

Jeremiah 31:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

Analysis

This verse completes the thought from verse 35: only if the sun, moon, and stars cease their courses will Israel cease to be a nation before God. This is an impossibility—therefore Israel's continuation is certain. The phrase 'seed of Israel' refers to the covenant people, the descendants of Jacob. God promises their perpetual existence, regardless of human unfaithfulness or historical catastrophes.

This raises important theological questions about Israel's continuing role in God's purposes. Reformed theology has wrestled with how this relates to the church. Some see the church as the 'new Israel' that completely replaces ethnic Israel. Others see a continuing distinction, with God's purposes for ethnic Israel distinct from but related to the church. Romans 9-11 addresses these questions, affirming that God's gifts and calling regarding Israel are irrevocable, yet also that Gentiles are grafted into the people of God.

The safest interpretation affirms both/and: the church (including both Jewish and Gentile believers) is the fulfillment of Israel's purpose as God's people, yet this does not negate God's continuing purposes for ethnic Israel. All true Israel is saved (Romans 11:26)—both the believing remnant from ethnic Israel and Gentiles brought in through faith. The permanence promised here ultimately applies to all who are in Christ, the true seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:29).

Historical Context

Throughout history, attempts have been made to destroy the Jewish people—from Pharaoh to Haman to Antiochus to Hitler. Yet they persist, against all odds. This survival testifies to God's covenant faithfulness. Even when most Jews rejected Jesus as Messiah, a remnant believed (Romans 11:5), and the gospel went to Gentiles. Yet Paul insists God has not rejected His people (Romans 11:1), and all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How should we understand God's irrevocable covenant with Israel in light of the church as God's people including Gentiles?
2. What does the Jewish people's continued existence throughout history reveal about God's covenant faithfulness?
3. How does understanding Israel's permanence inform our interpretation of biblical prophecy and eschatology?

Interlinear Text

אִם H518	יָמָּה שׁוּ depart H4185	יִחַד יִחַד If those ordinances H2706	לִפְנֵי הָאֵל H428	לִפְנֵי before H6440	נֹאמַר me saith H5002	יְהוָה the LORD H3068	גַּם H1571
	זֶרַע then the seed H2233	יִשְׂרָאֵל of Israel H3478	יִשְׁבֹּת וְ also shall cease H7673	מִהֵי יוֹם H1961	גַּם from being a nation H1471	לִפְנֵי before H6440	
כָּל H3605	הַמִּיָּמִם me for ever H3117						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 148:6 (Parallel theme): He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.