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Blindness in part has happened unto Israel, Romans 11:25-27 — part 2, by David Baron



David Baron was born in 1855 and died in 1926. He was a Jew well trained in Hebrew religion, culture and literature. After his conversion to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Messiah he became a greatly respected Bible teacher, sharing his unique insight into the Scriptures with his fellow Christians as well as exercising an effective missionary influence among his own people. Although the address, amplified in this booklet, was given early in the twentieth century, its message is still relevant and applicable today. May this exposition of the “gifts and calling of God which are without repentance”,

stir the hearts of Christians to praise the Lord for the unchanging Covenants of God, and quicken interest in the people still “beloved for the fathers’ sakes”. Part 1 of this article appeared in the Burning Bush last month.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE REMNANT

But notice another very important part of this revealed mystery, viz., that the blindness or hardness which has come upon Israel is a partial one. “Blindness in part has happened unto Israel” It is partial in its extent and also in its duration. It is partial in its extent - not all Israel is blinded. One great purpose that the Apostle had in writing these three chapters was to unfold the doctrine of the remnant, and it is a very important subject for us to understand. He shows, first of all, how throughout all their history hitherto, there has always been only a remnant that really belonged to God, whereas the great majority were always in a lesser or greater degree of apostasy from God. To me it is of infinite comfort to remember that the line of faith in Israel has never been broken. There were times when it was so attenuated that it was scarcely visible to the human eye. In Elijah’s time, for instance, there were only 7,000 out of the nation who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and the prophet himself did not know even of this number, for he cried: “I only am left.” But, thank God, there were the 7,000 others. The prophet Isaiah begins his book with the lament: “Except Jehovah of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and like unto Gomorrah”: but there was that small remnant. And so it has been all through even in the darkest time of national apostasy. Nowhere in the Bible is this truth brought out so forcibly, viz., the contrast between the godless majority and the little godly minority - as in the last prophetic book of the Old Testament, Malachi. There you have the godless majority proud, boastful, like Christendom today; formally keeping up the



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ordinances of the sanctuary, but giving to God that which cost them least - the maimed and the blind; saying: "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?" But, on the other hand, there is the little remnant of whom we read: "Then they that feared Jehovah spake often one with another: and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon His name." And this same condition of things is carried over from the Old Testament into the New Testament. It is the characteristic of the whole of this present dispensation. "Even so, at this present time also," says the Apostle, "there is a remnant according to the election of grace." We have in previous verses in this chapter the figure of the olive tree and its branches. I take the olive tree to be the stock which God Himself planted; from which eventually the Israel of God was to grow. Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation, with him it was that God made the unconditional covenant, unto him He made those great and wonderful promises which culminate in what may be called the golden promise: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Along with promises there was the gift of the Holy Spirit, though not in the full measure of manifestation and power as after Christ was crucified. Still the Spirit remained among them to keep alive that which God had planted; hence He speaks to them through the prophet Isaiah: "As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith Jehovah: My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." What happened then when Israel as a nation rejected Christ and resisted the Holy Spirit? Did God root out that olive tree? No. The tree remains. God's purposes - though He may permit them to be retarded - are not frustrated through the unbelief of men. "Some of the branches," says the Apostle, "were broken off." Now this is striking. As a matter of fact, it is the great bulk of the people that were unbelieving and that were broken off, but in God's estimation they are of little account compared with the little remnant that is of faith. The breaking off of some of the branches, or, in other words, the temporary fall of Israel, was the occasion for the display of God's wonderful grace to the Gentiles. Gentiles, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are grafted on to that olive tree, that they together with those that are of faith in Israel - the natural branches "might be partakers of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree." But you see there were some of Israel that never were broken off. Let Christians remember this when they speak of Israel's unbelief. Our Lord Jesus came unto His own, and they that were His received Him not, but the "as many as received Him" were also men of Israel, and thousands and tens of thousands of Jews believed in Christ before any Gentiles were brought in, and it was those Jewish believers who - taking their lives into their hands - went out into the world to proclaim the Gospel of the crucified but risen Messiah among the Gentiles; and, as it was at the beginning, so it has been all through the centuries. There has never been a time, even in the darkest period of the history of the Church, when there have not been Jewish believers, and some of them eminent personalities, who emanated at least some light and truth in the midst of the dense darkness into which Christendom had fallen. We do not believe in making up statistics, but it is estimated that within the past fifty or sixty years nearly a quarter of a million Jews were baptised into the Christian faith (ie. prior to this message being preached - Ed.) I might say that one object we had in starting our Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel was to emphasise the fact that although the majority of the Jewish nation are in unbelief,



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there are those of Israel who do believe and extol Christ as the Messiah and Saviour of men.

ISRAEL'S FUTURE

And this blindness or hardness which has come upon Israel is partial, not only in its extent, but also in its duration. There is something peculiar, something unique, about the future of Israel, as there is about their beginning and their history throughout. Why has this people been preserved all through these centuries in spite of their unbelief, and in spite of the fact that almost every possible force has been brought to bear upon them with a view either to exterminate them or to cause them to be assimilated among the nations; yet they still remain a people separated - "dwelling alone and not reckoned among the nations." The secret of it all is, as we have seen, revealed by God Himself. "Blindness in part has happened unto Israel," that is for a certain limited period, known and predetermined of God - "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." I take this to mean the full number of these who from among the Gentiles are by the grace of God being gathered out in this present dispensation, or, in other words, they are those who as branches are now being grafted in to the old olive tree. This expression, "the fulness of the Gentiles" must not be confounded with the other one used in Luke, viz. "The times of the Gentiles." The one is, if I might so express it, a political term, and means the time during which governmental power is entrusted of God to the Gentile nations; the other is what, for lack of a better expression, I may describe as a religious, or Church term, and refers, as already said, to the number of God's elect whom He is gathering out from among the nations, who, together with Israel, form the Church of Christ. And when that fulness is completed, then "all Israel shall be saved." Then there shall be no more the distinction which has existed among the Jewish people hitherto, between the godless majority and the godly minority, but they shall all be saved; or, as the prophet Isaiah expresses it: "Thy people shall be all righteous." They shall all know Jehovah from the least of them even unto the greatest of them. What a wonderful prospect this is! A whole saved nation, whose entire life and all their belongings shall be consecrated to the Lord, and have the words "Holiness to Jehovah" stamped upon them. And the Apostle also tells us how and when this will happen, "As it is written," he says, "there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and this is My covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins." This to me is of very great importance, for you note the Apostle proves his argument that all Israel is to be saved, not by a fresh revelation given to him of the Lord, but by appealing to Old Testament prophecy. By doing so, he puts, so to say, his seal on the fact that there is yet much in Old Testament prophecy to be fulfilled in relation to Israel's future - "As it is written: there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." There seems to me a blending of several different scriptures in this quotation. It is not only a reference to Isaiah 59, but to Isaiah 27, and I cannot but think that Psalm 50:2 was also in the Apostle's mind, where we read: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." He comes to Zion that His glory may shine forth out of Zion; for at His glorious appearing - which alone will be the means of the national conversion of the Jewish people - not only shall all ungodliness disappear from Israel, but light and truth shall radiate from them and Zion as their centre even unto earth's utmost bounds; for God's purpose will assuredly be fulfilled and Israel shall yet be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. Wonderful indeed are God's thoughts; well may the Apostle exclaim after unfolding the whole



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of the mystery of God with Israel: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! . . . For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen."