

## **Romans (69)** **The Future Hope of “Israel” (2)**

There is a fascination and desire by people to know what will take place in the future. Prophecy sells. People are enthralled with the book of Revelation. The fictional 15 volume “Left Behind” series has sold 65 million copies. Jerry Falwell had once said of the first book in the series, “In terms of its impact on Christianity, it’s probably greater than that of any other book in modern times, outside the Bible.”<sup>1</sup> But I would assert that the entire story line of the *Left Behind* series is entirely fiction and has no basis in the Bible. People who think that it is a story that is based on actual biblical prophecy are deluded and deceived.

Although people are easily charmed regarding the subject of prophecy, it would seem that the Lord, although He has set forth much in His written Word about future things, has chosen not to reveal what He intends to do to just anybody. To the one who desires to understand prophecy out of a mere personal interest of “what’s in store for me or mine”, or to know simply because it is alluring to know, the Lord has chosen to hide His purposes. But for the one who desires to know God and to see His glory, because he loves Him and delights in seeing Him glorified, the Lord is delighted to reveal Himself and His will to that one. It is one of the ways in which the Lord in a special way manifests Himself to them who are close to Him, who truly are in fellowship with Him. It is what God does for His “friends.” This is what our Lord told His disciples:

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, *for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* (John 15:15)

We also read that God manifests Himself in special ways to some, and besides that including a special manifestation of the presence of God and enjoyment of His grace in forms of joy and peace, it would include a revelation of Himself and His purposes to them. We have this word of promise:

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (John 14:21)

Our Lord has been pleased to reveal to us in Romans 11 His purpose in grace through history. Here God has shown us His intention to bestow salvation through Jesus Christ to His people, who are comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. He has also revealed to us His intention to save Israel, as we will see more clearly today. But as we declared last Lord’s Day, there is great confusion and error regarding evangelicals’ understanding of what this salvation for Israel will look like. What God has revealed here is that Jewish people will one day come to experience salvation with all of its blessings in the manner that Gentile believers also believe and are subsequently blessed of God. They will be converted by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Last week we considered the message of Romans 11:1-6. Let us read it once again.

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. <sup>2</sup>God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? <sup>3</sup>“Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have demolished Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” <sup>4</sup>But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” <sup>5</sup>So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup>But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

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<sup>1</sup> *Time Magazine*, Sept. 8, 2007.

The whole work of God in history of bringing salvation to His people is a work of His sovereign grace. The ultimate cause that Israel, that is, the majority of Jewish people, refused to believe on Jesus Christ, was due to the sovereign work of God in bringing judgment on Israel. We read in verse 7ff:

<sup>7</sup>What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, <sup>8</sup>as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes that would not see  
and ears that would not hear,  
down to this very day.”

<sup>9</sup>And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;  
<sup>10</sup>let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
and bend their backs forever.”

God brought His just judgment to bear upon Israel. Although they had been greatly privileged and blessed during the Old Testament era, they demonstrated that they were sinful and guilty just as were the Gentiles. Paul had written earlier in Romans 3:9, “What then? Are we (Jews) better than they Gentiles)? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.”

God is not obligated to save anyone. He once had been, due to His promises to the forefathers of Israel, but Israel’s failure and rebellion through history brought an end to God’s self-imposed obligation to favor the Jews. All are guilty of sin. Everyone is guilty for Adam’s sin, for his own sinful nature, for his actual transgressions of God’s law, and for his failure to do the will of God. God may choose to have compassion and to show mercy to a sinner and bring him salvation through His grace. Or, God may choose not to bestow mercy, but rather to bring His wrath them that is justly due them. Since all are guilty sinners and incapable of saving themselves, God is sovereign in this determination of whom He will save. As we read back in Romans in which Paul had declared of God, “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion’” (Rom 9:15). Paul therefore stated that God was sovereign in the bestowing of salvation on whom He wills: “So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Rom. 9:16).

But did God bring His judgment upon Israel for the purpose only of condemning them? No, Paul revealed beginning with verse 11 that God intended to bring about the salvation of the Gentile world through His judgment upon Israel. But further, He would bring salvation to the Gentiles with His further purpose of finally bringing salvation to all Israel. Let us read **Romans 11:11** and **12**.

<sup>11</sup>So I ask, did they (i.e. Israel, the Jews) 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. <sup>12</sup>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!

Here Paul stated the plan of God. Israel’s trespass, which would be their failure and refusal to believe on Jesus Christ as their promised Messiah/Savior, resulted in salvation coming to the Gentiles. How did this play out in history? As we showed last Lord’s Day, when God had entered into covenant through Moses with the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, God had promised to bless the Jewish people through the nation state of Israel. God had elevated the nation of Israel to be favored by Him above all of the Gentile nations of the world. We read of this in **Exodus 19:1-6**:

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. <sup>2</sup>They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, <sup>3</sup>while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup>You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. <sup>5</sup>***Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup>and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*** These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

We read further in the book of Deuteronomy of the privileged position that God showed to Israel above the Gentile nations.

<sup>6</sup>“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. ***The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*** <sup>7</sup>It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set His love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup>***but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers,*** that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations, <sup>10</sup>and repays to their face those who hate Him, by destroying them. (Deut. 7:6-10)

When God had committed Himself to favor Israel, the Gentiles were excluded from God’s blessing. Paul described the status of the Gentile nations before the Lord Jesus came into the world. We read in Ephesians 2:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- <sup>12</sup>remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, ***alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*** (Eph. 2:11f)

When Israel had broken God’s covenant some centuries before the coming of Christ, God had promised to send a Savior to redeem them from their sin. ***It was to Israel chiefly that God would send His Messiah.*** We read this in special hope for Israel in Psalm 130.

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD;  
<sup>2</sup>Lord, hear my voice!  
Let Your ears be attentive  
To the voice of my supplications.  
<sup>3</sup>If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who could stand?  
<sup>4</sup>But there is forgiveness with You,  
That You may be feared.  
<sup>5</sup>I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
And in His word I do hope.  
<sup>6</sup>My soul waits for the Lord  
More than those who watch for the morning—  
Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.  
<sup>7</sup>***O Israel, hope in the LORD;***  
***For with the LORD there is mercy,***  
***And with Him is abundant redemption.***  
<sup>8</sup>***And He shall redeem Israel***  
***From all his iniquities.*** (Psa. 130:1-8)

In the opening of the New Testament we also read of God sending Jesus primarily as the Savior of Israel. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, gave forth these inspired words regarding the promised Messiah:

<sup>68</sup>“Blessed be *the Lord God of Israel*, for He has visited and redeemed His people <sup>69</sup>and has raised up *a horn of salvation for us* in the house of His servant David, <sup>70</sup>as He spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup> that *we should be saved from our enemies* and from the hand of all who hate us; <sup>72</sup>*to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant*, <sup>73</sup>the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup>*that we*, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, <sup>75</sup>in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. (Luke 1:68-75)

The Lord Jesus Himself declared that His mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. On several occasions Gentiles were not received by Him initially because He was the promised Savior of Israel, not the Gentiles. In **Matthew 15:21-28** we read:

<sup>21</sup>And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>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.” <sup>23</sup>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.” <sup>24</sup>He answered, “***I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.***” <sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” <sup>26</sup>And He answered, “It is not right to take *the children’s bread* and throw it to the dogs.” <sup>27</sup>She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

And earlier, when Jesus had sent His disciples on a preaching mission, He had given them strict instruction to only go among the Jewish people.

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but ***go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*** <sup>7</sup>And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ (Matt. 10:5-7)

Even after our Lord was crucified and rose again, the initial effort to proclaim the gospel was to the Jew first.<sup>2</sup> Paul declared in Romans 15:6 these words, “***For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs...***” (Rom 15:8).

Even into the Christian era the gospel was initially taken to the Jews before the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> We read in the book of Acts when that effort to bring salvation to the Jews first was changed. This was a significant turning point in the advance of the gospel. We read in Acts 13:

<sup>43</sup>And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. <sup>44</sup>The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. <sup>45</sup>But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. <sup>46</sup>And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “***It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you.*** Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Romans 1:16, 2:9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> It is my opinion this was the period of time prophesied in Daniel 9:27 of the Messiah’s mission: “And He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week (i.e. 7 years), and for half of the week He shall put an end to sacrifice and offering (His crucifixion). And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” (which speaks of Jesus bringing judgment upon Jerusalem in AD 70). This interpretation is contrary to the popular dispensational interpretation that teaches the men in Daniel 9:27 is a future end time antichrist, rather than of Christ coming among His people.

Gentiles. <sup>47</sup>*For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”* <sup>48</sup>And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and *as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.* (Acts 13:43-48)

It was from this point onward that the church became increasingly Gentile. Christ had broken down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, the Gentiles were now becoming a part of Israel, the covenant people of God. We might return to Ephesians 2 which we read a portion of earlier:

<sup>11</sup>Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- <sup>12</sup>remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off (i.e. Gentiles) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup>And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but *you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,* <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:11-22)

Take note that Paul described the Gentiles as included into the people of God. Gentiles were formerly not part of the commonwealth of Israel, but through the death of Jesus Christ, the Gentiles, through faith in Him, have been “brought near” and are now “fellow citizens” with the “saints”, the redeemed of Israel. This shows the continuity between the people of God of the Old Testament and the people of God of the New Testament. There is one people who are all redeemed by Christ.

Now our dispensational friends, as we have pointed out before, see Israel and the church as two different entities with two different destinies. Where we see both continuity and discontinuity between the people of God of the Old Testament and the people of God of the New Testament, they see only discontinuity—Israel is Israel and the church is the church. They would emphasize in Ephesians 2 the fact that God created a new entity, the church, in which are both Jew and Gentile believers, but Israel, they argue, is comprised of ethnic Jews only. But where they see only distinction and difference, as two different peoples with no connection, Paul shows that the inclusion of believing Gentiles along with believing Jews under the new covenant as a maturing, becoming a new and adult man.

Let us return to Romans 11:13ff. Here Paul begins to speak about the future destiny of Israel, which in this context the term Israel is the ethnic Jewish people. In verses 13ff Paul wrote of the possibility of Israel being yet saved. He does so by speaking to the believing Gentiles.

<sup>13</sup>Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry <sup>14</sup>in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. <sup>15</sup>For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup>If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Paul declared that the favor of God shown to Gentiles in bring them salvation moves some Jews to jealousy, and thereby leads “some” Jews to salvation. Paul then posits what blessing would come to the church if the majority of Israel were to be saved. Again, verse 15 reads, “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” What is Paul speaking about? It appears that he was saying that if Israel were to come to faith it would result or signal the Second Coming of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. Not all agree with this assessment.

The main point in verse 15 is that God's acceptance of the Jews is nothing less than "life from the dead." Some understand this phrase to refer merely to the salvation of the Jewish Christians. According to this interpretation the words "life from the dead" define the "acceptance" mentioned. But the parallelism of verse 15 with verse 12 implies that something more obtains from the salvation of the Jews ("How much more their fullness!") Most scholars concur that a greater benefit is envisioned as a result of Israel's salvation. Some have maintained that the spiritual progress of the gospel in the world is intended. The gospel will have even greater success among Gentiles after Israel as a whole is saved. Most scholars, however, rightly understand the phrase "life from the dead" to refer to the physical resurrection from the dead. That is, the salvation of "all Israel" (cf. 11:26) will be the climax of this age, and will be followed by the resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

**Verse 16** speaks of the privileged place that the Jewish people have before God. *"If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches."* What is suggested here is that since the Jewish Patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were chosen and dedicated to God, then all of their physical descendants also have a privileged place before God. Moreover, just as the firstfruits of a field was offered by the farmer thereby dedicating or consecrating the whole field unto the Lord, so Jewish people, due to the blessing of God on the Patriarchs, are a privileged people whom may be the objects of God's saving work.

In **verse 17** Paul speaks of the ease in which God could bring the Jewish people to salvation if He purposed to do so since God was able to bring the Gentiles to salvation, which seems to be a much greater task to perform.

