

ANYONE CAN HAVE A FUTURE IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

*11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.
(Jeremiah 29:11).*

As believers we never have to fear the future! The Lord has everything in control. The only thing that is out of control is a lost and fallen world. For Paul he wants to remind Israel that even though they may be rejected by God at this time there will be a time when they want be rejected. Just as Jeremiah prophecified, God gives us a future and hope.

Men have always tried to determine what the future would hold, but as you will see from these examples it doesn't always turn out the way we think it will.

Theoretically, television may be feasible, but I consider it an impossibility--a development which we should waste little time dreaming about.

[Lee de Forest, 1926, inventor of the cathode ray tube.](#)

I think there is a world market for about five computers.

[Thomas J. Watson, 1943, Chairman of the Board of IBM.](#)

We don't think the Beatles will do anything in their market. Guitar groups are on their way out.

[Recording company expert, 1962.](#)

More than at any time in history, mankind faces a crossroads--one path leading to despair and utter hopelessness, the other leading to total destruction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.

[Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State, U. S. News and World Report, Jan. 9, 1989.](#)

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.

[Corrie Ten Boom.](#)

During his 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy often closed his speeches with the story of Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives.

One day in 1789, the sky of Hartford darkened ominously, and some of the representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Quelling a clamor for immediate adjournment, Davenport rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought."

Rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ returns. Instead of fearing the dark, we're to be lights as we watch and wait.

[Harry Heintz](#).

An interesting map is on display in the British Museum in London. It's an old mariner's chart, drawn in 1525, outlining the North American coastline and adjacent waters. The cartographer made some intriguing notations on areas of the map that represented regions not yet explored. He wrote: "Here be giants," "Here be fiery scorpions," and "Here be dragons." Eventually, the map came into the possession of Sir John Franklin, a British explorer in the early 1800s. Scratching out the fearful inscriptions, he wrote these words across the map: "Here is God."

A. ISRAEL AND THEIR FUTURE OF GRACE.

1. (V.1a) Has God **cast away** (rejected) **His people** Israel?

a. **Has God cast away His people?** Paul's question makes sense as at this point in Romans. If Israel's rejection of the gospel was somehow both consistent with God's eternal plan (Romans 9:1-29) and Israel's own choosing (Romans 9:30-10:21), then does this mean that Israel's fate is settled, and there is no possibility of restoration?

b. **Certainly not!** Despite their present state, Israel is **not** permanently **cast away**. Now Paul will explain this answer.

2. (V.1b) Evidence that God has not *cast away His people*: Paul himself.

a. **I also am an Israelite**: The fact that Paul has come to faith in Jesus as Messiah proves there are some Jews who have been chosen by God and who have embraced the gospel.

b. **I also**: Whenever we want evidence of God's work, we could and should look to our own life first. This is what Paul did and what we should do.

3. (Vv.2-5) The principle of a remnant.

a. **God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew . . . at this present time there is a remnant**: Paul knows that as a whole Israel had rejected their Messiah. Yet a substantial remnant embraces the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God has often worked in Israel through a faithful remnant (as He did in the time of Elijah).

i. "It is just possible that Paul, likewise persecuted by his own countrymen, felt a special kinship with Elijah." (Harrison)

b. Notice that Elijah prayed to **God against Israel**. Things were so bad that Elijah prayed **against** his own people!

c. **LORD, they have killed Your prophets**: Elijah thought that God had cast off the nation and he was the only one left serving the Lord. But God showed him that there was in fact a substantial remnant - though it was only a remnant, it was actually there.

d. **At this present time there is a remnant**: We often think that God needs a lot of people to do a great work, but He often works through a small group, or through a group that starts out small. Though not many Jews in Paul's day embraced Jesus as Messiah, **a remnant** did and God will use that small group in a big way.

4. (Vv.6-10) God's right to choose a remnant according to grace.

a. **If by grace, then it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace:** Paul left the previous verse noting that the remnant was chosen *according to the election of grace*. Now he reminds us what **grace** is, by definition: the free gift of God, not given with any eye to the performance or potential in the one receiving, but only given out of the kindness of the giver.

b. **If it is of works, it is no longer grace:** As principles, grace and works don't go together. If giving is of grace, it cannot be of works, and if it is of works, it cannot be of grace.

c. **The elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened:** Therefore, God's saving mercy has been extended not to Israel as a whole, but to the elect among Israel, who have received it - the rest are hardened by their rejection.

d. The quotations from Isaiah 29 and Psalm 69 tell us that God can give a **spirit of stupor** and **eyes that they should not see** and He can say **let their eyes be darkened** as He pleases. If God is pleased to enlighten only a remnant of Israel at the present time, He may do so as He pleases.

i. Morris calls **a spirit of stupor** "an attitude of deadness towards spiritual things."

