

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

## Final Things Lesson 8: “The Church and Israel”

Today is the last lesson in our series, “Final Things.” And this last lesson doesn’t really fit on the timeline that we’ve been working through.



We’ve gone from the second coming to the millennium to the eternal state and the New Jerusalem. Then we went back to the church age, the rapture, and the tribulation.

This last topic isn’t a piece of this timeline. It’s more specifically about Israel and her relationship to the church. This is more of a conceptual and hermeneutical issue, that affects our eschatology. And the question is this: What do we do with Israel? And what do we do with the statements about Israel in the Bible?

When I was a young man, I loved music. I loved music even as much as basketball. And I wanted to be a musician. And my favorite musician by far was Rich Mullins, who had an amazing career before his untimely death at age 41. And my favorite album by Rich was an album called “A Liturgy, a Legacy, a Ragamuffin Band.” And the first song on that album has a line that has stuck in my head for over thirty years. The song is called “Here in America.” And the line goes like this: “The Holy King of Israel knows me here in America.”

Now, obviously Jesus is more than just the Holy King of Israel. But he’s not less. And understanding Jesus’s kingship and his redemptive plan that takes place through Israel and the Jewish people is *really* important.

Jesus was born a Jew, to Jewish parents, in a demonstrably Jewish locale, Bethlehem, the city of David. And my salvation is a result of that Jewish King who came to save *his* people from *their* sins. I’m grafted into that plan. More on that in a minute.

Here’s what I want to do today. I want to answer two questions. The first is a simple question: **Who is Israel?**

Let’s be crystal clear on that. Years ago, Vince Lombardi was trying to get through to his team, the Green Bay Packers. And they were struggling. So he got them together, and he gave them a speech. And he started by saying, “Gentlemen, this is a football!” He went back to the basics. That’s what we’re going to do first. I’ll give you five answer to the question, “Who is Israel?”

But then, we need to address some deeper issues. And we’ll do that with this question.

**What is God’s plan for Israel after the first coming of Christ?**

So look back on that timeline.



From the cross all the way to the eternal state and the New Jerusalem: *What's God's plan for Israel during all those time periods? From the church age to the tribulation to the millennial kingdom and to the eternal state? I'll give you seven answers to that question. And then we're done.*

So write this down as #1 in your notes in answer to the first question—Who is Israel?

### Who is Israel?

1) The physical **offspring** of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Now I'm answering this question from a biblical perspective. I'm answering this question from a theological vantage point, not a geopolitical one. That's why I framed this question with a who not a what. Obviously Israel is a modern nation-state. And that's not unimportant to our discussion today. But I want us to focus more on the people of Israel throughout the centuries. Who is that people?

In the OT, the book of **Genesis** gets pretty quickly to the patriarch, Abraham (**Neh. 9:7**). He is called by God in **Genesis 12**. There was nothing unique or special about Abraham (or Abram). He was from an idolatrous background in the Ur of the Chaldeans (**Josh 24:2–3**).

Why did God call him? Why did God choose him? Because he wanted to (**Deut 7:7–8; Rom. 9:11–16**). The end. God chose Abraham and his offspring according to his sovereign will. And the rest of the OT, from **Genesis 12–Malachi**, is essentially an outworking of the relationship and the covenant between Abraham's descendants and their God.

But it's more particular than that. It's not just the children of Abraham. Because that would include Ishmaelites and the other sons of Abraham through his second wife Keturah. Instead, it's the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as we see repeated frequently in the OT.<sup>1</sup> Thus we have the twelve tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob, which factor into God's plan all the way to the end. We have the twelve tribes mentioned in **Revelation** with the 144,000 (**Rev 7:4–8**). Their names, the names of Jacob's sons, are emblazoned on the New Jerusalem (**Rev 21:12**).

Here's a second thing to note about Israel. They are...

2) Known **historically** as Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews

Now this is a rough estimation. But generally speaking, Abraham's descendants were first known as Hebrews (**Gen 14:13; 39:14; 41:12; Exod 1:15–16, 19; 2:6–11**). And Abraham was the original Hebrew or עִבְרִי ('ivri). The etymology of that term is uncertain. But it probably derives from a term meaning "one who crossed over" or "one from beyond." That would be apropos for Abraham who was called to wander away from Ur of the Chaldeans and cross over towards the Promised Land. The verb עָבַר ('abar) means "to cross over or pass through." So it could be a reference to Abraham "crossing over" the Euphrates or crossing over ancient Mesopotamia on his way to the Promised Land.

