

# All Israel Will Be Saved - Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 11:25-36

**Preached on:** Sunday, July 15, 2012

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bible and turning to Romans chapter 11? The title of my discourse to you this morning is "All Israel will be Saved." This will be the first part of this series.

Let me read the text to you. We are actually only going to be looking at the first verse, verse 25, but I would like to read the entire text through verse 36 so that you get a sense of what the apostle is saying here.

Romans 11 beginning in verse 25.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." "AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have one of the most fascinating passages in all of Scripture, one that reveals yet another piece of the puzzle with respect to God's sovereign plan of redemption, especially as it relates to his beloved enemy, Israel. Here we have one of the clearest passages in the New Testament that teaches a future salvation of national ethnic Israel.

I often reflect upon what it must have been like to have been with the Lord as one of his disciples. Can you imagine what that would have been like to be able to have sweet fellowship with the incarnate Christ, behold first hand his miracles, even be empowered

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 11:25-36.

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to do some of the same, to sit at the feet of God himself and learn the great mysteries of the universe, especially with respect to his plan of redemption.

And as we read in the New Testament we are not surprised to see that one of their chief preoccupations was that of what is going to happen to our beloved kinsmen, the salvation of Israel, the restoration of Israel to the kingdom that has been promised? When is that going to happen?

And we see that that has been explicitly promised in many passages of Scripture. We have studied the passage in Deuteronomy 30. We have seen it in Jeremiah chapter 16, Jeremiah chapter 30, chapter 31. You see it in Ezekiel chapter 20, chapter 36, chapter 37, many passages.

You see, the disciples knew that God had promised the perpetuity of the nation of Israel in God's plan of redemption, especially according to Jeremiah 31 verses 35 through 37. And this was reaffirmed again in the New Testament. How exciting this must have been. For example, in Matthew chapter 19 verse 28:

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”<sup>2</sup>

Don't you know this must have been exhilarating to them. And in Luke's account of the Lord's supper Jesus declared in Luke 22 beginning in verse 29:

...and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

So Jesus shared their Jewish hope of a national restoration of Israel, affirming the Old Testament prophecies that proclaim a world wide political kingdom in which he as Messiah of the house of David would one day rule Israel and all of the nations of the world on a renovated earth.

In Acts chapter one and verse three we learn that Jesus meet with this disciples for a period of 40 days after his resurrection. And what was the main topic of conversation? He was speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Then in verses six and seven Luke records Jesus' final interchange with his apostles before his ascension where he, once again, affirmed the idea of a restoration of national Israel. There he said:

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 19:28.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 22:29-30.

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And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying,  
"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the  
Father has fixed by His own authority;"<sup>4</sup>

Now if God was finished with his covenant people Israel—as many believe he is—and that the Church has now permanently replaced Israel as a new spiritual Israel, then this would have been the perfect place for Jesus to have said so and correct their thinking. If that were true, I am sure Jesus would have said to them something like this, "Wait a minute, guys. You know, I have been with you for 40 days speaking to you concerning the kingdom of God. Don't you understand that ethnic, national, territorial Israel is now all absorbed into the universal Christian Church, thus eliminating her national identity? Don't you understand that the physical messianic kingdom once promised to Israel has now been changed into a spiritual kingdom and you are living in it right now?"

Well, obviously he didn't say that, because I would submit you that none of that is true. Did not Paul say in Romans 11 verse one:

"God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"<sup>5</sup>

You see, the apostle understood this and like Paul they all longed to see the spiritual salvation and the physical restoration of their nation Israel. So it was appropriate for them to ask:

"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>6</sup>

Beloved, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that God's plans for Israel are literal.

Amos founded Israel's hope in Amos 9:14. There we read:

"Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel."<sup>7</sup>

And in verse 15 he went on to say:

"I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says the LORD your God."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 1:6-7.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 11:1.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:6.

<sup>7</sup> Amos 9:14.

<sup>8</sup> Amos 9:15.