<sup>17</sup>But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup>do not be arrogant toward the branches.

Notice here again we see the continuity of the new covenant people of God with the redeemed of the Old Testament. Although we Gentiles were "wild branches", we were made a part of the "olive tree." But we are to be humble, always remembering that it was due to God's grace through faith that had brought us into this blessed position.

Moreover, we Gentile believers derive our blessing from God's dealings with the Patriarchs. **Verse 18** reads, *"If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you."* We are connected with the blessing and promises that God had given to the Jewish patriarchs. He went on to write in **verses 19** through **21**:

<sup>19</sup>Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup>That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup>For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

We see that all of us are dependent upon the mercy and grace of God for our salvation. We have no reason for pride, self-sufficiency, or presumption.

Paul then exclaims the glory of God in His kindness in bringing salvation to His people as well as His severity in bringing judgment on sinners.

<sup>22</sup>Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in His kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

When Paul wrote that we must continue in God's kindness "Otherwise you too will be cut off," Paul was not saying that true Christians could lose their salvation. He was speaking of Gentiles as a collective group. If they stopped exhibiting faith in Christ, their time of experiencing salvation would come to an end.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), pp. 598f.

On the other hand, the Jews who were unbelieving could be rejoined to the people of God if they ceased their unbelief and they believed on Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We read in **verse 23**:

<sup>23</sup>And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

Paul speaks of the ease in which God could do this if He so willed. **Verse 24** reads, “*For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.*”

Next Paul wrote of a “mystery”, that is, a previously held secret regarding the purpose and work of God that God had only now revealed to His people.

<sup>25</sup>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.

Paul speaks of a **partial hardening** of Israel. God had hardened Israel, that is, all but a remnant (cf. Rom. 11:5) so that they would not be saved. This hardening would take place until “*the times of the Gentiles has come in.*” What is meant by this expression? The times of the Gentiles refers to the time that began early in the church era when God began to bring to salvation mostly Gentiles and this period will continue until the end of this church age, or the end of history. What is suggested in verse 25, although it is not explicitly stated, is that the partial hardening of Israel will then come to an end when God completes saving the Gentiles whom He has elected to receive salvation.

We now arrive to **verse 26**, in which the ESV reads, “*And in this way all Israel will be saved...*” The New King James Version reads, “*And so all Israel will be saved...*” This is the most debated verse in the passage. First, recognize what it does not say; it does not say “And *then* all Israel will be saved.” But rather, with consideration of what Paul had just declared, in this way all Israel will be saved.” The major positions of the meaning of this verse are as follows: (1) God is saving a remnant of Jews throughout this church age along with an innumerable number of Gentiles. In this way, all “Israel”, in other words, all **spiritual Israel** will be saved.<sup>5</sup> This position does not see a promise for the future coming to salvation of a majority of Jews, but rather God has only purposed to save a remnant of Jews along with a multitude of Gentiles who together comprise “all Israel.” (2) A second position sees that when God completes calling His elect Gentiles to salvation, then He will once again do a great work of salvation in bringing “all Israel”, in other words most ethnic Jews, to salvation. This is the position that I take.

The debate, therefore, is on the meaning of “Israel” in verse 26. Now the term Israel is used to identify many different groups or entities in the Holy Scriptures. And so, it is not always an easy thing to distinguish between the different sets of people that a biblical writer might be designating as “Israel.” Here are several options:

1. “Israel” is the individual, Jacob, renamed by God -- Genesis 35:10
2. “Israel” is a reference to the extended physical family of the Patriarchs prior to becoming a nation -- Genesis 34:7
3. “Israel” is the “land” that God had promised to Abraham and his physical descendants -- 2 Chron. 2:17
4. “Israel” is the collective twelve tribes prior to becoming a formal nation -- Exodus 3:1
5. “Israel” as a nation formed in Egypt and constituted at Mount Sinai -- Deuteronomy 26:5
6. “Israel” as the name of the northern nation of Israel, comprised of 10 tribes -- 1 Kings 12:18
7. “Israel” is a personal reference to the Promised Messiah, i.e. Jesus Christ -- Isaiah 49:3;
8. “Israel” is a reference to ethnic Jewish people under the law of Moses; “Israel after the flesh” -- 1 Corinthians 10:18

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<sup>5</sup> This is William Hendriksen’s position. John Calvin also believed that “Israel” in verse 26 is a reference to spiritual Israel, not physical Israel.