Now that terminology, Hebrew or Hebrews, lasts till roughly the Exodus. After the Exodus, they are more often called Israelites. Jacob's name was changed to Israel in **Genesis 32:28**. Israel means basically, "one who struggles with God." That's apt for the Israelites.

And that nomenclature lasts for them until after the Babylonian captivity, when they come back to the land of Israel as Jews. The term Jews derives from "Judea" or "Judah." That was the prominent tribe that

<sup>1</sup> Also in the NT. See Exod 2:24; 3:6, 15–16; 4:5; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 26:42; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 30:20; 34:4; 1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chr 29:18; 2 Chr 30:6; Matt 8:11; 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 13:28; 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32.

survived the Babylonian captivity. And that's the term that survives today, even as the Jewish people have spread around the world in what's called the diaspora.

Now, each of these terms are used in the NT. And it's an ethnic designation. For the record, I don't use the term Israeli to describe the Jewish people. And Israeli is someone who currently lives in the state of Israel, which was reconstituted after WWII and the holocaust in their ancient lands. And Israelis are a subset of the worldwide Jewish population. There are just as many Jews that live outside of Israel today as live in it.

The term "antisemitic" is a bit of a misnomer. It's a real thing, and it's been part of our world for centuries. But the term itself is derived from "Shem," Noah's son. And Shem was a great-grandfather of Abraham, several generations removed. So technically that shouldn't be limited to Abraham's children, let alone the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I'm not here today to recriminate terminology—that's a fool's errand. When people say "antisemitism" or "antisemitic" in our day, they essentially mean anti-Jewish.

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### Thirdly, Israel is...

3) A people **distinct** from the Gentiles and set apart unto God

It's fascinating to me how the Jewish people have maintained ethnic identity for millennia. That's not an accident. And that was God's intent all along (**Exod 19:5–6; Lev 20:24–26; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18–19; Ps 135:4; Amos 3:2; Isa 41:8–9**).

In **Deuteronomy 7:6–8**, God says, "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers."

In **Leviticus 20:24**, God says, "You shall inherit their land [i.e., the land of the Canaanites], and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples." And **Leviticus 20:26** says, "You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine."

Many of the peoples throughout the centuries have been absorbed into other people groups. They migrate. They intermarry. They lose touch with their ethnic connections or they develop new ones. **This was the tactic of the Assyrians 2,700 years ago. They intentionally try to intermingle peoples (2 Kgs 17:6, 24).**

**This was also the tactic of the Soviet Union a hundred years ago. It often works.** But it hasn't worked for the Jewish people. They are a stubborn people. They have maintained their ethnic identity for millennia. And that's in no small part because of their connection to their God, their connection to the Book (the OT), and the plan that God has for them as a people. More on that later.

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### And part of that is the covenant that God made with them. Israel is...

4) A covenant people **chosen** by God in the OT

In **Genesis 15**, God made a covenant with Abraham. Literally he "cut" a covenant (כָּרַת בְּרִית [karat berit – "cut a covenant"]). And as part of that covenant, a group of animals were cut in half, and God, in the theophany of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed through those animals (**15:9–10, 17**). It was so binding upon God, it was *as if* God were saying, "**May I become like these dead animals—cut in half—if I break my covenant with you, Abraham.**"<sup>2</sup>

Later, in **Genesis 17:1–8**, God confirmed that covenant and then instituted the sign of circumcision.

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,"<sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."<sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face. And

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<sup>2</sup> This is the standard understanding of an ANE covenant. For evidence of this understanding in the Bible, observe what is said in Jeremiah 34:18–20: "And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth."

God said to him, <sup>4</sup> “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup> And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

This covenant is referred to as the “Abrahamic covenant.” It was initially promised in **Genesis 12:1–3**. And it’s unique to God’s people, Israel. But it includes the other nations of the world too. Because God said, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (**12:2–3**).

God repeats that covenant with both Isaac and Jacob, Abraham’s son and grandson (see **Gen 26:2–5; 28:13–15**). And as part of God’s unconditional covenant with Abraham’s offspring, they are promised: **(1) land, (2) seed, and (3) blessing (Gen 12:2–3, 7; 13:15; 15:5, 18–21)**.

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And that’s not the only covenant that they were given. They were also given the Mosaic covenant.<sup>3</sup> And they were also given the Davidic covenant, which promised a future messiah.

