

# **God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #1**

Romans 11:25-29

April 5, 2009

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Is there a future for Israel as a Nation in the prophecies of the Old Testament? Or are all prophecies concerning future blessings upon Israel as a Nation to be spiritualized and realized in the new Israel (comprised of both Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament Church)? By God's grace, we will seek to provide some clear answers to these questions in future sermons on this subject. But before looking at such prophecies in the Old Testament perhaps it would be helpful to begin with what the Holy Spirit teaches in the inspired pages of the New Testament on the subject and then work our way backward to the Old Testament prophecies. For what God reveals in the New Testament cannot contradict what he reveals in the Old Testament (or vice versa). And what God reveals concerning the future blessings of the Nation of Israel are brought forward and evaluated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11.

Let me preface this study with a few remarks as to what I hope to accomplish in this overview of Israel's prophesied National restoration and conversion to Christ.

First, I do not intend to satisfy the idle curiosity of people in merely providing an exposition of biblical texts as to what God reveals shall happen in the future. The Bible is no crystal ball, and I am no fortune teller. My supreme goal is to exalt the God who writes history, who controls history, who reveals His covenant love in Jesus Christ to undeserving sinners in history, and who works all things out for the glory of His justice and grace in history. I do not want your curiosity to be satisfied; I want your faith to grow in and your love to increase for the everlasting God who will one day soon draw unto Himself with the cords

of Covenant love His ancient people Israel. Dear ones, I want us to stand in utter awe and wonder of both the severity and goodness of God who brings His righteous judgment upon obstinate covenant-breakers, but shows His mercy to thousands of them who love Him and keep His Covenant. In other words, a study of prophecy should not be a mere academic pursuit, but ultimately lead us to adore our most wise, most just, most gracious, and most powerful God.

Second, I also pray that you may understand from this study that God's Covenant blessings upon the Nations of this world are bound together with God's Covenant blessings upon the Nation of Israel. That God's Covenant with Israel as a Nation is founded upon the Covenant of Grace made in Christ as expounded in the Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that God's Covenants with the Gentile Nations (as is the Solemn League and Covenant) is likewise founded upon the Covenant of Grace made in Christ as expounded in the Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Dear ones, the future gospel blessings in Gentile Nations is bound together with the future gospel blessings of Israel as a Nation, for both the conversion of Israel to Christ and the conversion of the Gentile Nations to Christ flow from the same Covenant of Grace wherein the uttermost parts of the earth have been given to Christ as His inheritance in fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption (according to Psalm 2:8).

Third, I also would have you know as we begin this brief overview that the conversion of the Jews to Christ (not simply the conversion of Jewish people in general, but the conversion OF THE JEWS in particular and as distinguished from the conversion of the fullness of the Gentiles) is made a distinct part of that for which we are to pray by way of our covenanted uniformity in the Solemn League and Covenant. On the Title Page to the **Larger Catechism** we read the following statement as to the intent of our forefathers who penned the **Larger Catechism** and swore to God the **Solemn League and Covenant**:

The Larger Catechism. Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with the assistance of Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, AS A PART OF THE COVENANTED UNIFORMITY IN RELIGION betwixt the Churches of Christ in the Kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland.

Thus, the doctrine taught in the **Larger Catechism** was intended by our covenanted forefathers to bind together in one doctrine all those bound by the **Solemn League and Covenant**. And one of the truths of Scripture we are biblically and covenantally bound to embrace is found in the Answer to Question 191.

Question 191: What do we pray for in the second petition?

Answer: In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, **THE JEWS CALLED** [not a general call to save some Jewish people here and there, but a particular call by God to the Jews to return to their Covenant God—GLP], the fullness of the Gentiles brought in . . .

Likewise when we consider the **Directory For the Public Worship of God** which also bears the same statement on its Title Page as to its being a part of the covenanted uniformity in Religion sworn to in the **Solemn League and Covenant** , we also read that in our public prayers before God as God's people, we are to pray for the following:

To pray for the propagation of the gospel and kingdom of Christ to all nations; **FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS** [not a general conversion of a few Jewish people here and there, but the particular conversion of THE JEWS to turn to their Covenant God—GLP], the fullness of the Gentiles, the fall of Antichrist, and the hastening of the second coming of our Lord . . .