9. "Israel" as the elect Jews within the larger community of Jewish people – "Not all Israel is of Israel" -- Rom. 9:6; 11:26
10. "Israel" as non-elect Jews who failed to believe on the Messiah -- Rom. 11:7
11. "Israel" as "The Israel of God"; i.e. all of the elect, whether Jewish or Gentile -- Gal. 6:6, 16

But here in Romans 11 Paul has consistently used the term "Israel" to identify ethnic Jews. It would be an absurd violation of context to change the meaning of Israel being ethnic Jews to being "spiritual Israel." Schreiner addressed this matter:

Some have argued that the term ("all Israel") embraces both Jews and Gentiles who have believed in Jesus the Messiah. Elsewhere Paul emphasizes that believers are true Jews and the true circumcision (Rom. 2:28-2; Phil. 3:3), the sons and daughters of Abraham (Rom. 4:1-17; Gal. 3:6-9, 26-29), and the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). Thus it is not at all impossible that in Romans 11:26 "Israel" refers to the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. But the central and decisive objection to this interpretation is the context of Romans 9-11, especially the immediate context of chapter 11. The failure of ethnic Jews to obtain salvation is what provoked Romans 9-11 in the first place. Moreover, the preceding verses in chapter 11 preserves a distinction between Gentiles and ethnic Jews: the Gentiles are being grafted onto the olive tree while the Jews—as the natural branches—are being removed. Indeed, to posit that the term "Israel" includes believing Gentiles in verse 26 requires that Paul lurches to a new meaning for the term "Israel" in verse 26. For verse 25 says that a partial hardening has come upon "Israel" while the full number of the "Gentiles" stream into the church. It is obvious in verse 25 that the term "Israel" refers to ethnic Israel in contradistinction to the Gentiles. Thus it is extremely unlikely that the term "Israel" would have a different meaning in verse 26 than it did in verse 25.<sup>6</sup>

Paul then provides a quotation that appears to be from Isaiah **Psalm 14:7, Isaiah 27:9, and Isaiah 59:20 and 21.**

"The Deliverer will come from Zion,  
He will banish ungodliness from Jacob";  
<sup>27</sup>"and this will be My covenant with them  
when I take away their sins."

God has revealed that He will one day save a large portion of the Jewish people. Throughout church history He has been saving a remnant of Jews, but at the end of this age He intends to save a great number of Jewish people to Jesus Christ.

Paul then makes this statement respecting Jews who are unbelieving of Jesus Christ.

<sup>28</sup>As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. <sup>29</sup>For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup>For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all.

God regards the ethnic Jewish people as being "beloved for the father's sake" even while they are enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But God had moved to harden them in their sin so as to bring judgment upon them, thereby freeing Himself to have mercy not only upon Gentiles, but upon all sinners, whether Jewish or Gentile.

Now take note that although Paul is revealing a "mystery" regarding the salvation of the Jewish people, it all will occur through the auspices of the church of Jesus Christ. There is no mention here of a restored nation

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<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 614f.



state of Israel as in the promised hope of Israel. There is not separate program of salvation than what the Gentiles also freely received and enjoyed. God saves all alike through Jesus Christ His Son.

But what of the nation of Israel today? Does not the existence of the state of Israel speak of a fulfillment of "Israel" as a favored nation-state once again? The answer is no, it does not. Now do not misunderstand, clearly God's hand has been the force that has brought Jews back to Palestine and enabled Israel to be reconstituted as a nation. But it is only legitimate prophetically with view to an end time conversion of Jewish people to Jesus Christ, not to a rebuilt Jewish temple in a restored earthly political nation-state in that land.

Next Lord's Day we will consider the doxology that Paul appends at the conclusion of his teaching regarding God's work of redeeming His chosen people from sin through history.

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Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20f)