**Write this down as a fifth answer to that question—Who is Israel? Well, Israel is...**

5) The people who were **promised** a world-saving Messiah

In **2 Samuel 7**, King David, who was the greatest and most powerful descendant of Abraham, except for maybe Moses, was promised an eternal heir. David was promised a perpetual dynasty. He was promised a perpetual throne and kingdom.

**2 Samuel 7:12–13** says as follows:

*“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”*

In **Psalm 110:1**, David prophesies, “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” Why are there two Lords? Who is King David’s “**Lord?**”

Jesus has some fun with the Pharisees concerning this passage. He stumped them so badly, he left them silent. And then he just took off without explaining it to them (see **Matt 22:41–46**).

But the answer is obvious, if you know the truth about who Jesus is. The answer is that David is prophesying concerning his own future son who would actually be *his Lord*. “The Lord [Yahweh] will say to [David’s Lord—Jesus], “sit at my right hand.” This is the Davidic covenant in action. This is the world-saving Messiah that came through King David’s greater Son.

Now Matthew traces that genealogy on the first page of the NT from Abraham to David, and then all the way down to Mary, Jesus’s mother (**Matt 1:1–17**). And when the pagan, Gentile magi came to visit Jesus, Joseph, and Mary in **Matthew 2**, they asked, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” (**2:2**).

They were Gentiles. And they were kingmakers. And “the king of the Jews” became their king. And the king of the Jews has become my king. **And wouldn’t you know it, Rich Mullins was right! “The Holy King of Israel knows me here in America.” And I know him. And I serve him.**

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So, when we put this all together, we can say as follows: **(1) Israel is the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (2) Throughout history they have been referred to as the Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews. (3) They are called to be set apart from the Gentiles. (4) They are God’s covenant people. They are recipients of the Abrahamic covenant which promises land, seed, and blessing. (5) And they are recipients of the Davidic covenant which promises a world-saving messiah for Jews and Gentiles.**

Paul adds to that in **Romans 9:4–5** when he says, “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

<sup>3</sup> They were also given a land covenant (see Deut 29–30). They were also given the New Covenant, which we, as Gentiles, partake in (Jer 31:31–34; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8). But that was originally promised to Israel and Judah.

Now, there have been Christians throughout the centuries who have believed that Israel, the ethnic entity, and covenant people have been *replaced* by the church in the NT era. This is referred to as “replacement theology” or “fulfillment theology.” The better term is probably “supersessionism.” They believe the church *supersedes* Israel— supersessionism.

Now, once again, good Christian brothers and sisters disagree on this matter. Some of my heroes *are* and *were* supersessionists: Augustine, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Owen, Martin Luther, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, Martin Lloyd Jones, D.A. Carson, John Piper, Voddie Baucham. Most of the reformers re in this category, as are most of the puritans. My people!

But, I do not think that the church has replaced Israel. And—as I’ve repeatedly argued over the last seven weeks—God still has a future plan for Israel. God still has promises and covenants that need to be fulfilled. So I’m not a *supersessionist*. I’m a *dispensationalist*. And we’ve got people in that camp too. The cupboard is not bare: D.L. Moody, Lewis Chafer, John MacArthur, David Jeremiah, John Walvoord, Michael Vlach, D.L. Bock, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, etc., etc.

And we, as dispensationalists, believe that God has operated in our world at different times during different dispensations. And the church age will eventually give way to the tribulation and the millennium. And God will redirect his redemptive focus toward ethnic Israel.

And even some historical and current supersessionists believed in a future widespread conversion of Jewish people. To be honest, it’s hard not to come to that conclusion when you read **Romans 11**.

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**Which leads now to a second question.**

**What is God’s plan for Israel after the first coming of Christ?**

**Let’s get into that now. And to help us with this, turn to the NT book of Romans. Let’s look at the most concentrated teaching on this subject, namely Romans 11. I’ll give you seven answers to that question.**

**Here’s the first answer.**

1) God is preserving a believing **remnant** of Israel in the present church age (Rom 11:1–6)

**Paul says in Romans 11:1,**

<sup>1</sup> *I ask, then, has God rejected his people?*

**“Has God rejected his people?”**<sup>4</sup> Just a little context here. Paul has just spent the last two chapters, **Romans 9–10**, talking about how the Jewish people have continually rejected the Messiah, Jesus. And it breaks Paul’s heart. Paul said in **Romans 10:1**, “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for [the Jewish people] is that they may be saved.”

