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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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*This month's question has been sent in by a brother who wonders if he has encountered 'contradictory texts' - (his own words) - in the scriptures.*

#### **THE PASSAGE QUOTED**

The first passage to which he refers is the prophecy of Jeremiah, relating to the establishing of a new covenant, **Jer. 31:31ff.**

His second reference is **Matt. 10:5-6**, which states that the Twelve were sent '*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*', **Matt. 10:5-6.**

He then quotes **Matt. 15:24**, where the Lord declares that He was '*sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*'.

Finally, he mentions two passages, **Rom. 11:11** and **Eph. 2:11-21**, in which Paul refers to the salvation of the Gentiles.

Our brother's main problem appears to be with the passage in Rom. 11, because he states:

*"The bone of contention is that the Gentile world was drafted (sic.) in, only because Israel had rejected Christ. Should Christ have been recognized and accepted by Israel, what would have been the fate of the Gentile world?"*

His difficulty is created by the assumption made in his first sentence, where he appears to imply that the salvation of the Gentiles was only made possible by the Jewish rejection of the Christ. In other words, he seems to imply that, if the Jews had recognized and received Jesus as their Messiah, there might have been no salvation for the Gentiles.

### IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

There are several facts which we should first consider.

1. When the Jews rejected Christ they did so because this was the choice they made for themselves. John 1:11 states that *"He came to his own ('idia' = 'that which belonged to him') and his own ('idion' = 'they who belonged to him') did not receive him"*. That is, they refused to accept Him.

2. They were not predestined to do so and their rejection of the Gospel formed no part of the divine plan of redemption.

3. Although it was not divinely planned, their refusal to accept the Christ was divinely foreseen, Isa. 53:vv7-9. In Rom. 11:21, Paul declares that God had been extremely patient with His *'disobedient and rebellious people'*.

The fact that the Gospel was preached *'to the Jew first'*, was in recognition of the special relationship which existed between God and Israel, and the special place which that nation occupied in God's plan, Rom. 9:5.

### PAUL AT PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

We find, in Acts 13:14ff, that when Paul spoke to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, he first reminded them of their history, recalling the fact that God had promised that a Saviour would come through the House of David, (v. 23), and then declaring that Jesus is that Saviour. Now, notice v. 39:

*"And by Him (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses"*.

The significance of this statement was clearly not lost on the Gentiles, because they begged that this message might be preached to *them*, the following Sabbath. Since the population of Pisidian Antioch was overwhelmingly Gentile, the following Sabbath almost the entire population came together to hear the good news.

When the Jews became angry and opposed Paul and Barnabas, they were told:

*"It was necessary that the gospel should be first preached to you, but, since you thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (v.46).*

### WHY DID THEY 'TURN TO THE GENTILES'?

This question is answered in the next verse.

*'For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth'.*

The scriptures teach that it was always God's plan that the whole human race should be offered the gift of salvation from sin. This was revealed in His promise to Abraham, found in Gen. 22:18, to which Paul refers in Gal. 3:8-9. If they had made the right choice, the Jews would have fulfilled and honoured an important role in God's plan, as bearers of the message of salvation to all mankind. But their unbelief denied them this privilege.

At Pisidian Antioch, the preachers drove home their message by quoting the prophecy found in *Isa. 42:6*, which states that the Messiah would be: *'for salvation unto the ends of the earth'*, and the result was that many of the Gentiles were glad and believed the Gospel, (v.48).

### THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE

Bible students will surely have noticed the great similarity between this sermon preached in Pisidian Antioch, Paul's first recorded sermon, and the message proclaimed by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, the day the Church was established.

Peter's conclusion was essentially the same as that of Paul.

*"The promise is to you (Jews) and to your children, and to all that are afar off (Gentiles), and to everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him."* Acts 2:39.

### NO CONTRADICTION!

It is worth remembering that, if an interpretation which we place on any part of the Word of God creates a conflict with any another passage; the problem lies, not with the scriptures, but with our interpretation.

A careful examination of what Paul wrote to the churches in Rome and Ephesus reveals no contradiction, since he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His teaching concerning the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles is made abundantly clear in the *Ephesian letter*, to which our questioning brother also refers.

In the first chapter, he writes about the great purpose formed by God, which was designed to:

*'unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth'* (ch. 1:10).

In the second chapter, he states that, involved in this divine purpose, was the creation of *'one new man'* - a new Body - consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, thus producing peace between the two, where previously hostility had existed.

He points out that they both, Jews and Gentiles, needed reconciliation to God, and therefore the message of peace must be preached to both; to those who were *'afar off'* (the Gentiles) and also to those who *'were near'* (the Jews) ch.2:17.

As a result, both Jews and Gentiles, have been united in the One Body.

Both have access to God through the One Spirit, so that they are no longer to be designated *'strangers'* (the Gentiles) and *'sojourners'* (the Jews), but must be recognized as fellow-citizens, and members of God's family.

### CONCLUSION

This was always God's purpose in sending His Son, even though Israel as a people never understood the role that He had planned for them in His scheme of redemption. They were never able to understand His purpose because of the warped view they held of the rest of mankind. They believed that they - and they alone - mattered to God, and, if one good thing came out of their rejection of the Christ, it was that the offer of salvation to the Gentiles made the Jews open their eyes.

In *Rom. 11:14*, Paul implies that his ministry among the Gentiles and their acceptance of salvation, had the effect of *'making Israel jealous'*, and he therefore *'magnified'* his ministry, in order to *'save some of them'*.

However, neither the *rejection* of the Christ by the Jews, nor his *acceptance* by them, would have had any ultimate effect on God's intention to offer salvation to the Gentiles.

The only effect produced by the Jewish decision to reject the Lord, was on the *manner* in which the Gospel came to the Gentiles. They had chosen to reject the privilege of bringing the message of God's salvation to the world. But it was always

God's intention that the Gentiles should hear the Good News.

The aged Simeon recognised this, for when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, *'inspired by the spirit'*, Simeon said:

*" . . . mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all the people; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel."* (Luke 2:29-32).

We should be eternally thankful that the possibility of salvation comes to us, not 'by courtesy of the Jews', but 'by the Grace of God'.

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