Thus, dear ones, having just completed a series on the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant, it is my desire to declare and make known first and foremost the **biblical truth** concerning the distinct and particular call of God to the Jews (God's ancient covenanted people), but also to declare and make known the **covenanted truth** for which our faithful forefathers taught us to pray in the blessed time of worldwide gospel prosperity that will fill the whole earth in the near future (we pray). In so doing, I pray we will once again be reminded that

God does not forget His Covenants with His people (whether with the Jewish Nation or with Gentile Nations).

As we approach our text in Romans 11:25-29, our main points throughout this series will be constructed as several different questions to be answered. Let us consider then our first question.

## **I. What Is The Context Leading Up To Our Text In Romans 11:25-29?**

A. The Apostle Paul writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Romans 9-11 in order to deal with questions that were raised about God's redemptive plan and particularly these questions: What about the unbelief of Israel, God's covenanted people? Does Israel's unbelief demonstrate that God has permanently cast off His covenanted people of old? Did Israel sin to such a degree that God annulled His Covenant with them? Is God finished with Israel as a Nation? Will Israel yet be restored and converted to God? If so when will this take place? What part in the redemptive plan of God will the Gentile Nations of the world and Israel have in the future?

B. The question of Israel's unbelief is raised in Romans 9:1-4a. Again we read of Israel's unbelief in Romans 9:31-33. Paul continues this theme of Israel's unbelief in Romans 10:1,21. Thus, when we come to Romans chapter 11, it is this matter of Israel's unbelief and God's judgment upon Israel that Paul addresses ("Hath God cast away his people? God forbid" Romans 11:1). What we then find in the remainder of this chapter (Romans 11) is an overview of God redemptive plan for Israel at the present time and in the future. The Lord has not forgotten His covenanted people of Israel, and Romans 11 becomes God's vindication of Himself (through Paul) of His most wise, most just, and most gracious plan for His covenanted people (Romans 11:33-36). Thus, if anyone desires to know whether God is finished with Israel as

covenanted people and Nation, there is no better place to turn than to Romans 11. For here the everlasting love of Christ for unworthy and undeserving sinners who have hated Him and despised Him is displayed for the whole world to see. Israel is Exhibit One demonstrating God's Covenant love and faithfulness. In Israel, we see ourselves as well, who are every bit as undeserving and unworthy of God's love and mercy due to our transgression of His holy Law. For that reason, we cannot be saved on the basis of a Covenant of Works (involving our merit in the least), but must be saved on the basis of a Covenant of Grace alone through the redemptive love of Christ in fulfilling all righteousness for chosen sinners and paying the debt of their sin and condemnation in full. Dear ones, Israel's salvation is our salvation. Let us rejoice and be glad as we study the mercy of God worked out in history.

## **II. In Romans 11:26, we are confronted with the question as to who this ISRAEL is of which we read, "And so all ISRAEL shall be saved"?**

A. No doubt this is one of the most important questions in properly understanding God's plan for Israel at the present time and in the future. When we consider the way in which Paul uses the term "Israel" in the immediate context, there should be no mystery at all as to who this Israel is in Romans 11:26. You will want to follow along with your Bibles opened in order to see so clearly the thrust of Paul's argument. This may sound like a running commentary at times, but it is necessary to go through these verses in order to follow the continuity of Paul's argument. I make no apologies, for this is after all God's Holy Word.

1. Who is the Israel referred to in Romans 10:21 ("But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people")? It is clear that Paul refers here to the unbelief and disobedience of Israel in rejecting the Gospel. This Israel in Romans 10:21 refers not to the New Israel of the New Testament

Church (consisting of both Jews and Gentiles), nor does it refer to the elect remnant of believing Israel. To the contrary, Paul refers to the greater part and vast majority of the people of Israel as a Nation who have turned their backs to the invitations offered by God through His Prophets, Apostles, and Ministers to freely receive the Gospel of salvation. Paul is simply referring to the Old Testament text as found in Isaiah 65:2 where clearly the Prophet refers to the Nation of Israel as well.

