

There is a lot of confusion in the church about the role of Israel. Most of the mainline denominations have become increasingly secular, so their attitude is that Israel has created a lot of tension in the world and is usually in the wrong. Some on the other end of the pendulum see Israel as God's chosen who can do no wrong, all of whom God has sovereignly chosen to save. The Apostle Paul gives us the Biblical truth which is seeing things from God's perspective. Chapter ten told us of the breadth of salvation and the work of God in every human heart. Paul describes how the gospel has gone out to the world, and that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (10:13). At the same time, he sees how few of his fellow Jews have received the good news and the hardness of their heart throughout history.

Chapter eleven begins with Paul asking, ^{1a} *... has God rejected his people?* Midway through the chapter he asked in another way, ^{11a} *... did they stumble in order that they might fall?* Both times he answers with an emphatic, "By no means!" He explained to us that there is a "spirit of stupor" that keeps them from hearing and seeing the truth that Jesus is the Messiah (11:8). The purpose of the hardening of their hearts was so that the gospel would go to the Gentiles. Then, through their intimacy with the Messiah, Israel would become jealous and recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior (11:11).

We ended last week with verse 25. ²⁵ *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* This is referring to the Times of the Gentiles of which Jesus spoke. Jesus described it as a time when the Jewish Temple would be trampled under the feet of Gentiles (Luke 21:24). That was a prophetic description of what happened, beginning 40 years after Jesus' death to the present.

What amazes me is that temple was in Jewish hands until the majority of the church was Gentile. Then, after the Jewish conquest of Jerusalem in the Six Day War, the Jews allowed the Arabs to continue to control the Temple Mount. When you see the Temple Mount taken over by the Jews and forbidding access to it by anyone but Jews, you will know The Times of the Gentiles is over. Some think we will be raptured before then (Matthew 24:42), while others think it will happen after that event (Matthew 24:29-31). What is important for us in understanding this passage is that Paul and Jesus saw a period of time in which the Gentiles would come to the salvation through the Messiah, but that time would one day come to an end.

When that time comes to an end, the hardening of Israel will be removed. That should help us understand what Paul means in the next verse. ^{26a} *And in this way all Israel will be saved.* What way? The Times of the Gentiles will end and the hardening that caused

Commented [notes1]: Romans 10:13 (ESV)

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Commented [notes2]: Romans 11:8 (ESV)

⁸ 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."

Commented [notes3]: Romans 11:11 (ESV)

¹¹ So I ask, did they 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.

Commented [notes4]: Luke 21:24 (ESV)

²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Commented [notes5]: Matthew 24:42 (ESV)

⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Commented [notes6]: Matthew 24:29-31 (ESV)

²⁹ "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

them not to see or hear will be lifted. The entire nation of Israel will accept the word God placed in their heart and on their lips (10:8). Last week I gave you a summary of what that looks like from prophecy. It will come in a time of great crisis for Israel (Deuteronomy 4:30-31).

Paul is not saying that all Jews throughout history will be saved. If that were the case he would not have wished he could be accursed that they would be saved (9:3). You might ask, "But what about all those who died in the hardness of heart and never called on the name of the Lord?" First, we must be careful to not limit the grace of God. Calling on the name of the Lord may be broader than we imagine it to be (Genesis 4:26). Let us leave that definition to God. Of course it is only by the sacrifice of Jesus that anyone is saved (Ephesians 1:7). The real question is this. How much must a person know of that sacrifice or understand it to call on the name of the Lord?

Secondly, we know of the nature of God from Scripture. We know He is merciful and yet entirely just. We know that He declared mercy triumphs over justice (James 2:13), and yet, He will not let sin go unpunished (Exodus 34:7). One must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3). We know it is not His will that any should perish (2Peter 3:9). From those truth statements of Scripture I conclude that God would not permanently harden the heart of anyone that would, given the time and opportunity, believe and be saved. Please understand that I am not talking about all people eventually being saved. If I understand the prophecy of Zechariah correctly, two-thirds of those in Jerusalem will perish before Paul's words come to pass (Zechariah 13:8-9). We join with the heavenly Father in wishing it was not so, but God has given all of us freedom to choose (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Now Paul will do as he has done throughout the letter. He will defend His assertion by using Scripture. *as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"*²⁷ *"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."* Paul is quoting an altered form of Isaiah 59:20-21a and 27:9a. He is quoting the LXX translation in his own words. He changes the Redeemer coming "on account of" Zion to the Redeemer "coming from" Zion. He probably does so in reference to previous quotations regarding the Redeemer coming from Zion (Psalm 14:7 LXX *yesu at Yisrael*). That wording implies that Israel is in bondage, not just to Rome but to sin and specifically the sin of rejecting their Messiah. That is the same theme in the verse Paul quoted from Isaiah.