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The plain, normal meaning of language in the Old Testament compels us to believe in an ultimate permanent restoration of the Jews into their ancient homeland at the end of the age. And the New Testament heaps even more evidence to affirm the same. And today we continue to witness the return of the Jewish people, their coming back into their land, their coming back in unbelief where they will remain until the very end until God saves them and gathers them that second and final time as we studied last week in Isaiah 11 when he will take all of the banished ones of Israel from the four corners of the earth and bring the final ones into the land and save them as promised. What thrilling anticipation this was for the early saints. And it should be for all of us, even in the Church age today to know that God is faithfully fulfilling his covenant promises to national ethnic Israel, that today remain hostile towards their Messiah who in Luke 13 beginning in verse 34, just before his death looked down on Jerusalem and said:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'<sup>9</sup>

Quoting Psalm 118 verse 26, one that the rabbis understood to be a messianic psalm of praise referring to the day of Israel's redemption. And here in our text this morning, beloved, the inspired apostle gives us further insights into this future event when Jesus the Messiah will descend upon Jerusalem in all of his glory, when he will give them eyes to see, remove their spiritual blindness, soften their hardened hearts and not only save Israel spiritually, but also restore them physically to their land as his witness nation as he establishes his glorious kingdom on a renovated earth for 1000 years just as the Scripture so clearly teaches, a kingdom that will be the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state, when the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

How I long for this day of triumph. And how anticlimactic it would be to think that we are living in the kingdom now.

So we come to this climax of Paul's explanation of God's gracious plan of redemption for his covenant people Israel. Remember now in Romans nine he speaks of Israel's election. In Romans 10 he speaks of Israel's defection. And in Romans 11 he speaks of his real salvation which will ultimately fulfill God's purpose in choosing them in the first place as God declared through his servant Jeremiah in Jeremiah 13:11.

"...that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 13:34-35.

<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah 13:11.

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You see, friends, Israel's salvation is a magnificent demonstration of God's mercy, of his sovereign grace that ultimately brings glory to his name. And that is what his plan of redemption is all about, especially as it relates to Israel. As the prophet Isaiah says in chapter 43 verse 21 referring to Israel:

“The people whom I formed for Myself, Will declare My praise.”<sup>11</sup>

What a day that will be. And these themes are the focus of Paul's climactic statements here in Romans 11:25-36 that results in perhaps the most magnificent doxology in all of Scripture. Here Paul humbles arrogant saints by exalting four attributes of God which glorifies his name. That is what we are going to be looking at over the next few weeks. We are going to be humbled by, number one, his sovereign grace; number two, his unfailing faithfulness; number three, his infinite mercy and, finally, his incomprehensible holiness. And my prayer is that each of us as we immerse ourselves in these glorious truths will be humbled by these attributes of our glorious God.

So today we are going to look at the issue of being humbled by God's sovereign grace, focusing primarily on verse 25 and a little bit of verse 26.

Now, remember by way of context, Paul has been arguing that Israel's failure is not final, that God has a two fold purpose in it, to save Gentiles and to use Gentiles to make Jews jealous that they might come to Christ. And he has spent a great deal of time rebuking arrogant Gentiles concerning Israel's failure, that since we are the ones who were grafted into the rich root of patriarchal blessing, we owe our spiritual existence to Israel. So don't get too cocky, here, Gentiles. That is the point. And he has also revealed the glorious prospect of reversing Israel's failure in verses 23 and 24 when unbelieving Israelites will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again.

So as we come to this text, Paul is, in essence, summarizing all that he has been saying since chapter nine. But he is still focusing on this issue of humbling arrogant Gentiles which must have been an issue then as it is today.

Notice verse 25, the first part.

“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation.”<sup>12</sup>

In other words, brethren, I want you to understand these things. What I have been saying is not just idle conjecture. It is not human opinion. This is divine revelation and God does

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 43:19.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 11:25.

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not want you to be uninformed. Literally he doesn't want you to be ignorant of this mystery.

Well, what is the mystery? Well, mystery biblically is not something that we can't comprehend, but rather it is something that we would have never known apart from divine revelation. In fact, this mystery was not even revealed in the Old Testament in a clear way. In fact, Paul even defines it in chapter 16 of Romans beginning at the end of verse 25. He defines it as revelation, quote:

“... which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations...”<sup>13</sup>

So Paul is saying, “I don't want you to be uninformed of this mystery.”

