came to Christ." Paul, remember, wasn't seeking Jesus. He hated the Gospel. Persecuted the Church. But Jesus blindsided and saved him on the Damascus Road. So he's proof #1.

Elijah

Proof #2, he points to **the example of Elijah** in verse 2. In Elijah's day in the OT, Israel was so **spiritually backslidden** that Elijah presumed that **he alone** was faithful in Israel—and they were seeking to kill him too! He prayed, "I alone am left and they're seeking my life." How does God respond to him? Verse 4, God says, "I have kept for Myself **7,000** men who haven't worshiped Baal." So somehow, in **God's sovereign and mysterious plan**, by sheer grace, preserved a **remnant** of faithful Israelites. And Paul says **that applies at the present age as well.**

Remnant

Even though the majority of the Jews today reject Jesus as their Messiah, they're **spiritually blind and <u>hardened</u>, as described in verses 8-10,** God is still saving a remnant and that *<u>remnant is **evidence that he's not done with Israel**</u>.*

- **God's present "rejection" of Israel is <u>partial</u>, not total.**

Reason: Covenant

The reason for this is because God has a **covenant relationship** with them. He made **unconditional promises** to their **forefather, Abraham**, back in Genesis 12 and 15 that were unconditional and He keeps them for His name's sake. If they weren't unconditional, **Romans 9:29** says they'd be like **Sodom and Gomorrah**—**completely destroyed** in judgment for their disobedience. He disciplines them, but never destroys them. And can I just say they've been

disciplined so much that, **Tevye, in *Fiddler on the Roof***, prays, "I know we are the chosen people. But once in a while, can't you choose someone else?"

However if you do want to know **How to Destroy Israel completely, Jeremiah gave us the instructions in Jeremiah 31**. Did you know that? He said if you want to destroy, this is all you have to do—one of two things: 1) You either **pull the sun, moon, and stars out the sky. 2)** You **measure the breadth of the universe. Either one**. See the f act of the matter is no matter how many times they are **disciplined by God** and no matter how many times **Satan seeks to destroy them**, it's not going to happen because God has made **promises to preserve** them. I would also humbly submit He promises to ***restore*** them.

2. The Future Restoration of Israel. (11:11-36)

Romans 11:11, *I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?*

Life Alert
So Has Israel stumbled? Yes. They stumbled many times, most grievously over Jesus. But what the question is implying is, "Did they stumble and fall so far that they are beyond recovery?" Is like **the Life Alert commercials** where they've fallen and they can't get up? His response?

May it never be! [God forbid] *But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, **to make them jealous**. 12 Now if their transgression is **riches** for the world and their failure is **riches** for the Gentiles, how much more will their **fulfillment** be! 13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if somehow I might **move to jealousy** my fellow countrymen and save some of them. 15 For if their **rejection** is the **reconciliation** of the world, what will their **acceptance** be but life from the dead?*

Jealousy & Cookies
So Paul explains his great desire for Jews to be saved and how by God turning to the Gentiles, and and blessing us in Christ, God is seeking to **make them jealous**. It's kind of like when you **offer your kids a reward for good behavior**. We went out to eat last week after church. I told the kids if you do a good job eating, you can go redeem an ice cream cone. Well, when the Jews see all these **Gentiles like us** enjoying our ice cream—**enjoying the blessings of the Savior, the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit—they get jealous and want Jesus too.**

Lesser to Greater
And then he argues from the lesser to greater. If the lesser thing is true, how much more will the greater be. If their **present rejection** means **blessings** for the **rest of the world**, How much more will the blessings be when they are **accepted again? When** the **covenants to them are fulfilled**? When God **finishes His unfinished business** with them? It'll be **"as life from the dead."** That's a prophetic phrase that depicts resurrection, which I think we're safe to say based on prophecy that for them, is **nationally, spiritually, and physically**.

He goes on in **verses 16-24** to give **the illustration of an olive tree** to explains what God is doing in his sovereign program between the Church and Israel. For the sake of time, I'll summarize it:

- **God's plan** is like a **cultivated olive tree that is Jewish in nature. The roots of the tree are likely the Abrahamic Covenant. And being connected to that tree is to be in the blessing place of God.**
- There are **natural branches** which represent the **Jews**
- There are **unnatural, wild branches**: represent **Gentiles**

If you follow the thought process, he explains that **what God has done** is when the natural branches (the Jews) by and large rejected the Messiah, they were **broken off** and God in turn started to **graft in unnatural, wild olive tree branches** –that is, believing Gentiles, like us. Right now, Israel by and large, has been set aside as the *primary means* of putting Himself on display and reaching the world with His Word. The Church which is primarily Gentile, is being used today. But that place of blessing is *not complete* or *permanent*. And he warns us Gentiles **not to become proud** against those natural branches because **God can easily, more naturally, graft them back in** to their own tree. He says in verse 24, **How much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree?** Springboarding off of that he says in v. 25:

*"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a **partial** hardening has happened to Israel **until** the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

So Paul reveals this **mystery** here that should humble us and I believe it's that the spiritual hardening of Israel is not only **partial, it's temporary**.

- **God's present "rejection" of Israel is temporary, not final.**

In other words, there will be a softening. A regrafting. A fuller, more comprehensive acceptance and salvation of Israelites near Christ's return. The door is opened to them again.