Unfortunately many of the Jewish people in Paul’s day rejected Jesus. So Paul asks, **“Has God rejected the Jewish people?”**

And Paul answers, **“No!”**

*By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.*

Has God rejected the Israelites? Paul says, **“No, I’m an Israelite, thank you very much. I’m a descendant of Abraham.”**

**John Chrysostom**, the church father, said it this way almost 1,700 years ago: **“God has not rejected his people, because Paul himself was one of them. If God had cast them off, he would not have chosen one of them as the one to whom he entrusted all his preaching, the affairs of the world, all the mysteries and the whole message of salvation.”**<sup>5</sup> **And think too about your Bible. Think about the NT even. Every single one of the NT writers, except maybe Luke, is Jewish.**

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<sup>4</sup> This is essentially the question that Paul answers throughout all of Romans 11. R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 193 says, “Paul concerns himself with the question of whether God has given up on Israel. It was a natural question because much of the nation was spiritually lost in Old Testament times, and likewise the bulk of the nation rejected the Messiah when he came. Paul’s answer here will be that God is in no way done with the Jews—there is a future for the Jewish nation. This answer, as we shall see, carries with it some advice on how we are to regard the Jews.”

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Gerald Bray, ed., *Romans (Revised)*, ACCOS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 274.

The sad reality is that Gentiles have been trying to discount God's favor on the Israelites centuries. **I even read recently that the mild-mannered C.S. Lewis dealt with a period of antisemitism in his life.<sup>6</sup> And it wasn't just him. Martin Luther said some things about Jews in his writings that'll just make you cringe. And this has been a troubling part of the Christian church for 2,000 years.**

And yet, at the same time, there has always been a remnant of Jewish believers in the church. They haven't been as prominent or as numerous as Gentile Christians. But they're still out there. And they have been historically part of the church.

**Benjamin Disraeli, for example, the famous nineteenth century Prime Minister of England, was a Jewish Christian. Felix Mendelssohn, the famous composer who wrote the music for "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!" was a Jewish Christian. Joy Davidman, the famous author and wife of C.S. Lewis, was a Jewish Christian. Her son likewise.**

**I have several friends who I went to school with at Moody Bible Institute who are Jewish Christians. The professor at Moody who taught me Hebrew, Michael Wechsler, is a Jewish Christian. As is Michael Rydelnik, who is the son of Holocaust survivors. And we have messianic Jews as part of our congregation here at Messiah.**

So when Paul asks rhetorically, **"Has God rejected his people?"** I think we can join Paul in saying, **"Absolutely not! By no means!"** Paul is saying here, **"I am proof positive right here that God hasn't done that."**

Look at **verse 2.**

<sup>2</sup> *God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.*

In other words, there is a remnant of people within Israel including Paul whom God foreknew all along would embrace Christ and follow Christ. Sure lots and lots of Jews have rejected Jesus. That's part of the reason Paul is lamenting here in **Romans**. But lots of Jews have embraced Jesus too.

*Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?<sup>3</sup> "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."*

The prophet Elijah lived and minister in the time of Israel's deepest apostasy. King Ahab, one of the most evil and worthless kings was on the throne. His wife the idol-worshipping Phoenician queen, Jezebel. She was actively destroying Yahweh worship throughout the kingdom and replacing it with Baal and Asherah worship.<sup>7</sup>

Elijah made the mistake way back in the time of King Ahab of guessing what was going on in the world. And he's very dramatic about it. **"O God. I'm all alone! O God, they're going to wipe out your faithful followers. It's over. The sky is falling. You're not going to have anybody left, Lord."**

And look at how God responds to that. God says, **"I beg your pardon, Elijah! You're not alone, buddy!"** You'll have to forgive Elijah. Elijah is a prophet/preacher from the OT. And you know how preachers are? They are emotional. They hyperbolize.<sup>8</sup>

And look at **verse 4,**

<sup>4</sup> *But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."<sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.*

**"I beg your pardon, Elijah. Don't assume you know what I'm doing in this world. Don't overstate the case. I've got 7,000 men who are on my side, so don't you worry."**

And even if those 7,000 were just 700, or just 7, what God is really saying is that there's no reason to despair, Elijah. God knows what he's doing in this world. And we can trust in his sovereignty. **So relax and let God do what he's going to do.**

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<sup>6</sup> Hughes, *Romans*, 192.

