

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 58

THE REMNANT, PART 2

Peter was writing to believers dispersed around Asia living in an area we now know as Turkey but in this pericope, 1 Peter 2:1-10, he seems to be addressing Jewish believers. Almost every commentator writing today makes this all about the church and completely ignores the evidence that Peter was writing something to Jewish believers. Some theologians who believe Peter was writing to both Jews and Gentiles overall, acknowledge "certain passages appear primarily directed to a Jewish context." [Louis Barbieri, "1 Peter" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: 1 Peter*, p. 1957]. Those who make this totally about the church are not correct. For example, Southern Baptist Calvinist Schreiner writes, "Peter indicates at the outset, therefore, that the church of Jesus Christ is the Israel of God, his chosen people." [Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 50]. Obviously, in a sense, it is about the church because Jewish people are part of the church as believers, but the context of this pericope is Peter writing to Jewish believers and writing about matters they would understand from the Old Testament Scriptures. According to the context, it should be fairly obvious that Peter is writing to Jews from a Jewish frame of mind born of the Old Testament Scriptures. While there are certainly applications for the church that must not be ignored, the Apostle to the circumcision had another purpose in mind. "In this section of the epistle, Peter draws a contrast between the Remnant and the non-Remnant. His purpose is to show that, while the non-Remnant has failed in its calling, the Remnant has not failed. Thus what Peter states here may not necessarily be true of the Church as a whole, but specifically of Jewish believers who now make up the Remnant of Israel." [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, p. 770]. One of the most serious problems preventing a proper understanding of the New Testament is either ignorance about or the outright rejection of God's program for history regarding Israel that is a vital and necessary part of understanding Scripture as a whole. We simply cannot ignore Israel and the way the New Testament relates to and uses the Old Testament and aligns itself with it to present truth. That situation is also particularly evident in properly understanding the Gospels.

1 Peter 2:1–10 ¹Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. ⁴And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice [ἐκλεκτός] and precious in the sight of God, ⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE [ἐκλεκτός] STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINT-

ED.” ⁷This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,” ⁸and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. ⁹But you are A CHOSEN [ἐκλεκτός] RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

As an aside, notice that in verses 4 and 6 ἐκλεκτός is translated “choice” by the NASB which is one of the few places in the New Testament where I believe the word is properly and correctly translated. All other versions translate it as “chosen” or “elect” as the NASB also does in most other places. The KJV, NKJV, RSV, HCSB, NET, NLT, NIV, and the complete Jewish Bible all use “chosen” or a cognate. The ASV simply transliterates the word, “elect,” which is not an interpretation and carries no meaning. The NKJV, the KJV, and the ASV use “elect” in verse 6 probably because they realize calling Christ chosen, is not correct. Christ, the Cornerstone, was obviously not chosen by God; He is eternally the Son of God and is therefore qualitatively and supremely choice, not chosen. Christ was destined for the cross from eternity past; He was not chosen by God to go to the cross. Clearly, the NASB translators realized how silly it would be to say Christ was “chosen” so they decided that “choice” was the better word to use translating ἐκλεκτός, and they were correct. It is disconcerting to realize no other translators realized the particulars of this pericope concerning the eternal Christ and therefore automatically revert to the theological meaning of the word, chosen. It’s like these people are on autopilot. They are fixated on the incorrect definition of this word because it has been impressed into Christian thought since Augustine over 1,500 years ago. Concerning believers, “choice” is the correct translation as well; people are not chosen by God to be saved; people believe and are saved thereby becoming the choice ones in God’s sight. Notice also, in verse 9 the NASB translators reverted back to the incorrect translation of “chosen” instead of “choice.” It would have been a more accurate translation to say that the Remnant is a choice race rather than a chosen race.

Verse 5 refers to Exodus 19:5-6 which reveals that God expected Israel to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Peter informs the dispersed Jewish believers they are living stones and part of a spiritual house—the spiritual house of the Remnant of Israel and they are a holy priesthood. The unbelieving, non-remnant nation failed in its assignment to be these things for God to the world but now the Remnant is offering up spiritual sacrifices to God.

There is certainly a lot of application in this Scripture for the church in general, but that isn’t Peter’s primary intention in this section of his epistle. For example, Peter wrote about being built up into a spiritual house and that is true and it applies to every believer, but the context here involves the believing Remnant within Israel. With the exception of Dr. Fruchtenbaum, I could not find one commentary that didn’t simply assume this was all

about believers and the church in general and that includes dispensationalists although some of them hinted at the correct understanding. The problem is most theologians do not properly relate what Peter is saying to the Old Testament, Israel, and the Remnant. A theologian named Karen Jobes made a simple comparison with Israel and that was unusual because most theologians don't even make that connection, but her theology is still Replacement Theology and incorrect. "The description of resident aliens and foreigners draws Peter's readers into continuity with the nation of Israel, who began their history as aliens in Egypt and lived much of their history as resident aliens and foreigners in exile." [Karen H. Jobes, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Peter*, p. 168]. She actually doesn't see Israel in here, she sees the church in terms of simply having some common identity with Old Testament Israel by being aliens on earth away from their true heavenly home just as Abraham was a stranger and a sojourner in a foreign land. In her mind, the church is simply the continuation of Israel.

Verse 6 quotes Isaiah 28:16 to identify Christ Jesus as the choice Stone that is the Cornerstone of the foundation. Those who believe in Him will not be disappointed. Disappointed, *κατασχύνω*, is much better translated "put to shame" which is how other major Bible versions have translated it. In English, the picture that comes to mind when one is not disappointed paints a word picture that is very different from that which comes to mind about being ashamed. Those who fail to believe in Christ Jesus will be put to shame. Verses 7-8 say the Remnant enjoys the precious value that flows from belief, but the non-remnant, those who disbelieve, stumble in their disobedience. In fact, absent a change of mind (repentance), they are doomed. Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22 which predicted the rejection of the stone that has become the Cornerstone and the leaders of Israel did, in fact, reject the Stone. Then he quotes Isaiah 8:14 which is a Scripture concerning the believing Remnant, stating the Lord would be "a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over..." for the non-remnant. The non-remnant not only did stumble because of their unbelief, the majority of the Jewish people continue to stumble because of unbelief. Isaiah 28:16 said the Remnant and the non-remnant would be divided because, "He who believes in it [the Stone] will not be disturbed." This has happened and continues to take place as the Messiah, the Cornerstone, has been rejected and consequently has become the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense to the non-remnant while the Remnant enjoys the peace that comes with believing in the Messiah. Peter used the same illustration of the rejected Stone in Acts 4:11 shortly after Pentecost.

In verses 9-10, Peter describes the wonderful status of the Remnant which is also a reference back to Exodus 19:5-6. As the Remnant, they are a choice race by means of their faith in the Messiah, but this also refers to the fact that the Remnant of Israel is also the choice people group as a nation. The Remnant will be the nucleus of the nation going into the Kingdom. At this time, Israelites do not cease being part of the nation when they come to faith. The Church is not a race; this isn't about the Church because it is formed from people of all races. Theologians such as Jobes make this about all people in general. "Peter here makes the radical claim that those who believe in Jesus Christ—whether Jew, Gentile, Greek, Roman, Cappadocian, Bithynian, or whatever—though from many races, constitute a new race of those who have been born again into a liv-

ing hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." [Karen H. Jobes, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Peter*, p. 159]. The Remnant is priests and kings forming a royal priesthood. Where the non-remnant has failed to be the holy nation God created them to be, the Remnant has not failed. The Remnant is a people for God's own possession. This is a truth presented throughout the Old Testament (Dt. 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Is. 43:21; Mal. 3:17). The purpose for the Remnant is the fulfillment of the purpose God desired for Israel from the start and that is to reveal the attributes or virtues of God to the world (Is. 43:21). Finally, Peter refers to Hosea 1:10-2:1, 23. His point is that those who were once the non-remnant are now the Remnant. In Romans, Paul relates Gentiles to Hosea's words, but that isn't the point Peter is making—and Hosea wasn't either.

This Scripture is presenting the distinction between the Jewish non-remnant and the Jewish Remnant of God. It is not about presenting a distinction between Israel and the church or between unbelieving Jews and believing Gentiles. Israel, as the nation and people they were created by God to be, failed, but the Remnant of Israel has not failed and is fulfilling the purpose for which God created Israel in the first place. Eventually, the Remnant of Israel will enter the Kingdom to enjoy the Kingdom promises God made to Israel through the covenants.

Romans 9-11 is even more specifically about the Remnant of Israel but replacement theologians must put the church into this Scripture. "In the New Testament the apostle Paul picked up the teaching of Isaiah and other prophets about the remnant and applied it to the church (Rom. 11:5). Paul showed that God's purpose is seen in the 'remnant' out of Israel who have joined the Gentiles to form the church, the new people of God. Further, Jesus' choice of twelve apostles built upon the remnant themes. Symbolizing the twelve tribes, the apostles became the remnant who erected a new structure, the church, upon the foundation of Israel. In the church, both Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, find their true spiritual home when they believe in Christ." [Nelson's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Remnant," p. 975]. This is the standard position of Replacement Theology and Paul says absolutely nothing of the sort in this Scripture!

Romans 9-11 is not that hard to understand IF one allows the Scriptures to speak for themselves. Of course, that is the problem. Most theologians impose their theology onto the text and have to interpret it according to Replacement Theology. This simply leads people away from the truth Paul is revealing in these chapters of Romans. When the New Testament says "Israel," it means the nation and people of Israel; it does not mean the church whether the church is characterized as the "New Israel" or otherwise. When Paul refers to the Remnant, he is referring to believing Jews; he is not referring to the church as Israel's replacement. Replacement theologians have to deny the plain truth of these Scriptures in order to maintain their theology and that is not exegesis—it is theology masquerading as exegesis. It represents a massive failure to not only understand God's Kingdom program but also to reject it.

I just mentioned that every time "Israel" is used in the New Testament, it means the nation of Israel. In the NASB, the word is used 75 times and the meaning never varies.

Matthew: 14	Mark: 2	Luke: 12	John: 4
Acts: 20	Romans: 11	1 Cor.: 1	2 Cor.: 2
Galatians: 1	Ephesians: 1	Philippians: 1	Hebrews: 3
Revelation: 3			

In Romans, each use of the word occurs in chapters 9-11. Replacement theologians use Galatians 6:16 to prove, in their mind, the church has replaced Israel and then they use that as the basis for interpreting Israel in Romans 9-11 as the church. It is an assumption resulting in circular reasoning based on a faulty interpretation of the meaning of Israel. In terms of logical fallacies, it is also begging the question because it assumes what it is trying to prove and that is the church is the new Israel; therefore, Israel cannot mean the nation of Jews it meant in the Old Testament. Instead, in the New Testament, it means the church. Hermeneutically speaking, it is an illegitimate totality transfer of sorts in violation of grammar and context. The reasoning behind Replacement Theology is, if Israel means the church in Galatians 6:16, then it must mean the church in Romans 9-11.

In Romans 9-11, Paul was anguished over the fact his Jewish kin, who had all the advantages of being God's people, refused to believe. Paul acknowledged that Israel's rejection of salvation cannot frustrate God's plan and other people, who are not ethnic Jews, will be saved. What advantages then did the Jews have over the Gentiles?

Romans 3:1-2 ¹Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ²Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Romans 9:4-5 ⁴who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, ⁵whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

In other words, Israel had enormous advantages over Gentiles in their relationship with God. "For they are not all Israel who are from Israel" (Rom. 9:6) cannot be interpreted to mean that true Israel is now the church. In context, Paul is distinguishing between the Remnant of Israel and those Jews not of the Remnant. "It is important that this verse not be misunderstood. Paul is not distinguishing between Israel and the Church, nor between Jews and Gentiles. Rather, he is distinguishing between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe, or between the Remnant and the non-Remnant. The first expression, *all Israel*, refers to the believing Jewish Remnant, the believing natural seed. The second expression, *of Israel*, refers to the entire nation, the whole natural seed. In other words, not the whole of Israel is the true Israel or believing Israel. What Paul is saying is that there are two Israels: *first*, Israel the whole, which includes all physical de-

scendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and second, within the nation of Israel, there is the Israel of God, the believing Israel, the true Israel. The contrast is between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. There is one Israel that constitutes the entire nation, and within the whole of physical Israel, there is a spiritual Israel. Spiritual Israel is never stated by Scripture to be the Church. It is always those Jews, within the nation [of Israel], who believe." [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, p. 776].

Romans 9:6–7 ⁶But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; ⁷nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

Paul discusses physical descent from Abraham and His selection of Jacob over Esau. "What he is not saying, and indeed will not say, is that the promises were taken away from physical Israel and given to the Church. What he is saying is that these promises are still going to be given to physical Israel, but only to that part of physical Israel that believes. As in 1 Peter 2:1-10, it is the Remnant of Israel that is attaining the spiritual promises." [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, p. 777].

Paul distinguishes between national Israel, the non-remnant, and spiritual Israel the Remnant. God established the nation through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was later known as Israel. Through these men, the spiritual link is established even though there are other physical descendants of Abraham. Paul's discussion in chapter 9 is not about who will be saved as individuals but through what channel His program for history will unfold. God has never changed His ultimate purposes for history and Israel will play her role in that program. In other words, Israel has not been replaced by the church in God's program for history.

By quoting Hosea in Romans 9:25-26, Paul was not saying that Gentiles fulfilled this Scripture. He is simply making a comparison. "Paul has argued that God is dealing with unbelieving Israel through a wrath that is tempered by long patience with them, and that He has taken the opportunity thus provided to extend His mercy beyond the boundaries of Israel to Gentiles, who were not previously God's people at all.... Both quotations refer in the context of Hosea to the northern kingdom of Israel, which God had rejected because of its spiritual harlotry expressed in idolatry. But for Paul's purposes the words of Hosea sufficiently establish the principle that those at one time rejected as the people of God can be received by Him as His people. Since the vessels of mercy are composed of both Jews and Gentiles (vv 23-24), God's loving action in having mercy on them makes the principle exhibited in Hosea applicable to both." [Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, pp. 281-282]. Among the Jews there were those who were God's people and those who were not. Now God was extending mercy to Gentiles who had previously not been the recipients of that mercy. Obviously, individual Gentiles could come to faith before Christ's First Advent, but the only people as a be-

believing group was Israel. Israel's rebellion has provided Gentiles to become part of God's program as the church. People, both Jews and Gentiles, can become part of God's people at any time through faith. The point Paul is making has nothing to do with the church replacing Israel.

Paul spoke of God's intention to deliver a Remnant from among greater Israel.

Romans 9:27–28 ²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; ²⁸FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."

According to Replacement theologians, this Remnant is the church, but that is contrary to the context of Paul's discourse. Verse 28 refers to the Tribulation. This Remnant is the group of Jews who will inherit the Covenant promises in the Kingdom because they came to faith during the day of Jacob's Trouble. "God was keeping His promises to Israel, meaning God was selecting some, but not all, of the physical descendants of Abraham to be in a right covenantal standing with Him, including salvation." [Michael G. Vanlaningham, "Romans" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, p. 1761]. Part of that covenantal standing is the inheritance of the covenantal Kingdom promises. Zane Hodges referred to Paul's words here as "remnant theology." [Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, p. 283].

Romans 9:29 is another affirmation that Israel as a nation will survive by means of the Remnant.

Romans 9:29 ²⁹And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah, and Pharaoh as Paul earlier noted, were subjected to God's temporal wrath, so too will Israel and the world be subjected to temporal wrath. At the end of it, some few Jews will be saved and many will be eternally lost, but there will be a Remnant of believing Jews to carry on as Israel. This is not about the church.

Paul clearly says that God has not rejected His people (Rom. 11:1). May it never be! Paul came to faith and he was certainly a Jew which proves God has not totally rejected Israel. It is noteworthy that Paul referred to the Jews as "His [God's] people;" they are still the choice nation of God; He has not replaced them with the church. In the same way there was a Remnant of believers in Elijah's day, there is still a Remnant of believers (Rom. 11:5) who are justified by grace apart from works (Rom. 11:6). Because of their rebellion, the Jews in general have become spiritually darkened or hardened and only a few overcome it (Rom. 11:7-10), but those few constitute the Remnant. The point is, the rejection of Jesus as Messiah is not total and some of them continually, throughout the course of history, have come to faith. Gentile salvation has come, in

part, to make the Jews jealous so that they would realize their need for salvation and believe as a result of that realization (Rom. 11:11-12).

Romans 11:1 ¹I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Romans 11:5–6 ⁵In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice [appointed plan]. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Romans 11:7–10 ⁷What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." ⁹And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. ¹⁰"LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

Romans 11:11–12 ¹¹I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. ¹²Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

Replacement theologians use verses 5 and 28 to "prove" individual, divine election to justification salvation for some Jews. Schreiner, for example, writes, "The only reason some Jews believe is because God has graciously and mercifully chosen them to be part of his people (cf. 9:27-29). The linkage of grace and election also must be observed. Many worry that the choosing of some and not all would be unjust, but his idea overlooks the fact that election is gracious. No one deserves to be elected, and thus the election of any is a merciful gift of God that cannot be claimed as a democratic right.... One should also observe that Paul's teaching on election is indissolubly bound up with his gospel of justification. Those who deny unconditional election introduce, albeit subtly, the notion that human works play a role in obtaining justification and open the door for human boasting." [Thomas R. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans*, pp. 582-583]. What Schreiner means here is that according to his theology, faith is a work; therefore, God must regenerate a person first and then they believe and are saved. This is the standard explanation for limited atonement according to Calvinism. These verses are, however, about the restoration of the nation. Granted, it is through the believing Remnant composed of individual believers, but it is a national issue Paul deals with in these chapters. Dr. Olson explains why this is corporate in nature pertaining to national Israel and not to individual justification salvation. "[Romans 11:5] In the preceding verses, Paul had referred to God's reserving a remnant of 7000 in the days of Elijah and made a comparison with the remnant of Jewish believers in his day according to the principle of His gracious appointed plan. This involved a judicial hardening of unbelieving Israel, as part of that transition from Israel to the Church.... From the strong corporate context of this passage, it is obvious he is not

speaking of the selection of individual Jews to be that remnant but rather His dealing with the Jewish people corporately. In the preceding section he had made it abundantly clear that faith is the principle upon which that remnant came into being (9:30-33; 10:2-4, 8-17).... [Romans 11:28] The antecedent of 'they' are Jews who are enemies of the gospel and yet corporately are still a part of God's appointed nation, which will ultimately be converted in the end time at His return (Rom. 11:11-27). Most transparently here, *ekloge* [election] could not refer to individual unconditional election to salvation. *Thus there is a consistent corporate usage of this term as 'choice' or appointed people or plan ... related to the nation of Israel.*" [C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism & Arminianism: An Inductive Mediate Theology of Salvation*, pp. 324-325]. It is very evident how much damage is done to the meaning of Scripture when theology is imposed onto the text.

While Israel's sin has resulted in blessings for Gentiles, how much more will they be blessed when the Remnant of Israel is restored? It is true a believing Remnant of Israel exists and it is also true the nation as a whole has been set aside, but this does not mean God has permanently done away with the nation. While the believing Remnant is properly thought of as being part of the church today, that does not mean they are no longer part of the nation.

Romans 11:16 ¹⁶If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

This is based on Numbers 15:17-21. The piece, or first fruits, and the root are holy. Being holy, *קִדְּשׁ*, refers to being separated or set apart and consecrated for God's use and purposes. That certainly describes Israel. Israel was created as a nation holy to God and Israel is still holy in the plans and purposes of God for world history. Whether or not any particular Jewish individual is serving God is beside the point; God still has a plan and a purpose for the nation that will ultimately be realized in and through the believing Remnant.

Dennis Waltemeyer
Fredericksburg Bible Church