

BOWING THE KNEE TO BAAL (part 3 of 7; next post: tomorrow – 3/26/2021)

Fast forwarding from the Old Testament to the New, from the days of Elijah to the early Church, we read these words of the apostle Paul in Romans 11:1-5 –

“I 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. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.’ But what is the divine response to him? ‘I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.”

What a powerful affirmation to the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises to the Jewish people. Even though the vast majority of the nation of Israel rejected the Messiah when He came to them, there was a remnant who believed. Paul identifies himself as being a part of that distinct minority; not because of his goodness, but solely due to God’s sovereign elective grace (11:5).

As a result of Israel rejecting their Messiah, God would temporarily set aside the nation as His chosen agent for accomplishing His purposes in our world. This rejection by God would require a replacement through the instrumentality of the Church, the body of Christ. The purging of the apostate nation would then follow, by means of the Roman army’s destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70. At which point, Israel ceases to function as a theocracy, the consequence of a **purging by means of national extinction**. Israel’s apostate guilt before God, in bowing before their own contemporary Baal, is confirmed for us in John 19:15 –

“So they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”

Israel’s unholy alliance with Rome necessitates a purge, ushering in the Church Age, for the purpose of spreading the gospel, even to the remotest parts of our world. Yet throughout the Pauline epistles, we have one warning after another being issued in regard to the danger of false teachers and their heretical doctrines; indicating that the body of Christ, individually and collectively, would not be immune from deteriorating into an apostate condition. **How many American Evangelicals are even aware that such a degree of backsliding has come upon us, with the need for a profound and broad-based response of repentance?**