<sup>7</sup> Craig S. Keener, *IVPBBCNT* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Ro 11:2-4: "The Elijah narrative in 1 Kings 19:10, 14 and 18 indicates that at the time of Israel's deepest apostasy, a remnant had still avoided idolatry. It may be relevant that some Jewish traditions presented Elijah as zealous for God but not patriotic enough for Israel."

<sup>8</sup> Grant Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2017), 335 calls this one of life's great ironies that the great prophet who defeated 450 prophets of Baal ran for his life afterwards into the wilderness. "He had already forgotten how God empowered him on Mount Carmel!"

<sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

In other words, God's sovereign grace is going to accomplish what God wants to accomplish. And those who are saved are not saved by works anyways. If there is any great theme coming out of the book of **Romans**, it's this—justification by faith. **We are saved by faith. We are saved by God's grace. That's Gentiles and Jews both.**

**Yes, we need to differentiate the church and Israel. All the references to "Israel" in the NT (73 total) are references to ethnic Israel. The only possible exception to that is Galatians 6:16.**

**But there is no alternative plan for Jews in the church age or in the tribulation or in the millennial kingdom. Every single one of them who is saved or will be saved is saved by grace through faith. Unfortunately there are some well-meaning evangelicals in our day who have suggested that God has an alternate salvation plan for Jews apart from Gentiles. Not according to Paul he doesn't!**

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**Here's another thing that's happening with Israel right now in the church age.**

2) Israel is experiencing a spiritual **hardening** because of unbelief (Rom 11:7–10)

And this will go right on into the tribulation, I believe. The majority of Jews in our day are not saved. They are not followers of Jesus. There's a remnant. And that remnant is growing from what I've been told. But we're still in a period of spiritual hardening.

Paul says in **verse 7**.

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

God sovereignly chooses by grace his elect. And God sovereignly hardens the rest.<sup>9</sup> Is Israel still held responsible for her actions? Are unbelievers held responsible for their actions. **Yes, God is sovereign and man is responsible. Put both of those in your theology pipe and smoke it.**

In fact the same language that is used of Pharaoh in the OT is used of Israel here by Paul.<sup>10</sup> That would have been offensive to Paul's Jewish readers. **"You mean God hardened us like he hardened Pharaoh, the great enemy of the Jews in the book of Exodus. No way, Paul! No way!"**

Yes. Pharaoh hardened his heart; God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Same thing in Paul's day. Same thing in the church age. Jewish people hardened their heart towards Messiah Jesus. God hardened their hearts. The elect obtained the truth. The non-elect rejected it.

And then Paul quotes two OT Scriptures to back his statement. The first is **Isaiah 29:10**.

<sup>8</sup> as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."

Jesus said of the Jews in his days, **"ever hearing never understanding, ever seeing not perceiving"** (cf. **Matt 13:10–16**). That quotation comes from Isaiah too. **You can preach till you are blue in the face, but God has to awaken someone's soul to salvation.**

In Paul's case, he saw when he preached to the Jews that they had a "spirit of stupor." In Greek that word is *κατάνυξις* and it means "bewilderment, numbness or even deep sleep."<sup>11</sup> In Hebrew the word is תרדמה (*tār-dē-māh*), and it means "deep sleep."<sup>12</sup> God puts recalcitrant people into a deep, stupefying sleep. **And you can't wake them up. God has to wake them up.**

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<sup>9</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Romans*, vol. 29, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 204–5: "The remnant, having been saved by grace through faith, are clearly discernible among those natural-born sons of Abraham who, unlike their father, choose to seek justification through their works rather than the way ordained by God."

<sup>10</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 550: "They had been hardened ... This was the result of their resisting the truth, just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened because he resisted the truth."

<sup>11</sup> 30.19 *κατάνυξις*, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 351. See also 2919 *κατάνυξις*, James Swanson, *DBL: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>12</sup> 9554 תרדמה, James Swanson, *DBL: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997). Derived from דָּמָה (#8101) "go to sleep"? See also Willem VanGemeren, ed., *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 334.

Paul quote another OT passage to back his statements. This time he quotes from David in the **Book of Psalms**.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; <sup>10</sup> let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."