This is the conclusion of the subject of Israel that Paul took up in chapter nine, starting with his lament for the nation. He quoted numerous passages about their disobedience and impending exile implying a repetition of the previous historical pattern. But now Paul comes to glorious conclusion. He hasn't given up on his people. He hopes to win some of them through jealousy toward the Gentiles relationship with God. The promises of God to Abraham have come to pass but did not result in faith in Israel, but rather

Commented [notes7]: Romans 10:8 (ESV)

⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. E[that is, the word of faith that we proclaim];

Commented [notes8]: Deuteronomy 4:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice. ³¹ For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

Commented [notes9]: Romans 9:3 (ESV)

³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Commented [notes10]: Genesis 4:26 (ESV)

²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.

Commented [notes11]: Ephesians 1:7 (ESV)

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Commented [notes12]: James 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Commented [notes13]: Exodus 34:7 (ESV)

⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Commented [notes14]: John 3:3 (ESV)

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Commented [notes15]: 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Commented [notes16]: Zechariah 13:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. ⁹ And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

Commented [notes17]: Deuteronomy 30:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,

Commented [notes18]: Isaiah 59:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD. ^{21a} "And as for me, this is my covenant with them,

Commented [notes19]: Isaiah 27:9a (ESV)

⁹ Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be atoned for,

Commented [notes20]: Psalm 14:7 (ESV)

⁷ Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

disobedience (Genesis 22:18). Yet, Paul looks even further into history and sees a glorious day in which all Israel will be saved. They come to faith somewhat differently in that day, but in a similar way to that of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:5). In seeing the Lord Jesus, they will acknowledge He is Lord (Zechariah 12:10) and understand that to which they have been blinded for so long.

By using these passages regarding the Redeemer, which in Isaiah clearly refers to God, the Apostle is equating Christ with God. The stumbling stone in Zion upon which Israel stumbles is clearly the LORD of hosts in Isaiah 8:14 but referred to as Christ in Romans 9:33. At the time of Paul's writing this letter, Jews saw the quotation of Isaiah 59:20 as referring to a removal of their enemies. Paul has flipped the implication and said it is a removal of the sin in his fellow Jews! The Isaiah quotation goes on to say that God will from that time on never remove His Spirit from them (Isaiah 59:21).

²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. The church was beginning to experience increased persecution from Jews. Later in history it would be the wayward church persecuting the Jews. Paul is pointing back to the Jews rejection of the Messiah as being the means by which the gospel went to the world. Yet, Paul is emphasizing that God is not done with the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God loves them. Paul used the same expression to describe the church in Rome, "beloved" (Romans 1:7). The Jews are loved by God but they must accept that love. Moses wrote, *¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.* Deuteronomy 10:15 (ESV)

It is difficult for me to understand why Martin Luther, who was so affected by Romans 1:17, did not understand Romans 9 – 11 but became anti-Semitic. I suppose we should learn from his failure that we are all recipients of grace. The only perfect One is our Savior. Let us always be willing to learn from Scripture where we are mistaken.

I just read that God chose them above all people. *²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* The incredibly disproportionate number of Nobel prizes going to those of Jewish lineage attests to that fact. Paul is saying that God doesn't change His mind. He will work salvation in the Jewish nation.

I see God choosing the Jews as an example of His ability to save anyone who will come to Him. Look at the stubbornness they demonstrated in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 9:7). Consider the stubbornness to reject the Messiah because He wasn't going to be a general leading them against Rome. We can say that if God loves them and longs to save them, maybe there is hope for even me! Paul, himself, was a stubborn persecutor of Christians (1Corinthians 15:9). It took a vision of Jesus to transform and humble him into an obedient servant. God will do whatever it takes if we will respond. Paul became

Commented [notes21]: Genesis 22:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Commented [notes22]: Acts 9:5 (ESV)

⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Commented [notes23]: Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn."

Commented [notes24]: Isaiah 8:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.
¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

Commented [notes25]: Romans 9:33 (ESV)

³³ as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Commented [notes26]: Isaiah 59:21 (ESV)

²¹ "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore."