2. As Paul then begins Romans 11:1 with the question, “Hath God cast away his people”, the people in view must be the same rebellious people referred to in Romans 10:21 to whom God through His Ministers stretched out His hands all the day long, namely, the people and Nation of Israel. Thus, Paul begins Romans 11 dealing with the all important question as to whether God has cast away His people Israel as a Nation.

3. Paul says that God has not cast away every member of the Nation of Israel because he (Paul himself) is an Israelite that has been saved by the Lord (Romans 11:1).

4. Furthermore, in the time of Elijah, although the vast and greater part of the Kingdom of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) had rebelled against God’s Covenant, God still preserved a remnant of 7,000 (along with Elijah) who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Romans 11:2-4). But note that “Israel” in Romans 11:2 refers to the rebellious Nation from among whom Elijah and the 7,000 are distinguished as a believing remnant.

5. Paul then teaches in Romans 11:5-7 that just as in the days of Elijah so in the days of the Apostles there was a remnant that God had chosen to save by His free grace out of the rebellious and unbelieving people and Nation of Israel. Paul states in Romans 11:7: “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it.” Here again, the term “Israel” must refer to the whole body of the

rebellious Nation since the “election” (i.e. the chosen ones) were a remnant taken out of the greater number and body of Israel.

6. Now as we come to the end of Romans 11:7, Paul teaches that although this elect remnant out of Israel was being saved and would continue to be saved, the greater part of Israel as a people and Nation were blinded (“and the rest were blinded” or hardened in their rebellion and unbelief as God did not restrain them from their sin). This theme of God’s judgment upon the greater number and body of Israel in hardening the heart and blinding their eyes for their unbelief continues in Romans 11:8-10. Note that all of the pronouns in the third person (“they”, “them”, “their”) refer to Israel as the greater part of the body and people.

7. Having demonstrated that Israel as a collective body and Nation have been hardened in their unbelief and rebellion against God, Paul asks the question in Romans 11:11, “Have they [i.e. unbelieving Israel as a whole and as a Nation—GLP] stumbled that they should fall?” In other words, Paul asks, “Has the Nation of Israel stumbled in their unbelief and rebellion in order that they might permanently fall, never again to be restored from this fall?” Paul’s answer is in the strongest words possible, “God forbid” or literally “Let it not be” (just as in Romans 11:1). To the contrary, God has wisely intended through Israel’s fall to provoke Israel (as a whole and as a Nation) to jealousy by bringing the Gentiles into Covenant with Him by means of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

8. We now move to two conditional sentences (in Romans 11:12 and Romans 11:15 that clearly set the stage for what is meant by Paul when he says in Romans 11:26, “And so ALL ISRAEL shall be saved.”

a. The first conditional sentence (Romans 11:12) states in the IF part of the sentence (the protasis) what is presently true, “Now IF the fall of them [who is the “them”? Israel as a people and Nation—GLP] be the riches of the world [i.e. the spiritual riches of the Gospel to the Gentiles throughout the world—GLP], and the diminishing of them [i.e. the loss or overthrow of Israel as a Nation—GLP] the riches of the

Gentiles.” And now we move to the THEN part of the conditional sentence (the apodosis) which hold before us what shall happen in the future: then (implied) “how much more their [Israel’s i.e. the people and Nation of Israel’s—GLP] fullness?” In other words, how much more shall the Gospel blessings be realized among the Gentiles of the world at that time in the future when that same people and Nation of Israel that fell and was overthrown due to unbelief and rebellion during the time of Paul (and into the present time as well) shall come to Christ in the full number of them or greater number of them? If the Gentiles were blessed by Israel’s fall, just wait until you see the blessing upon the Gentiles in the whole world when Israel comes to Christ in her full number as a Nation.