The table in Jewish society is a symbol of closeness and fellowship and relationship.<sup>14</sup> You eat at table with another person. The Jews had a closeness to God by virtue of their ethnicity and their chosenness as a people. But that closeness has become a snare. That table has become a stumbling block.<sup>15</sup> **Familiarity has bred contempt.**

And David said, "let their eyes be darkened... bend theirs back forever." These are statements that David made in **Psalm 69** about his enemies.<sup>16</sup> Paul now uses these words to speak of Israelites in Paul's day that have become enemies.

There is great irony here. The sons of David, the Israelites, have become the enemies David wrote about because they rejected the Son of David, Jesus Christ. Their eyes are darkened. Their backs are bent. Their necks are stubborn. Their hearts are hardened. Their spirits are stupefied. Only God can awaken them.

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### Here's a third thing that's happening with Israel.

3) Israel's stumbling has opened the door for **Gentile** salvation (Rom 11:11)

Paul says in **verse 11**,

<sup>11</sup> So I ask, did they [the Israelites] 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.

Israel's stumbling has opened the door for Gentile salvation. This was all part of God's plan. Who can know the mind of God?

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### And related to that, here's a fourth thing that's happening with Israel.

4) Gentile salvation is meant to provoke Israel to **jealousy** (Rom 11:11–15)

Look at **verse 12**. Follow Paul's argument.

<sup>12</sup> Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

Now let me specify clearly the pronouns in this verse to show you exactly what Paul is saying here. Here's what he's saying. Let's read this slowly and grasp his meaning.

<sup>12</sup> Now if [the trespass of the Israelites] means riches for the world, and if [the failure of the Israelites] means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will [the **full inclusion** of Israelites] mean!

What in the world does that mean? "Full inclusion"? Well, I think it means that God has a future plan for Israel. God has a plan to bring a large number of ethnic Israelites back into his kingdom. God has a plan to provoke Israelites to jealousy by the Gentiles and bring Jews to Jesus *en masse*. And when that happens, it will be an incredible feat, one that will bring abundant goodness and riches to God's kingdom.

Look at **verse 13**,

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

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<sup>13</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 681: "In vv. 8–10 Paul supports his reference to hardening with two OT quotations. He follows Jewish precedent in using each of the three main divisions of the Hebrew canon: the 'law' (Deut. 29:4), the prophets (Isa. 29:10), and the 'writings' (Ps. 69:22–23)."

<sup>14</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 683 disagrees and says, "Paul probably did not intend to apply the details in the quotation to the Jews of his own day. Thus it is fruitless to inquire about what the 'table' might stand for, or what 'bending the backs' might connote."

<sup>15</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 427 says, "We should probably recognize that he simply intends his audience to see a parallel between what God himself does (gives people a spirit of stupor, eyes that cannot see and ears that cannot hear) and what David asks God to do to his enemies (to use the good thing they enjoy to put a stumbling block in their path)."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Now **verse 12** is about the future. But these verses, **verses 13–15**, aren't about the future. These describe the present—Paul's present situation. Every time Paul left those synagogues in **Acts** and went to preach the gospel to Gentiles, he had an ulterior motive in doing that. Paul loved his role as "apostle to the Gentiles." God called him to that role. He relished it!

And it wasn't just because he got to preach the gospel to Gentiles. It was also so that he might make his fellow Jews jealous. Paul wants to say, **"Look what these Gentiles have. Look what these Gentiles believe. They have embraced our Messiah. They have believed our Scriptures. Don't you want what they have? Don't you want to be a part of what God is doing in bringing Jews and Gentiles both to salvation?"** That's the jealousy (a good jealousy!) that Paul was trying to provoke among the Jews.<sup>17</sup>

And by the way, I was just reminded of this the other day. Paul was both an apostle to the Gentiles and to the Jews. When Paul got confronted on the Road to Damascus, Jesus said about him, "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the *Gentiles* and kings and *the children of Israel*" (**Acts 9:15**).<sup>18</sup>

And as you follow Paul's ministry and even his writing that makes perfect sense. He goes to the synagogues first. And when that doesn't work, he goes to the Gentiles. He writes the **Book of Romans** and says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the [Gentile]" (**Rom 1:16**). He writes the **Book of Romans** and is constantly discussing Jews and Gentiles both.