Well, what is the mystery? Beloved, as we are going to see, the mystery is that marvelous chain of events in the sovereign purposes of God that ultimately result in the salvation of those nefarious Jews in the nation of Israel that everyone loves to hate. No. Don't tell me he is going to save those wicked Christ killers at the end of the age. No way. Oh, yes way, absolutely. I don't want you to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation. The term estimation carries with it the idea of in your own understanding of things based upon your own wisdom.

We all have opinions. In fact, somebody has well said that opinions are like noses. Everybody has got one. And when it comes to the context of this passage, which is the whole issue of the future of national Israel, everybody has got an opinion. And many will believe that God was finally finished with them because of their unbelief in AD 70 that it was all over for the Jews.

But we are going to see that God has a plan for them yet. So he is saying here, “I don't want you to be wise in your own estimation, in your own understanding of things based upon your own wisdom with respect to Israel, with respect to the future.”

Beloved, on our own, we don't know beans from rabbit manure when it comes to what God is up to. Unless he reveals it to us. So we can even put it this way. I don't want you to be uninformed of this mystery lest you be conceited and think that God is finished with his covenant people, that he has now replaced them with the Gentile church that thinks it is superior.

You know, I find it interesting as I read the New Testament in particular we see this ongoing battle between the church or in the church between the arrogant Jews and the arrogant Gentiles. They, you know, it is like throwing a coon and a possum in a barrel.

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<sup>13</sup> Romans 16:25-26.

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They just don't get along very well and you see this. In fact, John calls this the boastful pride of life.

We all struggle with that, don't we? We see that even in this church. You see it all the time and frankly in every church. You know, if you don't look like me, if you don't talk like me, if you don't act like me, if you don't do things my way, if you don't like what I like, then you are wrong and I don't like you. And there you have it. And, of course, it is this type of sinfulness within the human heart that fueled Gentile arrogance towards the Jews. And, of course, the Jews dished out their fair portion of arrogance towards the Gentiles as well.

Now notice the humbling truth inherent in this mystery, verse 25.

“... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved.”<sup>14</sup>

Now the word partial modifies Israel. So what does this mean? Well, let me summarize it for you and then expand upon it. It means that in the secret counsel of God's will in eternity past he sovereignly ordained to harden the hearts of the vast majority of his chosen people due to their unbelief, but he preserved for himself a remnant even of these hardened hearts, a remnant from ethnic national Israel, those branches that were broken off that one day he will save en masse.

Now practically speaking this is going to occur—and we don't have time to go into all of the text to demonstrate this—but this will occur after the fullness of the Gentiles has come into the Church when the Jews are back in their land as Isaiah 11:11-12 tells us when Jerusalem will be surrounded by a great army of all of the nations. That will, interestingly enough, include the United States. All of the nations of the world and then Jesus will suddenly return to save the nation of Israel both physically and spiritually as we read in so many passages, Zechariah 14, Isaiah 59 verses 20 and 21 and so forth.

Now as a footnote here, some people ask: Well, how many of them are going to be saved?

Well, we don't know specifically, but the Word of God does give us a general idea. As a result of that great siege on Jerusalem at the end from the forces of the antichrist combined with the devastating fury of the wrath of God when he returns, we understand biblically that two thirds of the nation of Israel will perish and the remaining one third which will include the 144,000 witnesses as are mentioned in Revelation 7:4, they will all experience the removal of their judicial hardening and they will be saved and they will enter into the kingdom. The Holy Spirit is going to be poured out upon them causing them to repent and believe, Zechariah 12:10 and so forth.

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 11:25-26.

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And we learn this in several passages, one, for example, in Zechariah 13 beginning in verse eight as we read earlier.

"And it will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"<sup>15</sup>

Now remember. Paul wants our understanding of the revelation of this mystery to be a cure for the inveterate, in other words, the habitual entrenched arrogance that we have as Gentiles especially towards the Jews. And notice again how Paul describes this specifically at the end of verse 25.

