

Thus far in this mini-series we have seen Isaiah 6 as a judgment prophecy against the nation of Israel. It is partially leveled against her in the Gospels and also in the Acts period. We have shown that the Acts period is not about the church which is His Body but a further opportunity for Israel to turn and accept the Lord. He was expected to return to the earth at that time and initialize the blessings the prophets promised the Messiah would bring. The Day of the Lord was at hand.

Peter and Paul preached to Israel that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised to sit on David's throne (Acts 2 & 13) and as the Acts period progressed Peter wrote about the longsuffering (not the delayed coming) of the Lord towards Israel. He referred his Jewish readers to Paul in this regard;

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is **long-suffering** toward **us** (Israelites), not purposing that **any** (of us Israelites) should perish, but that **all** (Israelites) should come to repentance.

2Pe 3:15 And think of the **long-suffering** of our Lord as salvation (as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him

2Pe 3:16 as also in all his letters, **speaking in them of these things**; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable pervert, as also *they do* the rest of the Scriptures, to *their own* destruction).

Paul is the NT writer who details this longsuffering of the Lord towards Israel during the Acts period. In his letter to the Romans he states clearly that Israel had not been cast aside and God's OT purposes remained and the hope Paul held at that time was the OT promises made to Israel's Fathers, see Romans 15:4, 8-13. Not only so, in Romans, Paul outlines God's basis and dealings with Israel as He stretched out His hands to them.

During Acts God was longsuffering towards Israel and nothing new had been introduced because as we have seen, God's faithfulness was not dependent on Israel's;

Rom 3:3-4a For what if some (of ISRAEL) were unfaithful [or, refused to believe]? Their (ISRAEL's) unfaithfulness [or, unbelief] will not make the faithfulness of God useless, will it? Absolutely not! (ALT)

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of the one willing, nor of the one running, but of God, the One showing mercy.

God's faithfulness was founded on the fact that He had called Israel. Paul defines Israel as being the seed of Abraham through Isaac;

Rom 9:6 Not however that the Word of God has failed, for not all those of Israel are Israel;

Rom 9:7 nor because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children. But, "In Isaac shall your Seed be called."

Having established these dispensational truths of the Acts period, Paul then states clearly that Israel had not been cast aside and nothing new had been introduced because God's free gifts and calling are without change of mind;

Rom 11:1-2 I say then, Did not God put away His people? God did not thrust out His people whom He foreknew.

Rom 11:29 For the free gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Israel were God's people but were withstanding God's messengers, turning others away from the faith and perverting the right ways of the Lord. But despite these sins no change in dispensation had taken place. Yes, they were under God's judgment as we see in the first recorded miracle of Paul in Acts 13. This miracle is a picture of the condition of the nation from that point onwards;

Act 13:11 And now, behold, *the hand of the Lord is on you*. And you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a while. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking *some to lead him by the hand*.

This Jew, Bar-jesus, needed someone to lead him by the hand but he was only blinded for a season. This is exactly the state of Israel as seen in this passage in Romans;

Rom 11:7 What then? Israel has not obtained that which it seeks, but the election obtained *it*, and the rest were hardened

Rom 11:8 even as it is written, "God gave to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not seeing, and ears not hearing" until this day.

Rom 11:9 And David said, "Let their table become for a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a recompense to them.

Rom 11:11 And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous.

Rom 11:12 Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! (ISV)

This partial blinding of Israel was only temporary. It provided opportunity for Gentiles to be saved for the express purpose of "leading Israel by the hand", to provoke them to jealousy unto Israel's "full inclusion". It is impossible to

interpret this as full inclusion in the Body of Christ since Paul has clearly written that Israel's unfaithfulness did not mean any change in God's purposes.

Notice the reciprocal mercy during this later period of the Acts. Because Israel was an enemy and partially blinded, mercy fell upon the Gentiles, but the mercy on the Gentiles was designed to bring mercy on the nation, to "lead them by the hand";

Rom 11:28 Indeed as regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes. But as regards the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

Rom 11:29 For the free gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Rom 11:30 For as you also then disbelieved God, but now have been shown mercy through their disbelief,

Rom 11:31 even so these also have not believed now, so that through your mercy they may also obtain mercy.

This is how God was longsuffering with His elect people Israel during Acts. He had partially blinded them as an act of mercy, He was saving Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy, and just as the Gentiles were receiving mercy so would the entire nation in God's plan. His purposes for Israel had not been altered or transferred to "the church".

So what about the believers of that time, the believing Jews and Gentiles? Paul leaves us in no doubt as to their calling and purpose and it should not surprise us to find it is all prophetic. Returning to chapter 9 we find that after stating the election of Israel through Isaac, Paul then moves on to the election within that election, the elect remnant of prophecy;

Rom 9:6 Not however that the Word of God has failed, for not all those of Israel are Israel;

Rom 9:7 nor because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children. But, "In Isaac shall your Seed be called."

Rom 9:8 That is, not the children of the flesh are children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for a seed.