The key word is "**until**." ***Until* the fullness of the Gentiles comes in and when the Deliverer (Jesus) comes from Zion (Jerusalem)**. I will say there's a lot of debate over this passage and what it means. And along with Pastor Glenn, I'm more concerned with being ***ready*** for His return than being ***right***. But I'm inclined to believe and in agreement with many scholars and teachers that **when God has completed His sovereign plan for the Gentiles, which many understand to be the rapture, His focus will return to Israel and restoration will come** for them.

The phrase **All Israel**, when it is used, is **not** saying **every Jew of all time** will be saved. It's OT language reminding us that God deals with Israel nationally and when He comes back, after they've undergone intense persecution during that Tribulation period, **they will recognize and receive** Jesus at His second coming. **But** it's going to be a **process** to get them there. And I want to go over that process in brief.

3. **An Outline of Future <u>Events</u> Regarding Israel.**

1. **Israel is <u>regathered</u> in the land.** Prophecy predicts that. And in order for a lot of these prophecies to be fulfilled, they need to be back in the land. The crazy thing is in the last 150 years or so, thanks to **Holocaust and global persecution**, **millions** have immigrated back and they became a nation again in **1948**. At the end of the 17th century, there were only 7,000 Jews in the land and it was a wasteland. Now, millions are there and the nation is thriving.
2. **The Antichrist makes a <u>peace</u> treaty with Israel during the first half of the Tribulation.** They have rebuilt their temple and offer sacrifices in peace. Right now they can't do that with **Muslims** controlling the **temple mount**. But even now, the **Temple Institute** in Jerusalem has all the materials and plans to rebuild the Temple right now. With modern construction equipment, it could happen quickly.
3. **The 144,000 Israelite <u>bondservants</u> of God are sealed.** At the beginning of **the 7-year Tribulation period**, **Revelation 7,** God saves and seals 144,000 Jews whom He calls bond-servants, who appear to become great **evangelists** with some sort of divine **protection** during that time. They are called the **First Fruits** of the Tribulation period.
4. **The ministry of the two <u>Witnesses</u> in Jerusalem. Revelation 11** describes two witness, li**kely Jewish**, who during the Great Tribulation/last half, **prophesy and perform miracles** in Jerusalem for all the world to see (similar to those of Moses & Elijah). And the Bible talks about the whole world watching them die, celebrating it, and then groaning 3.5 days later when they are resurrected and ascend back into heaven. I imagine the whole world will watch via tv and smartphones.
5. **Israel will experienced unmatched <u>persecution</u> in the second half of the Tribulation.** The **Antichrist**, this global, **Satan-inspired** and **Satan-empowered** leader, seeks to wipe them out. The **global assault** on Israel is going to be so focused and so intent that only they have **no where to look but up to Jesus**. It's like another Red Sea Moment for them. They are completely surrounded with no hope. However,
6. **Israel will experience <u>physical</u> and <u>spiritual</u> salvation.**

I would commend you to read all of Zech 10-14, but I've selected some verses from Zechariah 12-13 here: 12:3 It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it…. 12:9 And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 13:1"In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

Physically, there will be a global assault from Gentile nations on Jerusalem and Jesus alone—not the U.S.—can and will save them.

Spiritually, He pours out on them His Spirit of **saving, forgiving grace** and supplication. **Supplication** being these softened, repentant hearts that will cry out in prayer to Him to save them.

It's exactly what Jesus predicted in **Matthew 23:39. He was weeping over Jerusalem, who didn't understand at His first coming and said,** "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem How often I have wanted to gather you like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling…You will not see me again ***until*** you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." I believe that it's at this time, at His second Coming, w**here that is fulfilled**. They bless Him **whom they pierced at His first coming.** *They pierced Him the first time. They praise Him the second time.*

But at the end of the day, we need to ask the question, **So what? What effect should this have on us?** Because **prophecy's not just to satisfy our curiosity**. It's to change our lives.

1. **Israel's story isn't <u>over</u>.** God still has **unfinished business** with them, and we need to guard against **pride** and **antisemitism**. Because that is on the rise today. Instead, I think we should **pray for the peace of Jerusalem** and like Paul pray for **Jews to come to Christ**. Personally, this understanding that God is not done with Israel has led my family and I to **support ministry to Jews and to support their right to the land (Zionism).** But at the same time, that doesn't mean we have to give **blanket support** to everything they say or do. They're government is made up of sinners just like our own. But again, their story isn't over and we need to be watchful because the stage is set for these events to unfold.

2. **Israel's story isn't an <u>accident</u>.**
   You know, I look at that **unfinished kitchen** back there, I see it as a great example of what is going on with Israel. Right now, it's a mess. It's unfinished. Parts here. Parts there. It looks like it's out of control. But slowly and surely, with the help of so many skilled individuals in our church, it's coming together beautifully. **Things aren't falling apart back there. They're falling into place.** Right now, Israel is a mess. The world is a mess. It looks like things are out of control in the M.E. But slowly and surely, God is weaving and orchestrating everything according to His plan in His timing for His glory.

3. **Israel's story is <u>our</u> story.**
   God's dealings with Israel is a **bellwether** for us. Israel is not **perfect**. Since Genesis 12, they have **stumbled** and **fumbled** and **failed** more times than we can count. But you know? So do you and I. None of us are **perfect**. None of us have **arrived**. Every single one of us **needs a Savior**. Every single day, we too, are **prone to leave** the God we love. But for some **mysterious reason**, He has shown **undeserved grace** and **mercy** and **faithfulness** to us. And at the end of the day, we stand assured that **He doesn't leave us or forsake us because He keeps His promises.**