b. The second conditional sentence (Romans 11:15) states in the IF part of the sentence (protasis) what is presently true, “For IF the casting away of them [who is the “them”? Israel as a people and Nation—GLP] be the reconciling of the world [i.e. the Gospel of reconciliation going out to Gentiles throughout the world—GLP],” then (implied) “what shall the receiving of them be [the receiving of whom? Israel as a Nation when she is received back into a faithful Covenant relationship with Christ—GLP], but life from the dead?” In other words, when Israel as a Nation is received back into her covenant with the Lord through faith in Jesus Christ, it will be like a spiritual resurrection of souls to life throughout the Nations of the world.

9. In the interest of time, go with me to Romans 11:25 where the last reference to ISRAEL is mentioned just prior to the statement of Paul in Romans 11:26 (“And all ISRAEL shall be saved”). Paul states a mystery in Romans 11:25 (i.e. a truth that is made known only by the revealed will of God in Scripture). Paul declares, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel [i.e. the same hardness referred to in Romans 11:7 and the same Israel as a people and Nation referred to in Romans 11:7 and throughout the whole chapter of Romans 11—GLP], until the fullness of the Gentiles be



come in.” Here is the immediately preceding verse stating that this hardness of heart that God has sent upon Israel as a Nation (during the present time) for her unbelief and rebellion against her God and Covenant is “in part” because it does not affect the every member of Israel without exception (for the remnant referred to in Romans 11:5-7 is spared) and because will continue only “until” when in the future the fullness of the Gentiles comes into Christ’s Kingdom. We will be asking and answering a number of other questions about “the fullness of the Gentiles” in future sermons, but for now, I simply want you to see that once again the term ISRAEL refers to the Nation of Israel that was hardened by the just censure of God.

10. Throughout Romans 11, we cannot find one single instance in which Israel refers to anything other than the people and Nation of Israel. Thus, when we approach Romans 11:26 with any other conception of Israel in mind, we then must be importing that conception from our own mind and not from the Scriptural context which is so clear in Romans 11. And Paul does not merely say, “And so ISRAEL shall be saved.” That would have been enough to seal the point of Israel’s future salvation as a people and Nation, but Paul goes even further and states unequivocally, “And so ALL ISRAEL shall be saved.” Paul does not state that a remnant or small part of Israel will be saved in the future, but that “ALL ISRAEL” shall be saved. The contrast could not be greater and the truth could not be clearer as to the future blessings that are yet to be poured out upon the people and Nation of Israel in the future (and in the near future, we pray). I ask, dear ones, how could this truth be conveyed more clearly than Paul has done? It is the same Israel that was cast away for a time, that fell for a time, and that was diminished for a time that will be saved in the future.

B. I close with the following quote from Herman Witsius, that learned and godly divine from the Reformed Church of the Church of the Netherlands.

[T]he Jews are in due time to be converted from their rebellion and transgressions... As this is not yet accomplished, as to **the whole body of the Israelites**, and yet the scripture must be fulfilled, the apostle [Paul—GLP] has justly inferred, that in the last times it will be perfectly fulfilled. For, seeing the foundation thereof is God's covenant with Israel, and this is a firm covenant, stable, immutable, and suspended on no ambiguous condition... it is not possible but that everything shall happen exactly, according to the promise and prediction [as found in Romans 11—GLP]. And this is my covenant with them, saith God... All this being addressed to **the whole body of the nation [of Israel—GLP]**, it must of necessity be fulfilled at the appointed time (Herman Witsius, *The Economy Of The Covenants*, 2:417, emphases added).

Yes, dear ones, there is coming a glorious time of worldwide Gospel blessing and prosperity throughout the whole world which will usher into the Kingdom of Christ the people and Nation of Israel. Oh how I would love to live (and pray I might live) to read those headlines that will fill the newspapers and the internet sites throughout the world at that time: Israel comes to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ! Lord hasten that day!