"...a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved."<sup>16</sup>

Now here, beloved, we see two components to this mystery that Paul is going to expand upon. Number one, we are going to see the extent of it and, secondly, the duration of this hardening. The extent and the duration of the hardening. First the extent. We see that it is a partial hardening. In other words, it is not a hardening on every single Jew. The great majority, yes, but not all of them. God has always preserved for himself a remnant and we see Jews down through the history of the Church coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. Neither Paul nor any one of us would have ever known this unless God had revealed it to us. And this is merely a summary of what he has been saying, again, that God has a two fold purpose in hardening the majority of unbelieving Israel as to save Gentiles and for Gentiles to make Jews jealous. He said in verse 17 that some, in other words, not all, but some of the branches were broken off. They were broken off of the rich root of patriarchal blessing defined in God's covenant to Abraham. They were the unproductive branches of unfaithful, idolatrous Israel that continue even to this day. And he says:

"...and you being a wild olive..."<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the productive branches of believing Gentiles from all nations that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah...

"...and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them..."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Zechariah 13:8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Romans 11:25-26.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 11:17.



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In other words, the remnant of believing Jews that God had not hardened. Remember, it is a partial hardening. He hadn't hardened all of them. We have been grafted in with the ones that have not been hardened and we became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree. But, according to verses 23 and 24, we are going to see that a majority of unbelieving Israelites that God has hardened are going to be softened and they are going to be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again.

So that helps us understand, number one, the extent of the hardening. But, secondly, the second component of this mystery is the duration of this hardening. Notice at the end of verse 25 again. It is going to be a partial hardening that has happened to Israel.

“...until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.”<sup>19</sup>

Well, what does this mean? Well, it means that God has set a limit upon his judgment until, marvelous word, a word of hope. It denotes a specific period of time that will end, a moment in time until the fullness, the fullness indicating completion, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. In other words, until the full number of elect Gentiles are saved.

So here is what he is saying. Don't be conceited, Gentiles over your new found position of blessing. All Israel will be saved with the last one of you in the church age has come in, εἰσερχομαι (ice-er'-khom-ahee), has come in, the original language.

It is interesting. This is a verb that Jesus often used to describe entering into the kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, of entering into eternal life and so forth. So when the last Gentile is saved, I should say during the Church age, because we know that there will be many saved during the millennium, Israel's judicial hardening will be removed and all Israel will once again enjoy its covenant fellowship with God as the prophets have promised.

Now most believers today are Gentiles with only a small number of Jews, those whom God has not hardened, who are a part of the remnant of his elect coming to faith in the Messiah. But at the end of the tribulation as we study Bible prophecy, God makes it clear that when the full number of the Gentiles is complete, then Jesus is going to return and the final third of those Jews whom God has preserved during that time of judgment will come to salvation in Messiah en masse.

Now I need to digress for a moment. Today we live in the times of the Gentiles. Jesus described this in Luke 21 verse 24. This speaks of a time of Gentile domination over Jerusalem. It probably began under Nebuchadnezzar in about 587 BC and it is going to continue until the Lord returns. This is a time now in which a vast number of Gentiles are

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 11:25.

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being saved as the Old Testament prophets predicted. And we are among that group by God's grace. But the inclusion of both believing Jews and Gentiles in a new spiritual community was a mystery as well and it wasn't revealed in the Old Testament, but it was in the New Testament. For example, Paul revealed it in Ephesians three verses two and six or two through six. He spoke there of the mystery of Christ which is literally the mystery of the Church, that both Jews and Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, were fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel and so forth.

So in the Church today there is spiritual community that exists. It is the ecclesia, it is the called out ones, those that are drawn out of all the nations and it is a spiritual community whereby that wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, Ephesians 2:11 and following. All believers are incorporated into this one body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28.

So it is for this reason that many have a hard time seeing a distinction between Israel and the Church. Many would argue that since this is ... that this is God in one body according to Ephesians two, that this means that the Church must be a homogenous unity that leaves no room for diversity and this prevents God from dealing differently with the Jews and so there is ... there just can't be any unique role for Israel as a nation in the future.

But I would argue that Paul repeatedly identifies himself as an ethnic Jew without any concern for being divisive. Think about it. Is there not unity in the diversity of the triune godhead? Is there not unity in the diversity of gifts among members in one body? We are not all the same. There is vast diversity. You go to other parts of the world and see other believers. There is vast diversity in the body of Christ. Is there not unity in the diversity that is found even in the bond of marriage? Of course there is. I believe Saucy had it right when he said, quote, "The union of Jew and Gentile in the Church does not rule out the possibility of functional distinctions between Israel and the other nations in the future. In the same way that there are functional distinctions among believers in the Church today amid spiritual equality."