B. GOD'S PLAN IN SAVING ONLY A REMNANT AT THE PRESENT TIME.

1. (V.11a) Does Israel's stumbling as predicted by Psalm 69 mean that they have fallen away permanently?

a. **Stumbled . . . fall:** As Paul presents it here, there is a difference between *stumbling* and *falling*. Israel had **stumbled**, but they would not **fall** - in the sense of being removed from God's purpose and plan. You can recover from a stumble, but if you fall you're down.

2. (Vv.11b-14) No, God had a specific purpose to fulfill in allowing Israel to stumble - so that salvation would come to the Gentiles.

a. **Certainly not!** Paul has shown that God is still working through a remnant of Israel today, but wants to make it clear that the sinning majority of Israel is not lost forever.

b. **Through their fall . . . salvation has come to the Gentiles:** We should not forget that in many instances the gospel only went out to the Gentiles after the Jewish people rejected it (Acts 13:46, 18:5-6, 28:25-28). In this sense, the rejection of the gospel by the Jews was **riches for the Gentiles**.

c. **If by any means I may provoke to jealousy:** Yet, Paul's desire isn't only that these riches would be enjoyed by the Gentiles only, but that the Jews would be provoked to a good kind of **jealousy**, motivating them to receive some of the blessings the Gentiles enjoyed.

i. "It is a matter for profound regret that just as Israel refused to accept this salvation when it was offered to them, so the Gentiles have all too often refused to *make Israel envious.*" (Morris)

3. (Vv.15-21) To the Gentiles: yes, Jewish rejection of Jesus was made into a blessing for you; but consider how great a blessing their acceptance of Jesus will be.

a. **If the firstfruit is holy:** The **firstfruit** probably represents the first Christians, who were Jewish. Their conversion was something holy and good for the church; all the apostles and most of the human authors of Scripture were Jewish. If the conversion of this **firstfruit** was good for the Gentiles, how much better will it be when the full harvest is brought in!

i. Many commentators take the **firstfruit** here as the patriarchs, but it fits better to see it as the original core group of Christians.

b. **Some of the branches . . . a wild olive tree:** With the picture of the tree and the branches, Paul reminds the Gentile Christians that it is only by God's grace that they can be grafted into the "tree" of God - the "root" of which is Israel.

i. "When an old olive tree had lost its vigor, it seems that one remedy in antiquity was to cut away the failing branches and graft in some wild olive shoots. The result was said to be the invigoration of the failing tree." (Morris)

ii. In the Talmud, it speaks of Ruth the Moabitess as a "godly shoot" engrafted into Israel. (Cited in Morris)

c. **Do not boast against the branches . . . you do not support the root, but the root supports you:** Lest Gentiles think of themselves as superior to Jews, Paul also reminds them that the root supports the branches - not the other way around.

d. **Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith:** In addition, any Gentile standing in the "tree" of God is there by faith only, not by works or merits. If Gentiles are unbelieving, they will be "cut off" just as much as unbelieving Israel was.

4. (Vv.22-24) Application of God's purpose in Israel's rejection that the Gentiles might be reached.

a. **Consider the goodness and severity of God:** Paul stresses the need to **continue in His goodness**; not in the sense of a salvation by works, but continuing in God's grace and goodness to us - a relationship of continual abiding.

i. The idea of a continual abiding in the "tree" is also expressed in John 15:1-8.

b. **God is able to graft them in again:** And, if Israel has been “cut off” because of their unbelief, they can be **grafted in** again **if they do not continue in unbelief.**

c. **How much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?** If the Gentiles seemed to “graft” into God’s “tree” easily, we know it won’t be hard for God to graft the **natural branches** back into the tree. We can also assume that the natural branches will have the potential to bear much fruit.

C. GOD’S PLAN FOR ISRAEL’S EVENTUAL RESTORATION.

1. (Vv.25-27) The promise that all Israel will be saved.

a. Paul’s warning to us that we should not be **wise in your own opinion** should remind us to take what he says here soberly. Christians must not **be ignorant of this mystery.**

b. **Blindness in part has happened to Israel:** Paul’s point from Romans 11:11-24 is summarized. God’s purpose in allowing **hardening in part** to come upon Israel is so that the **fullness of the Gentiles** can **come in.**

i. **In part** has the idea of “temporary”; Israel’s **hardness** is temporary. “One day the Jews will realize their blindness and folly. They’ll accept Jesus Christ, and the glorious national restoration of these people will bring in the Kingdom Age.” (Smith)

c. However, when that **fullness of the Gentiles has come in**, God will once again turn the attention of His plan of the ages specifically on Israel again, so that **all Israel will be saved.** God’s plan of the ages does not set its attention on everyone equally through all ages.

d. **All Israel will be saved:** This **all Israel** is not spiritual Israel. It isn't "spiritual Israel" in Romans 11:25, because that Israel is spiritually blind. Therefore, we shouldn't regard it as spiritual Israel in Romans 11:26.

