

“Don’t Mess With Israel!”

by Casey Head

It is hard to watch the evening news without hearing *something* about the nation of Israel. So many of the conflicts in the Middle East have to do with the Jews, whether directly or indirectly. But not only will you hear about Israel on the evening news, the vast majority of religious people continue to believe that they are the chosen nation of God. It is common for religious magazines and radio programs to discuss the nation of Israel, connecting modern conflicts and events to certain passages in the Bible. “Don’t mess with Israel,” some will say. “That’s their land, and God is on their side.” We must ask the question- is it true? ARE they the chosen people of God today, just as they were so long ago? IS God on their side, defending them and protecting them? DOES that land belong to them? The answer to all three questions is “no.”

Let us first establish *from the scriptures* that Israel is no longer the chosen people of God. In Romans 11, the apostle Paul makes the point that Israel has been cut off from God and that the Gentiles have been grafted in. It says in verses 21-22, “For if God spared not the natural branches (Jews), take heed lest He spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and *severity* of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, IF thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off.” Do you see the point? Israel has been severed from God. No longer are they His chosen people! Under the new and better covenant, salvation is about spiritual, not physical, birth. In other words, to be saved, one must submit to Christ and be reborn, and that is possible for Jews and Gentiles alike. That same point is made in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” It does not matter who you are or who your ancestors were, salvation is possible for everyone.

Second, salvation is no longer found in the physical lineage of Israel, but in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. Jesus says in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: *no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*” While Jews acknowledge God the Father, that is, Jehovah, they deny His Son, Jesus Christ, which means that they cannot be saved. After all, the only way to access the Father is through the Son. The same point is made in Acts 4:12. Peter says here to the council, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” The “name” spoken of here is Jesus Christ, as seen in verse ten. If a person desires salvation, they must go through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Paul says in Romans 3:24 that redemption is found IN Christ Jesus. If these verses aren’t powerful enough for you, then please consider what is said in 1 John 2:22-23... “Who is a liar but He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;* but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” Those who deny that Jesus is the Son of God do not have the Father. Yes, Jews “acknowledge” Jehovah, but because they deny His Son, they have not Jehovah. In order for a Jew to be saved, they must “confess that Jesus is the Son of God,” (1 Jn. 4:15) and they must obey His doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Jn. 9).

Despite the many points that we have made from the scriptures, some will still argue that Israel holds a special place in God’s future plan. They will turn to Romans 11 and to the book of Revelation to justify this point. Let us address these two prooftexts. While the first part of Romans 11 teaches that Israel has been severed, many will turn to verses 25-29 to show that they will one day be wholly redeemed, as they were before. Paul says in verse 26, “And so all Israel shall be saved,” and again in verse 29, “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (irrevocable).” It is true that these two verses *appear* to teach that Israel continues to serve as God’s special people, but the context must first be considered before a conclusion is reached. First of all, the word “so” in verse 26 literally means “in this manner.” The point is not that every Jew would eventually be saved, but rather that they *could* be saved if they turned to Christ, the Redeemer of Israel. Let us notice ALL of verse 26- “And so (in this manner) all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out

of Zion *the Deliverer*, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” All Jews can be saved, but they must first turn to the Deliverer, that is Christ. As seen in Matthew 1:21, the Son of God was named Jesus because “He shall save His people from their sins.” Consider also the words of Paul in verse 14, “If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save *some* of them.” Romans 11, despite what many think, does not teach that Jews will one day be wholly saved simply because they are Jews. Rather, the point is that they can be saved “in this manner,” that is, through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

In addition to Romans 11, many also want to use the book of Revelation to show that Israel still holds a special place in God’s future plan. In Revelation 7:4, we are told, “And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” Understand that this passage is not literal. In fact, the entire book of Revelation is written in signs and symbols, as seen in Revelation 1:1, 20. With this in mind, we must interpret 7:4 figuratively, not literally. As stated in Galatians 3:29 and 6:16, Christians are the “Israel” of God, in a spiritual sense. The point of Revelation 7:4 is that ALL of the Christians (spiritual Israel) during this time of hardship and physical judgement would be protected. The number “144,000” is not literal, just as the “seal” is not literal.

So far in this article, we have proven conclusively that the physical nation of Israel is no longer the chosen nation of God. The physical nation has been replaced by a spiritual nation, as seen in John 18:36-37. In order to be a child of God, one must go through Jesus Christ, as He is the ONLY way to obtain eternal life. Jews reject Jesus Christ. Can they be saved? Only if they obey the gospel plan of salvation and submit to the authority of Christ. The passages used to “prove” that Israel IS the nation of God have been dealt with and explained.

Before we close this brief article, let us address the land of Israel, now referred to as Palestine. Does it belong to them? Is it theirs “by right” because of promises God made to them long ago? The answer is “no.”

It is true that God made a land promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:7, but it is also true that the land promise was completely fulfilled when Israel conquered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. This point is confirmed in Joshua 23:14 when Israel was told, “And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, *that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you.*” Again, it says in Joshua 21:43, “And the Lord gave unto Israel *all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers*; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.” As you can see, the land promise was fulfilled long ago. While they did lose the land, being carried into captivity by the Babylonians, God had already told them that keeping the land was conditioned upon their continued faithfulness (Joshua 23:15-16). When Israel became disobedient, they lost the land.

Some will say that God made another land promise to Israel when they were in captivity. This is absolutely true, but it too was fulfilled. In Jeremiah 30:3, the Lord said of Israel, “For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” This promise was fulfilled, as seen in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. The people of Israel and Judah returned from captivity and rebuilt the temple (Ezra 6:14-18), rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 6:15), and rededicated themselves to God (Neh. 8). It is absurd to say that either of the land promises made by God to Israel remains unfulfilled. The land of Palestine does not belong to Israel, just as Israel is no longer a special nation in the eyes of God.

Hopefully, these points have aided you in your understanding of God’s current relationship with the physical nation of Israel. While Jews are certainly capable of being saved, their continued rejection of Christ prevents them from doing so. Until they repent and embrace the gospel of Christ, they will be lost eternally (Rom. 1:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).