Now you will recall in Romans 11 verse 17 that Gentiles do not become Israel. They become partakers with them. They share with them the blessings of the rich root of Israel's covenants and promises and hope and salvation in Messiah. In Ephesians 2:11 and following we learn that at one time Gentiles were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, from the citizenship of Israel. They were not part of that nation state. They were strangers to the covenants of promise.

Or, in keeping with Paul's metaphor in Romans 11:17 they had not yet been graciously engrafted into the root of Abrahamic blessing as wild uncultivated stock, or, as Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:13, they had not yet been brought near by the blood of Christ.

But, beloved, I would humbly submit to you there is nowhere in Scripture where we are

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told that Gentiles become part of Israel. Yes, there is only one way of salvation for Jew and Gentile. Christ has now made , quote, both groups one, Ephesians 2:14. But nowhere does it say that Gentiles are incorporated into the old commonwealth of Israel or into a new commonwealth of Israel or into a new spiritual Israel. We do not become, we share with Israel.

The New Testament affirms both similarities and differences between Israel and the Church. We see this all through the New Testament. Matthew 16, Christ spoke of the Church that is to be built. Matthew 18 he speaks of the Church and how we are to discipline unrepentant members. And he had concern for other sheep that were apart from Israel's fold. Yet he also gave special attention to his kinsfolk, his kinsfolk of the flesh.

Matthew 10, Matthew 15, Matthew 23.

And Paul spoke of himself as a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, Romans 15:8.

I like what my friend David Larsen had to say. He put it this way, quote, "Special blessings yet await Israel as an identifiable entity in the eschatological climax to human history and on into eternity. The Church will not in this age Christianize the world to bring everyone to faith in the gospel, but when, quote, the full number of the Gentiles is come in, Romans 11:25, then God will turn once again to Israel. God's plan for Israel is not any reflection on the glory of the Church, of Christ, but rather to recognize and rejoice in the extraordinary diversity within God's magnificent unity. To say that Israel is Israel and different from the Church is not unlike declaring cherubim are cherubim and different from seraphim. Both cherubim and seraphim are ministering spirits and Israel and the Church both make up the believing humanity. The writer to the Hebrews seems to revel in the variety of the intelligences who comprise the joyful assembly. And the book of Revelation has different spiritual groups."

So he goes on to say, "Rather than representing regression in turning back the blessed Jews, God is manifesting his fidelity to his immutable oath, Hebrews 6:17-18. The Church age is an interval or intercalated period of time not clearly seen in the prophetic telescoping of the Old Testament, just as the difference between the two advents of Christ was not clearly seen. But the Church is never called Israel in the New Testament. Israel has an earthly ethnic and national character. The Church has a heavenly, non ethnic and universal character. Salvation for all who are saved is based on the mediatorial work of Jesus the Messiah before or after the cross, now, in the tribulation or in the millennium," end quote.

So I would humbly argue that, indeed, the New Testament clearly teaches that Jewish people still have a unique role to play in the historical plan of redemption. Those branches of Israel that are currently hardened, that have been broken off will one day be softened and grafted back in to the group blessing.

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So return to verse 25. He says, “Don't be wise in your own estimation.”

“... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved.”<sup>20</sup>

You know, isn't this just like our glorious God to do this kind of a thing? Our faithful, merciful, holy God? This is the God that we serve. This is what he has done for each of us. Beloved, don't miss this. Paul wants us to behold God's sovereign mercy and grace even with Israel and be humbled by it. What kind of arrogance would possess a Christian to assume that he could understand God's sovereign plan for Israel apart from divine revelation? What kind of arrogance would doubt God's resolve to remain faithful to his covenant promises or to question his integrity to fulfill them? What kind of arrogance would begrudge God pouring out his undeserved mercy on a stubborn, hard hearted people as if we deserve better? Come on.

Don't be wise in your estimation, in your understanding of things based upon your wisdom. You see, our wisdom is utter folly compared to God's. Beloved, once again, we are too ignorant to even know we are ignorant and we are too proud to even know the extent of our pride. We have to have the Word of God. And yet we are going to try to explain what God is up to with his covenant people apart from his Word. I don't think so. Paul's point.

