

In our previous lessons we have been looking at Isaiah 6 as a judgment prophecy against the nation of Israel. In this process we have looked at the Book of Acts and the events there and how Isaiah 6 can be seen as strong feature proving that the tradition that Acts is the beginning of "the church" has to be discarded in the light of the Word of Truth.

The Book of Acts is a continuation of God's dealings with the nation of Israel as He held out His hands to them waiting for them to come to repentance and accept His Son, their Messiah who had been raised to sit on David's throne. The fact that Israel in the main was not faithful and did not turn to Him did not mean God was not being unfaithful to His own Word. Here are some passages we have already considered in this regard;

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)

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.

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.

During the Acts period many Jews turned to the Lord but the majority was rejecting the message and so God inflicted partial blindness up the nation as per Isaiah 6 and seen in the judgment upon Bar-jesus in Acts 13:6-11. This false prophet and Israel as a nation was partially blinded and stumbling but not cast aside during Acts;

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 does not mean that our calling today was revealed in the Acts period. Israel is not partially blinded and stumbling today, they have been put aside until a future when God resumes His purposes through her.

Paul began his ministry among the Gentile nations north and westward of the Mediterranean Gentiles (from Acts 13 onwards) many Gentiles turned to the Lord, the door being opened to them through Peter in Acts 10-11. Paul tells us very clearly how and why Gentiles were saved during the Acts period. The following verses show exactly the dispensational setting of the book of Acts;

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

Rom 11:1 I say then, Did not God put away His people? Let it not be said! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of *the* tribe of Benjamin.

Rom 11:2 God did not thrust out His people whom He foreknew.

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)

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.

Paul's letter to the Romans was written late in Acts and these are the conditions which existed at that time but not today. Let us sum up what our apostle teaches us in regards to the Acts period.

1. Israel were not cast aside but were partially blinded and stumbling and they were not partially blinded so as to be cast off. Paul anticipated their full restoration. Israel was loved for the father's sakes.
2. Israel's stumbling was the open door for Gentiles to be saved to provoke Israel to jealousy.
3. The calling of Abraham was still in view, for God does not change His mind or alter the thing gone out of his mouth.
4. Just as the Gentiles had received mercy when before they were unbelieving, so the stumbling Israel would receive mercy unto full inclusion.

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. (See Luke 21:24-27).

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.

Not one of these dispensational conditions exists today. Not one of these conditions can be found in the letters of Paul written after Acts 28; after Israel was put aside with the announcement of Isaiah 6.

So what about the Jew and Gentile believers of the Acts period? What "church" were they? If our tradition is totally incorrect and the book of Acts is not the birthday of our church today, what company did those believers of that time belong to?

Thankfully, Paul gives us the clear answer;

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).

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 Jewish and Gentile believers of the Acts period belonged to a chosen remnant of grace which God had spoken about through the prophets. This is not our calling today, we are not a remnant of prophecy; we belong to a called out company which had been hidden in God from the beginning the time. See Ephesians 3:6-10 and 2 Timothy 1:8-9.

If they constituted a different church then what was their hope? What were they looking to happen for them at that time? The answer is so simply if we believe what the apostles proclaimed.

This is what Peter said;

Act 2:29 Men, brothers, it is permitted to say to you with plainness as to the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Act 2:30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up (resurrect) Christ to sit upon his throne,

This is what Paul said;

Act 13:22 And when He had removed him, He raised up David to them to be their king; to whom He also witnessed and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse *to be* a man after My own heart, who shall fulfill all My will.

Act 13:23 Of this *man's* seed God has raised (resurrected) to Israel, according to *His* promise, a Savior, Jesus;

Act 13:32 And we preach the gospel to you, the promise made to the fathers,

Act 13:33 this God has fulfilled to us their children, raising up Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are My Son, this day I have begotten You." Psalm 2 says "my King upon My Holy Hill, ZION".

During Acts, the believers were waiting for Christ to return out of heaven to the earth to restore the Kingdom to Israel; to sit on David's throne. No wonder Paul wrote in Romans exactly what he preached in Acts 13;

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.

These are the dispensational elements of the Acts period. We also remember the mighty signs and wonders of that time including the gifts and the judgments which had been part of Israel's history from the beginning. Not one of these things belong to our calling today. So when did they cease, when did God change things?

At the end of the book of Acts, Paul proclaimed the Kingdom out of the Old Testament to the Jews in Rome. They argued amongst themselves and after nearly 40 years of patience and stretching out his hands to them, finally God brought upon that nation the full weight of Isaiah 6. Israel was placed aside for a (long) time. Here is a passage totally confused by tradition;

Act 28:23 And they having appointed him a day, many came to him in *his* lodging; to whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them the things concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning until evening.

Act 28:24 And some indeed believed the things that were said, others did not believe.

Act 28:25 And disagreeing with one another, they were let go (by God), Paul saying one word: Well did the Holy Spirit speak through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

Act 28:26 saying, "Go to this people and say: Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive. (Isaiah 6).

After pronouncing this judgment passage against Israel, Paul then makes the following statement;

Act 28:28 Therefore be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will hear.

Preciously in the Acts period, Paul preached to Jew first and when they rejected the gospel, he turned to the Gentiles, but here is a difference. Here Israel is finally placed aside and today, in our wonderful calling, the Jews have no advantage, no dispensational privilege. All those dispensational things of the Acts period were put aside with Israel and a completely new set of conditions was introduced to the world through Paul in these letters, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1@2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

May the Lord answer Paul's ancient prayer for the Christians who came out of the Acts period for all of us today:

Eph 1:15 Therefore I also, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints,

Eph 1:16 do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,

Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the* knowledge of Him,

Eph 1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Eph 1:19 and what *is* the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing