**The Great Commission and Israel**

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20**teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

After Jesus had first commissioned the 12 to go with his authority to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 9) ,he now commissions them to go and make disciples of all nations, people of every ethnolinguistic people group on the earth, including the Jews of Israel. He brough them up to Mt. Arbel – a fitting location overlooking galilee of the gentiles where he performed much of his ministry of teaching, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom with demonstrations of healing power and deliverance. Based on his authority and presence he calls them to make disciples of all nations- going, baptizing and teaching! Echoing in the memory of the disciples were Jesus’ words in Matthew 21, ‘it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’ Isaiah had prophesied that the temple was to be a place of prayer for all nations. It had always been God’s intention to call Israel to the nations and invite the nations into his house – the place of his presence! The nation of Israel was called to demonstrate the worship of YHVH, and to be known as place of prayer. The plan of God has always involved Israel and the nations. The Great Commission doesn’t shift the narrative away from Israel to the nations, but rather brings together God’s promises to Israel and the nations. God’s covenant with Abraham in Gen 12:1-3, was not a promise to simply elect one people group out of the nations, it was a promise to save on people ‘for’ the sake of the nations. God’s covenant with Abram was an eternal covenant, it was replaced or done away with! God is ‘covenantly faithful to the Jewish people! However from the beginning God has desired an inheritance from every people, tribe, tongue and language! God is fully committed to fulfill his promises to save both the jews and the nations (Gentiles) in and through his worthy Son, Jesus Christ (List of Verse references).

In reflecting on the Great Commission, first and foremost, the church should prioritize Israel today as an unreached people. Paul declared in Romans 1:16, “for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes first for the Jew and the Gentile” We are called to take the gospel to the Jew only but to the Jew first. This was the pattern of Paul and early church to go first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. In the book of Acts Paul’s goes to the Jews first 9 different times and at the end of Acts, Paul is again urging the Jews to put their faith in Jesus. Paul’s desire (longing of his heart) and prayer to God was for her salvation. His describes his desire as so all-consuming that he was even willing to be accursed for the sake of his people’s salvation. We are called to imitate Paul as Paul imitated Christ. Ultimately it is God’s name that is at stake in Israel’s story. As Samuel Whitefield writes “Israel’s story is ultimately about Israel’s God, and His glory is at stake in her story”

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God; It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act but for the sake of my holy name”

God’s honor is at stake in saving Israel – a salvation that is only found in the name of Jesus. Our God is a covenant keeping God! He always fulfills his promises and keeps his word! His words are trustworthy and true!

Second, the plan …

In Acts 1:6-8, Jesus shares his heart with the disciples. He had taught them about the Kingdom of God over the last forty days from his resurrection and just before he ascends to heaven to the right hand of the Father, the disciples ask him a question, ‘will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” First, Jesus didn’t correct their understanding of a ‘restored’ Israel but rather spoke to their expectations of timing – it would take time for this to come to pass. Second, Jesus connected Israel’s restoration with the Great Commission – to take the gospel to the Gentile nations, to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. If the disciples wanted to see the salvation of Israel, they would have to go to the nations! Jesus tells them to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit to empower them to be his witnesses to reach both Jews and Gentiles through the power of the Gospel! The prophetic promise of the Spirit was Israel’s inheritance (Verses). In Acts 2 at Pentecost the Spirit is poured out on Jewish believers just as God had promised throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The events of Acts 2 did not shift God’s plan from Israel to the nations. Instead it invited the nations into Israel’s story. As Samuel Whitehead writes, “Acts 2 is not the end of Israel’s story; it is a significant step towards the fulfillment of Israel’s promises.” In fact we see this in Joel’s prophecy that Peter shares in Acts 2. Ancient Israel had ‘early rains’ and ‘late rains.’ The early rains in the fall began the growing season, and set the stage for the latter rains which would bring in the big harvest. Acts 2 was an early rain where a remnant of Jews were saved but the latter rain of God’s Spirit would bring in the full harvest, where all Israel will be saved, “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Act 2:21, Joel 2:32, Zechariah 12:10-12). Peter is saying that the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 will result in the day when all Israel will be saved as they ‘call on the name of the Lord’

In Romans 11:25-26, Paul gives the clue to the timing of this latter rain outpouring of the Spirit upon all Israel,

“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **26**And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob’; ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’”

When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, a remnant of Jesus followers among every nation (people group), then all Israel will be saved! This is why Paul had such passion to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, because he understood this glorious mystery! And how will all Isreal be saved? God will use Gentile believers to provoke Israel to jealousy!

“So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous (Rom. 11:11).

The Spirit of God will remove the veil, a partial hardening that had come upon Israel, and she will see her Messiah, the one whom she had pierced, call on the name of the Lord and be saved! The Lord is even now calling the Jews back to her homeland in Israel because there is soon coming a glorious revival in the land of Israel, when an entire nation will saved in a day!

However, in order for this to come to pass, a remnant of whole-hearted Jesus followers, disciples of Jesus, must be represented among every remaining unreached people group! The free gift of salvation offered to the Gentiles is not the end of Israel’s story nor the fulfillment of his promises towards Israel but rather the means by which God will bring Israel into her full inheritance! Israel will hear the good news about her Messiah from Gentiles obeying the Great Commission!

After Paul finishes his discourse in Romans 9-11, he explodes in worship, as should we!

“For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:32-36).

It was so shocking in Acts 10, when the Spirit was poured out on Gentiles based simply on faith in Jesus. Gentiles didn’t need to take on Jewish identity to receive the Spirit and this affirmed to the apostles that God had accepted Gentiles into his family as Gentiles.

We have seen people accept Jesus as their Jewish Messiah in this generation than in the previous 2000yrs of church history …

God honors his covenant with Israel in Matthew 15:24 Jesus sent to the lost sheep of Israel and Matthew 10 =

1. [Our one-page "Statement of Belief" on Israel](https://centerforisrael.com/israelposition/)
2. [Collection of 8-14 page papers](https://centerforisrael.com/resources/?type=position_paper&pg=1) on specific topics related to Israel/Jewish people and the Church (many some of the complex/divisive/unhealthy topics in this space)
3. Pastor Robert explaining [Gateway's priority for Israel](https://centerforisrael.com/collection/gateways-priority-for-israel/) (5-part video series)
4. My [most-recent 13-min video](https://centerforisrael.com/video/three-ways-to-prioritize-israel/) explaining how Gateway practically models our love for Israel
5. Collection of some of our [2-minute and under videos](https://centerforisrael.com/resources/?pg=1&tagged=2%20Minute%20Video&type=video) on various topics

Prayer Guide for Israel - https://centerforisrael.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/GCI-Israel-Prayer-Guide-22.pdf

End with Romans 9 – 11 (caused Paul to erupt in worship …etc)

Acts 1 -

Matthew 9:35-39 lost sheep of Israel -

Matthew 28:18-20 (Keener – story line of Gentiles in Matthew) now to Jews and Gentile nations

Romans 1 – gospel to jew first and then to the Gentile – Paul as an apostle to the Gentiles same pattern – why he wanted to get to Spain (ends of the earth) -

Romans 9:2-5, “that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3**For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. **4**They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. **5**To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen”

“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved”

How will they be saved –

Romanas 10:9-10, “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10**For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. **11**For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” **12**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. **13**For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Has God rejected his people Israel?

Romans 11:1-2, “I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2**God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew”

**Make the Jews Jealous – Life from the dead**

Romans 11:11-15, “So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. **12**Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

**13**Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14**in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. **15**For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

**All Israel will be saved**

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **26**And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob’; ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’”