And next notice what he says.

“...and thus all Israel will be saved.”<sup>21</sup>

Now many of my friends who are supercessionists, meaning they believe that the Church has superseded Israel, they believe in the Church has replaced Israel and really struggle with this passage, because if it means what it says, then God has not permanently replaced Israel with the church and their system falls apart.

Now there are three views in the supercessionist camp with respect to what this word Israel means. One view says that Israel refers to the Church, the new spiritual Israel and naturally because in their understanding of theology, the Church entirely inherits Israel's promises and covenants to the exclusion of Israel. But, beloved, I would say this is contrary to reason. I would even argue that this betrays a serious theological bias and worse yet, for some a subtle form of Anti Judaism. And here is why I would say that. The term Israel is used a total of 73 times in the New Testament and it always refers to ethnic Jews. Of these 73 citations, the vast majority refer to national ethnic Israel and only a few refer specifically to Jewish believers, but they, too, are ethnic Jews. Plus there

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 11:25-26.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 11:26.

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is not one single passage that clearly states in the New Testament that Israel has been permanently disenfranchised and replaced by the Church and how inherits all Israel's promises and covenants spiritually.

But rather what we see in the New Testament is a consistent distinguishing between the Church and the nation of Israel, again, whom Paul described in Romans nine at the end of verse three as:

...my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, this is still theirs. It doesn't say that they forfeited all of this and now it all goes to the Church. And, furthermore, since Romans nine where Paul began his explanation of God's future role for Israel as the nation every time he has used the term Israel it is with respect to ethnic national Israel. So I would submit that there is no reason to assume that suddenly we are to assign a different non ethnic spiritual meaning to the term here.

A second view among my brothers that are supercessionists they would say that Israel refers to elect Jews throughout history that has continued to be saved. Well, I believe that this is also highly unlikely. I think the context prohibits this. Again, Paul is not focused here on the remnant of elect Jews that God has not pardoned. Right? God ... those that have not been broken off. What he is focusing on here are those whom he has hardened, whom he has broken off that are one day going to be grafted in.

Moreover, that a small number of Jews have been and will continue to trickle into the kingdom, beloved, that is no mystery. I mean, everybody knows that. We don't need special revelation for that. Everyone knows that all the elect, Jews and Gentile, are going to be saved. And why should such an obvious truth evoke Gentile arrogance requiring Paul's rebuke? If that were true, nobody would be arrogant towards them, because the arrogance comes from the understanding that, boy, God is finished with them.

And, finally, if Israel refers to elect Jews throughout history coming to Christ why would such an obvious truth evoke such a passionate doxology? It doesn't make any sense to me. As we will see what ignites Paul to such an explosive level of praise is the reality that God is one day going to save and restore his kinsmen, Israelites. They are going to be grafted back into the rich root of covenantal blessing. That is what gets him so excited.

Well, a third view among some supercessionists is that Paul is describing a national

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 9:3-5.

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salvation of Israel into the Church, but not a restoration of Israel en masse as a nation. Well, this is closer to the truth. And while this bucket holds more water than the other two, I would argue that what is missing here is that the vast amount of biblical evidence indicates that Israel is not only going to experience national salvation, but also physical restoration as a nation into her land. She will rule and reign in a kingdom with the Messiah, all of which is consistent with the new covenant, Jeremiah 31 verses 31 through 34 that really expands upon the promises that God gave to Abraham and to David. This far exceeds the idea of merely being incorporated into the Christian Church.

And it is impossible to escape, beloved, the conclusion that God's plans for Israel are literal. Isaiah 60 verse 21.

Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever,  
The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be  
glorified. The smallest one will become a clan, And the least one a mighty  
nation. I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time.<sup>23</sup>

How about the new covenant promises in Jeremiah 31? Look at verse 23.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Once again they will  
speak this word in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I restore their  
fortunes, 'The LORD bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill!'  
And Judah and all its cities will dwell together in it, the farmer and they  
who go about with flocks. For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh  
everyone who languishes."<sup>24</sup>

My, how true that is and how true it will be.