Rom 9:9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

Rom 9:10 And not only this, but when Rebekah also had conceived by one, by our father Isaac

Rom 9:11 (for the children had not yet been born, neither had done any good or evil; but that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who called,)

Rom 9:12 it was said to her, "The elder shall serve the younger."

Rom 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Rom 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there not unrighteousness with God? Let it not be!

Rom 9:15 For He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of the one willing, nor of the one running, but of God, the One showing mercy.

The nation through Isaac is an election but within the line of Isaac two children were born and before either had done good or evil, God made a choice not based upon works. Mercy is not dependent on the one running or rejecting but God alone. So far as Israel was concerned during Acts, their ultimate salvation was expected at that time not because of their failure to "run" but because of the mercy of God. God is sovereign, He is the potter, He fashions His elect as He decides and this has nothing to do with some being saved and some not. It is about vessels of honour and less honour.

Notice in the following passage it is of the same "lump" from which God chooses to make vessels of less honour and "fitted for waste" and vessels fitted for honour and glory compare Roms.9:21 & 11:16. Paul clearly states in this passage that the believing Jews and Gentiles of the Acts period were the remnant of prophecy; vessels of honour;

Rom 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?

Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;

Rom 9:23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had before prepared to glory;

Rom 9:24 whom **He also called**, not only us, of **Jews**, but also of the **nations** (Gentiles)?

Rom 9:25 As He also says in Hosea, "I will call those not My people, My people; and those not beloved, Beloved."

Rom 9:26 And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them. "You *are* not My people; there they shall be called sons of the living God."

Rom 9:27 Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel is as the sands of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. (cp remnant in Joel 2:32 as in Acts 2:39 and Roms.10:13).

Paul includes himself in the "us of Jews" portion of this elect remnant of that time. All the believing Jews and Gentiles of the Acts period constituted that prophetic election of grace. Isaiah and Hosea do not speak of today's dispensation of the grace of God and there is nothing dispensationally in Romans that relates to our present calling today either. We are not an elect remnant of grace in the line of Isaac.

Some might have difficulty mixing grace and prophecy but Paul, who had already discarded the involvement of works in election in chapter 9:11, had no hesitation. Look at the Scriptures side by side;

Rom 9:10 And not only this, but when Rebekah also had conceived by one, by our father Isaac

Rom 9:11 (for the children had not yet been born, neither had done any good or evil; but that the purpose of God according to election might stand, **not of works** but of Him who called,)

Rom 11:5 Even so then, also in this present time a remnant (of prophecy) according to the election of grace has come into being.

Rom 11:6 But if by grace, then *it is* **no more of works**; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it is* of works, then it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work.

The elect remnant of grace of the Acts period is not the church which is His body of the post Acts period. We must rightly divide the Word of Truth not wrongly combine or explain away the Word of Truth.

So while the Lord was longsuffering towards Israel waiting for repentance, He was calling out the remnant of prophecy. This had a preserving effect on the entire nation;

Rom 9:28 For He is bringing the matter to an end, and cutting short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work on the earth."

Rom 9:29 And as Isaiah said before, "Unless the Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we would have been as Sodom, and would have been like Gomorrah."

The reader might like to go back and read Isaiah 1:1-8 to see an identical national state of apostasy in Israel. If Paul refers to Isaiah then so should we before drawing any conclusions about "the church". If Isaiah speaks of the church which is His Body only then can we inject it into Romans. The conditions of Isaiah's time are the same dispensational elements of the Acts period. Nothing in any of this permits the bringing back of the later truths of Ephesians and Colossians into these Acts period letters.

So why did Peter refer his Jewish readers to Paul? It was Paul who wrote about God's longsuffering mercy to Israel late in the Acts period. It was Paul who had the fuller information about the conditions of that time. But just as Peter proclaimed the Day of the Lord would come (2Pet.3:9-10) so in Romans the very same Day of the Lord was in view in Paul, see Roms.13:11-12, 15:4, 8, 12 & 16:20.

At the time of writing Romans Paul affirms the unchanging status of God's purposes for the world through Israel. Nothing new can be implied. Paul writes that Israel was God's elect people. Paul writes about the mystery of Israel's partial blindness which was a merciful judgment by God. Paul writes that this judgment on Israel provided opportunity for mercy to fall upon the Gentiles. Gentiles were being saved to provoke Israel, who had provoked God, compare Roms.10:19 with Deut.32:20-21.

Within Israel; this great line from Isaac, there was a remnant, a "seed" of faith. This remnant of the Acts period was also a choice of the sovereign God who was showing mercy and patience to the nation at large;

Rom 10:21 But to Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobeying and gainsaying people."

In Romans no dispensational change can be seen from the purposes of God found in the OT., not one hint that Paul had any idea about a new calling. Let us acknowledge our Apostle who was looking for the coming of the Lord out of Zion when he wrote Romans late in the Acts period;

Rom 11:25 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Rom 11:29 For the free gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.