i. There is a distinction between national or ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel. Paul makes this clear in Galatians 3:7 and other passages. Nevertheless, God still has a purpose and a plan for ethnic Israel, and will bring salvation to them.

e. **Will be saved:** This states clearly for us that God is *not* finished with Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group. Though God has turned the focus of His saving mercies away from Israel on to the Gentiles, He will turn it back again.

i. This simple passage refutes those who insist that God is forever done with Israel as Israel, and that the Church is the New Israel and inherits every promise ever made to national and ethnic Israel of the Old Testament.

f. **All Israel will be saved:** This does not mean there will be a time when every last person of Jewish descent will be saved. Instead, this is a time when Israel as a whole will be a saved people, and when the nation as a whole (especially its leadership) embraces Jesus Christ as Messiah.

i. Even as the apostasy of Israel did not extend to every last Jew, so the salvation of Israel will not extend to every last Jew; Paul is speaking of the "mass" of Jews when he says **all Israel**. "*All Israel* is a recurring expression in Jewish literature, where it need not mean 'every Jew without a single exception', but 'Israel as a whole.' " (Bruce)

iii. The Bible indicates this is a necessary condition for the return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:39, Zechariah 12:10-11). Jesus will not return again until God turns the focus of His saving mercies on Israel again, and Israel responds to God through Jesus Christ.

g. **The Deliverer will come out of Zion:** The quotations from Isaiah show that God still has a redeeming work to accomplish with Israel, and that it will not be left undone.

2. (Vv.28-29) God's love and calling for Israel still endures.

a. **Concerning the gospel . . . concerning the election:** Even though it seemed that in Paul's generation the Jews were enemies of God and were against the person and work of Jesus, they are still **beloved** - if for no other reason, then **for the sake of the fathers** (the patriarchs of the Old Testament).

i. Of course, they are loved for *more* than the **sake of the fathers**, but that by itself would be enough.

b. **The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable:** This is another reason why God hasn't given up on national and ethnic Israel. This principle, stated by Paul, comforts us far beyond its direct relevance to Israel. It means that God will not give up on us, and He leaves the path to restoration open.

3. (Vv.30-32) Paul cautions the Gentile Christians to remember where they came from and where God has promised to take the Jewish people.

a. **You were once disobedient to God:** The Gentile Christians came from **disobedience**; yet God showed them mercy, in part through the disobedience of Israel.

b. **Obtained mercy through their disobedience:** If God could use the disobedience of Israel for the good of Gentiles, He could also use the mercy shown to Gentiles for the mercy of Israel.

c. **God has committed them all to disobedience:** The idea is that God has shut up both Jew and Gentile into custody as lawbreakers. God offers **mercy** to these prisoners, based on the person and work of Jesus.

4. (Vv.33-36) Praise to God for His plan and the progress of the plan.

a. **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** As Paul considers God's great plan of the ages, he breaks into spontaneous praise. Paul realizes that God's **ways** are **past finding out**, and God's wisdom and knowledge is beyond him.

i. "The Romans dedicated a certain lake, the depth whereof they knew not, to Victory; so should we admire the unsearchable counsels of God." (Trapp)

ii. Who would have planned the whole scenario with Israel, the Gentiles and the Church as God has planned it? Yet, we can see the great wisdom and compassion in His plan.

iii. "It is strange that, with such a scripture as this before their eyes, men should sit down coolly and positively write about counsels and decrees of God formed from all eternity, of which they speak with as much confidence and decision as if *they* had formed a part of the council of the Most High, and had been with him in the beginning of his ways!" (Clarke)

b. **For who has known the mind of the LORD?** The quotations from Isaiah 40:13 and Job 41:11 emphasize both God's wisdom and sovereign conduct; no one can make God their debtor.

i. **Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?** You can try all you want - but you will never make God a debtor to you. You can't out-give God. He will never need to repay a debt to anyone.

c. **Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things:** "All these words are monosyllables. A child just learning to read could easily spell them out. But who shall exhaust their meaning?" (Meyer)

i. It is all **of Him**: This plan came from God. It wasn't man's idea. We didn't say, "I've offended God and have to find a way back to Him. Let's work on a plan to come back to God." In our spiritual indifference and death we didn't care about a plan, and even if we did care we aren't smart enough or wise enough to make one. It is all **of Him**.

ii. It is all **through Him**: Even if we had the plan, we couldn't make it happen. We couldn't free ourselves from this prison of sin and self. It could only happen **through Him**, and the great work of Jesus on our behalf is the **through Him** that brings salvation.

iii. It is all **to Him**: It's not for me, it's not for you, it's all **to Him**. It is *to the praise of the glory of His grace* (Ephesians 1:6). It's for His pleasure that we are created, and we find our fulfillment in bringing Him glory and honor.

d. **To whom be glory forever:** The fact that Paul can't figure out God makes him glorify God all the more. When we understand some of the greatness of God, we worship Him all the more passionately.