Amos sounded Israel's hope in Amos 9:14. He says:

"Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel."<sup>25</sup>

And in verse 15 we read:

"I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their  
land Which I have given them,' Says the LORD your God."<sup>26</sup>

So we must understand it is not the hardened remnant that needs to be saved. They are not the branches broken off the root of patriarchal blessing that will one day be grafted in

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<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 60:21-22.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 31:23-25.

<sup>25</sup> Amos 9:14.

<sup>26</sup> Amos 9:15.

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again. It is the hardened elect of Israel among the vast number of ethnic national Israel that are currently experiencing God's judicial hardening that will one day be saved and en masse and be restored to their land.

Beloved, this is the great mystery that is to humble all of us as Gentiles. And this is what animates Paul to burst forth in this magnificent doxology at the end of chapter 11. He is saying, "Yes, one day this partial hardening that has happened to Israel is going to be lifted. It will happen when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in and then because of God's sovereign grace, because of his unfailing faithfulness, because of his infinite mercy, a vast number of my kinsmen are going to be gloriously saved.

"...just as it is written, 'THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.' 'AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.'"<sup>27</sup>

Beloved, as we look at Scripture we see that this will be the day when Jerusalem will become, quote, the throne of the Lord, Psalm 48:1,3; Jeremiah 3:17. It will be the time when the topography of the temple mount will be raised significantly from its current height, Zechariah 14; Isaiah two, Micah four. It will be the time when the Messiah himself will construct a magnificent millennial temple and the Jews will be brought back into the... that have been brought back into their Promised Land will literally be divided into the tribes of Israel. We read this all through Ezekiel chapter 40 through 48. It will be a time when the shekinah glory of the living God will return to this millennial temple, Ezekiel 43, and the glory of the Lord is going to emanate from this magnificent temple as we read in Isaiah 40. It will be a time, then, when the entire city will be a place of holiness and righteousness and justice. There is all kinds of texts that tell us this. It will be time when Jerusalem will become the center for universal peace and prayer and worship and Jerusalem will be the center of joy and rejoicing for the world. Read Isaiah 65. It will be a time when the nations of the world will come to the temple mount to seek justice and learn God's law. It will be the time when, according to Zechariah 14:9 that the Lord will be king over all the earth. In that day the Lord will be the only one and his name the only one.

This is what gets Paul so excited. And, frankly, it does me, too. And it is also extraordinarily humbling to realize that this is God's plan.

It is fascinating in Scripture. We really see a three stage plan of redemption as it relates to Israel. First because of Israel's unbelief we read that God cut them off at the tree of blessing. And then, secondly, as we look at Scripture, we see that he will one day graft them in again as a nation and glorious save them and fully restore them as his witness nation. But then, thirdly, even as the fullness of the Gentiles will initiate the salvation of Israel, so the salvation of Israel will initiate the messianic kingdom, an amazing concept.

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<sup>27</sup> Romans 11:26-27.

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We read about this, for example, in Acts 15. There you may recall that James describes Israel's future salvation and restoration that will initiate the kingdom when he was addressing the apostles and the elders that came together. Remember it happened in AD 50 in Jerusalem. They were trying to figure out to what degree Gentiles should obey the Mosaic law including circumcision in order to be saved. And so there is this big debate and you hear from Peter and Paul and Barnabas and all the others and finally the dear pastor there of the Church stands up and he says, "Ok, guys, her is the bottom line.:" One of the things that he said in Acts 15 beginning at verse 12 is this.

James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, IN ORDER THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM OF OLD."<sup>28</sup>

To be sure, beloved, we are all humbled by God's sovereign grace, not only as it relates to our salvation, but also as it relates to his astonishing plan for his beloved enemy Israel. Beloved, the idea that the Church has permanently replaced Israel is simply an unbiblical doctrine in my view. There is not one single text that clearly identifies the Church as Israel or teaches the permanent rejection of Israel. And, quite the contrary, as we have just read, the New Testament affirms a future for national Israel which gives God such glory revealing how his elective purposes can never be thwarted, that he is the faithful, covenant making and covenant keeping God of Israel, that his promises never fail.

So I would simply say that these great truths, the revelation of this mystery, oh, it should humble each of us.