Commented [notes27]: Romans 1:7 (ESV)

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes28]: Romans 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Commented [notes29]: Deuteronomy 9:7 (NIV)

⁷ Remember this and never forget how you provoked the LORD your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

Commented [notes30]: 1 Corinthians 15:9 (ESV)

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

just as stubbornly determined to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Imagine how powerful the witness of the 144,000 will be!

³⁰ For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. The Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. That disobedience pushed the gospel out to us Gentiles and has spread to the entire world. We found the mercy of God partly because they rejected Jesus. When they recognize they are being disobedient through seeing your life transformed, they will seek the same mercy you received. But unless our lives are indeed transformed they will not see it. Why would they be jealous of someone who lives just as they do? We are witnesses when the Spirit of God transforms our lives to focus on satisfaction in God rather than being satisfied with the little pleasures of this world. Only then can others see we have received mercy.

³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. Only when we realize how disobedient we are do we seek the mercy of God. In thinking that they are pleasing to God by keeping the Laws of Moses, the Jewish people often missed the greatest need of us all, mercy. When they realize they have rejected their Messiah and spoken against His children, like Paul, the scales will fall from their eyes and they will receive God's mercy (Acts 9:18). God knew the choice Adam and Eve would make (Genesis 3:6). We would never truly love God without the freedom to choose. The choice to rebel would lead to the need for a Savior. The increasing depravity of the human heart that turns from God only serves to show the greatness of His mercy and grace. We would never have understood how great His love and mercy are without going down the path we chose.

This verse is not telling us that all will be saved. We must compare Scripture with Scripture even within this very letter. Paul wrote that there is no mercy for those who reject God's mercy given to us through Jesus' sacrifice (2:8-9), and that those who are self-seeking and will not obey the truth will receive wrath and fury, including the Jew. In fact, Paul wrote that it would be to the Jew first. To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).

Paul closes this section with one of the most beautiful doxologies in the Bible. It was written in a three part hymn like form and may have been sung. The style and quotes within it lead me to believe it was inspired spontaneously as the letter was being written. While this letter starts with the depravity of sinful man, and in this section we have seen the disobedient Jewish people, and that all mankind consigned to disobedience, the hymn breathes what should come flowing from the heart of the recipients of mercy. *³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Or who has given a*

Commented [notes31]: Acts 9:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

Commented [notes32]: Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Commented [notes33]: Romans 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,

Commented [notes34]: Luke 12:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

gift to him that he might be repaid?"³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

As Paul contemplated the wonder of God working on the heart of man to draw as many as possible who will receive mercy, he sees the depth of God's wisdom and knowledge. We can but submit to His judgments and inscrutable ways. We would be foolish to question the One who made all things and knows all things. Our questioning His acts only emphasizes our prideful vanity. God does as He pleases based on His perfect nature. Paul realizes he is only catching a miniscule portion of revelation into God's great heart and mind.

The wonder of the infinite God brings to mind two verses from Isaiah and Job that Paul inserts to emphasize God's transcendence and sovereignty. Who knows the mind of the Lord or has given Him counsel. (Paul is quoting [Isaiah 40:13 LXX](#)) How can one as limited as man tell the all-knowing God anything that He has not already considered? Then Paul quotes from the Aramaic version of [Job 41:3](#). Who can give anything to God and then have God indebted to him or her? Whatever we give to God was already His. These two quotes emphasize the vast difference between Creator and creation. What a call to humility!

The conclusion of all this is that ³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* This is no passive God that stands aloof and watches an experiment to see how it will turn out. Paul was not a Deist! He saw everything in all creation, every act of man, every situation, everything directed by the invisible hand of God bringing all things to a conclusion that would bring God glory. Paul brings out the oneness of Christ Jesus and God in a similarly worded passage to the Corinthians. ⁶ *yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.* 1 Corinthians 8:6 (ESV) What a mighty God we serve! This concludes the body of the letter. The final four chapters are an exhortation to the church in Rome.

Questions

- 1 During what time are we living?
- 2 What happens after that time?
- 3 Does this mean all Jews go to heaven?
- 4 Go over Paul's conclusions about Israel.
- 5 How does Paul equate Jesus with God?
- 6 Who is beloved of God?
- 7 Why has God allowed us all to sin?
- 8 Will all be saved?
- 9 What do Paul's quotes in the doxology teach us?
- 10 What does the last verse tell us about the events in our life and the world?

Commented [notes35]: Isaiah 40:13 (ESV)

¹³ Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?

Commented [notes36]: Job 41:3 (ESV)

³ Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words?

Tg. Job 41:3 is quite different from the MT The same idea is found in **1 Chronicles 29:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.