

ISRAEL'S PREEMINENCE¹

- 1. Of all the nations, Israel is first in importance, order, and rank. By God's arrangement, her rights precede the rights of all other nations.**
 - a. **Ge 12:2** 2 And I will make of you a great nation....
 - b. “πρῶτον thus suggests the same salvation history which Paul declares in Rom. 1:16, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι. This was, of course, the actual sequence of the Christian mission in the apostolic period, and indeed as a salvation-historical programme it recapitulates the biblical concept of mission based on the special choice of Israel as the centre from which God's blessings will spread out to other nations, as it is expressed from Gn. 12:2–3 onwards (cf. Is. 2:2–4; 49:6, etc.).”²

- 2. God's choice of Israel as the preeminent nation is not arbitrary.** God chose her because of:
 - a. Shem's righteousness compared with his brothers (Ge 9:26-27).
 - (1) **Ge 9:26-27** 26 [Noah] also said, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. 27 May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.
 - b. Abraham's faith and obedience (Ge 12:4; 15:6), followed by Isaac ([]) and Jacob ([]).
 - c. God's creation of Israel as the 71st nation ([]).
 - d. Israel's seeming insignificance ([]).

- 3. As the preeminent nation, Israel enjoys certain advantages.**
 - a. **Ro 3:1-2** 1 What advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

- 4. This doesn't mean Israel is allowed to do anything she wants. Far from it. God treats Israel and the nations with complete fairness and impartiality.**
 - a. **Ro 2:9-11** 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.³
 - b. **Ro 3:9** 9 What then? Are we Jews any better off [when it comes to righteousness and judgment]? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin....

- 5. The purpose of Israel's preeminence is for her to be a vehicle through whom God will bless all the families of the earth.**
 - a. Israel is blessed in order to be a blessing to the nations.
 - b. **Ge 12:3** ...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

¹ Israel's priority, supremacy.

² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 298.

³ Priority does not equal partiality.

- c. **Is 49:6** 6 It is too light a thing that you [Messiah] should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation (לְשׁוּעָה) may reach to the end of the earth.
- d. **Jn 4:22** 22 You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know. We [Jews] worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.
- e. **Ac 3:25** 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the [Abrahamic] covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

6. Satan has always focused his attention on Israel, because of her unique mission in God's plan of redemption.

- a. **Re 12:15-17** 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman [Israel], to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her [physical-spiritual?] seed, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

7. The gospel message is for all nations, true, but it is for Israel first.

- a. The first seven chapters of Acts involve Jewish evangelism only. Paul always visited the Jewish synagogue first. The first great commission of Gentile believers is to make the Jews jealous. We are to direct our evangelistic efforts to Jews first.
- b. **Mt 10:5-6** 5 These twelve [disciples] Jesus sent out, instructing them, Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- c. **Mt 15:21-28** 21 Jesus...withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. 23 But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him saying, Send her away, for she is crying out after us. 24 He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25 But she came and knelt before him saying, Lord, help me. 26 And he answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. 27 She said, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. 28 Then Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly.
- d. **Mk 7:25-30** 25 Immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of [Jesus] and came and fell down at his feet. 26 The woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 But he said to her, Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. 28 But she answered him, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. 29 And he said to her, For this statement you may go your way. The demon has left your daughter. 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.
- e. **Ac 3:26** 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you [Israel] first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

- f. **Ac 13:46-47** 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly (παρρησιάζομαι) saying, It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you [Jews].⁴ Because you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles [in Pisidian Antioch].
- g. **Ro 1:16** 16 I [Paul] am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- h. **Ro 11:11** 11 So I ask, did [Israel] 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.
- i. **Ro 11:17-32** 23 And even they [Jewish unbelievers], if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted [back] in [to the Abrahamic and New covenants], for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you [Gentile believers] were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree [the Abrahamic and New covenants], how much more will these, the natural branches [Jewish unbelievers], be grafted back into their own olive tree [the Abrahamic and New covenants].
- j. Bock, Darryl L., and Mitch Glaser. *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History*. 2008.
- k. Newman, Randy. *Engaging with Jewish People*. 2016.

8. God intends Gentiles to learn key lessons from his dealings with Israel.

- a. **Ro 3:19** 19 Whatever the [Mosaic] law says it speaks to those who are under the law [Jews], so that every [Jewish and Gentile] mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

9. God blesses Gentiles who acknowledge the preeminence of Israel.

- a. **Ge 12:3** 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse....
- b. Abimelech.
- c. Jethro.
- d. Ruth.

10. Gentile believers must never be arrogant toward Jews, whether believers or unbelievers.

- a. **Ro 11:17-22** 17 If some of the branches [Jewish unbelievers] were broken off, and you [Gentile believers], although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others [Jewish believers] and now share in the nourishing root [Jesus] of the olive tree [the Abrahamic and New covenants], 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches [Jewish believers and unbelievers]. If you are, remember it is not you [Gentile believers] who support the root [Jesus, who is Jewish], but the root [Jesus, who is Jewish] that supports you [Gentile believers]. 19 Then you will say, Branches [Jewish unbelievers] were broken off so that I [a Gentile believer] might be grafted in [to some aspects the Abrahamic and New covenants]. 20 That is true. They [Jewish unbelievers] were broken off because of their unbelief, but you [Gentile believers] stand fast through

⁴ See *The Priority of Israel*.

faith. So do not become proud but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches [Jewish unbelievers], neither will he spare you [Gentile believers who are proud]. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen [Jewish unbelievers], but God's kindness to you [Gentile believers], provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you [Gentile believers] too will be cut off [from blessing under the Abrahamic and New covenants].

11. Israel's preeminence will, in the end, be recognised by all.

- a. **Is 2:2-3** 2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills. And all the nations shall flow to it, 3 and many peoples shall come and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.
- b. **Eze 36:27-28** 27 My dwelling place shall be with [Israel], and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then they will know that I am Yahweh who sets apart Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.
- c. **Ro 11:28-29** 28 As regards the gospel, they [Jewish unbelievers] are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob]. 29 For the gifts [promised to Israel under the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New covenant] and the calling of God [to preeminence] are irrevocable.

12. Application.

- a. Remember and pray for Israel and Jerusalem.
 - (1) **Ps 137:5** 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!
 - (2) **Ps 122:6** 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they be secure who love you!