I appreciate the humility of renowned New Testament scholar C. E. B. Cranfield who allowed the biblical evidence to change his views towards Israel. As you read his story you learn that he admitted to once believing that the Church had replaced Israel in God's plan of redemption. And he said, quote, "And I confess with shame to having also myself used in print on more than one occasion this language of the replacement of Israel by the Church," end quote. But then as you read his testimony, after studying Romans nine, 10 and 11, where we are at here, especially as the text extolled God's electing purposes, he became convinced otherwise. And here is what he said.

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<sup>28</sup> James 15:13-18.



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Quote, “It is only when the Church persists in refusing to learn this message where it secretly, perhaps unconsciously, believed that its own existence is based on human achievement and so fails to understand God’s mercy to himself, that it is unable to believe in God’s mercy for still unbelieving Israel and so entertains the ugly and unscriptural notion that God has cast off his people Israel and simply replaced it by the Christian Church. These three chapters, Romans nine through 11, emphatically forbid us to speak of the Church as having once and for all taken the place of the Jewish people,” end quote.

Beloved, in closing I would like for you to consider two things. First of all, I want you to be humbled as the apostle wants us to be as you reflect upon God’s sovereign plan for Israel because in that plan God is going to be glorified in a magnificent way. How I long for that triumph. But also I don’t want you to be distracted by the world. Here is what I mean by that.

We live in an age where we are distracted by all kinds of media, by entertainment, you know, everybody has got their little gadgets and kids play games. People basically live in a fantasy world. And we know as we look at Scripture that Satan’s diabolical strategy for the Church is to make us ineffective and to discourage us through bad teaching and bad living. So he is going to put all kinds of things out here for you to be distracted with so that you will run after them, so that you will live in a fantasy world of entertainment, so that you will live in a fantasy world that really makes no difference with respect to how you should be living for God. You get pulled away and you begin to lose track of the fact that almighty God has a severing plan that he is orchestrating precisely. And you are a part of that plan. And what is amazing to me is to look around at Christians and they are not excited about this.

Are you kidding me? God has spent all of this effort to reveal to us these glorious truths, to humble us, but also to help us to understand that as Paul says, if we have been raised up with Christ, we are to keep seeking the things above that we are to set our mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth.

So, beloved, what I want you to do is be careful. Examine your heart. Be careful with all of the things that lead you to live in a fantasy world rather than getting excited about the true reality of what God is up to in redemptive history, because if you allow yourself to get distracted, let me tell you what is going to happen. You are going to first of all lose your perspective of the character of God. He is not going to be all that big of a deal to you. You are going to be consumed with other things. You are also going to lose your devotion and live for the glory of God, because, after all, you find your joy elsewhere. You are going to lose your sense of urgency in evangelism. And we see this in a profound way in the Church today. It is like there is no sense of urgency that the Lord is coming. We need to be about the business that God has called us to and we begin to also lose our vigilance for watching for the Lord’s immanent return.

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Beloved, do you believe he is coming or don't you? If you do, are you looking for it? Is that the priority of your life? Oh, Lord, come quickly. Maranatha. We need to be a maranatha people. The Lord is coming. But if you get distracted, you are going to lose that and you are also finally going to lose your zeal for the messianic triumph when the Lord comes in all of his glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, when every knee is going to bow and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus is Lord. You are going to lose your zeal for that glorious triumph that gets Paul so excited, that will include not only us, but this restoration in salvation of his beloved enemy Israel. You are going to lose that sense of triumph when the Lord is going to come, when the earth is going to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord even as the waters cover the sea.

So, beloved, be humble and don't be distracted. Take these glorious truths from his Word and meditate upon them and let them animate your heart to worship and praise and obedience so that you will not miss out on seeing the glory and the greatness of our God.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these amazing truths. Lord, we confess that we cannot fully grasp all of them, because you have only given us bits and pieces. But, oh God, what you have given to us is overwhelming. And so, Lord, I pray that each of us will be humbled and that we will not allow ourselves to be distracted with the fleeting pleasures of the world, but that we will live to the praise of your glory. And, certainly, Lord, if there is anyone within the sound of my voice that knows nothing of Jesus, a person who has never cried out for his infinite mercy, who has never recognized the depths of his sin, oh, Lord, may today be the day that you absolutely overwhelm them with the reality of their guilt and the wrath of God that abides upon them that they might turn to Christ and be saved. We also all of this In the precious name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.*

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