He even says in **verse 13**, "Now I am speaking to you Gentiles," because he knows that the church in Rome is multicultural and he needs to address both ethnic groups. And what he says to the Gentiles is kind of insulting. It might hurt our feelings if we are too sensitive. Paul says, **"One of the reasons I'm coming to you, Gentiles... one of the reasons I 'magnify my ministry' to you as an apostle to the Gentiles is because I'm trying to make the Jews who have rejected Christ jealous. I'm trying to provoke them."**

You might say, **"Thanks a lot, Paul! You're just using us as guinea pigs! You're using us to make your own people jealous!"**

**"Yeah, that's about right."**

Don't forget what Paul said in **Romans 9:2**. Paul said, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for the Israelites that keep rejecting Jesus." He's that heartbroken about the situation. And he's hoping that the faith of the Gentiles, their new life in Christ, will be so *fantastic*, it'll be so *compelling*, it'll be so *attractive*, that it will provoke jealousy among the Jews and they will come to Christ!

**Let me just ask you, Christian, is your life in Christ so fantastic, so compelling, and so attractive that it provokes jealousy among Jewish and Gentile unbelievers? It should! People should look at your life and say, "I don't know what that person has, but I want that!" Your life should provoke jealousy in others.**

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**Here's a fifth thing that's happening with Israel.**

5) The church shares in Israel's spiritual **blessings** but does not replace Israel (Rom 11:16–24)

Paul was not a supersessionist. Paul says in **verse 16**.

<sup>16</sup> *If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.*

Paul is talking here about is the Jewish background to our Christian faith. The firstfruits are holy. The lump of dough is holy. The root of the tree is holy. The branches are holy. The whole kit and caboodle of the Jewish Scriptures and God's promises and the Abrahamic Covenant... It's all holy and good and right.

**"Don't knock it, Gentiles. Don't talk down your Jewish roots."** That's what Paul is saying here.

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

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<sup>17</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 688: "Paul apparently thinks that the Jews, as they see the Gentiles enjoying the messianic blessings promised first of all to them, will want those blessings for themselves."

<sup>18</sup> Actually, Jesus told Ananias that, and then Ananias told Paul that later, which is kind of circuitous. But if you know how God works, that's not unusual at all. The important point here is that Paul was called as an apostle to the Gentiles and to the children of Israel.

This is a great picture! Let me walk you through this.

So you have this tree, this olive tree. And it's a good tree. It's got good roots. It's got Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in its roots. It's got the prophets of the OT in its roots. It's got Moses and David and Elijah and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel in its roots. It's got all this Messianic hope and Messianic expectation flowing through it out towards its branches. And it brought forth these great branches in human history.<sup>19</sup>

But unfortunately some of the natural branches of the olive tree were broken off. They were dead, so they were removed. And the tree-pruner—God—did a curious thing. Instead of replacing these branches with like olive branches (Jews), he took these wild olive shoots (Gentiles) and grafted them in.

**He took wild branches. He took Africans. He took Asians. He took Europeans. He took Scandinavians. He took Latinos. He took Irishmen. He took Scotsmen. He took Slavic peoples. He took Italians. He took Germans. He took Native Americans and Eskimos. God took these wild olive shoots and he grafted them in to this rich, nourishing root of a native (Jewish) olive tree.**<sup>20</sup>

So listen up, Gentiles in the room. Every time you read the OT and say **“Ah, that's good.”** That is you being nourished by the olive tree. That's you, wild olive branch that you are, getting fed. Every time you see a prophecy in the OT fulfilled in Christ like **Isaiah 9:6**, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”... **Put that on your Christmas Card and send it out!** Every time you read that and think to yourself, **“Hallelujah, Jesus my savior was prophesied in the OT,”** you are getting nourished by the root.<sup>21</sup> You are a wild olive branch getting fed.

Do we deserve to be grafted onto that olive tree? No! Do we deserve to be connected to that root? Absolutely not. That's why we call it... grace. **You didn't deserve it. But you can certainly enjoy it.**

**By the way, let me switch the analogy for you. Do you remember Jesus's parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1–10)? The King gives a wedding feast for his son, sends out invitations, and nobody comes. He sends out messengers saying, “Come, come, the fattened calves have been slaughtered. It's going to be a great celebration.” But the people refuse to come.**<sup>22</sup>

**And even worse, they kill the messengers. So what does the King do? Well he sends out new messengers to the highways and byways. And the King says, “Just bring whoever you can find. Just bring any lowlife who is willing to come to the wedding.”**<sup>23</sup>

**You know who we are in Jesus's parable? You know who we are, Gentiles of Messiah Bible Church? We are the riff-raff invited to the party. We are the nobodies and the anybodies of that parable. We are the feral cats that God has brought into his home to love us and feed us and make us part of his Kingdom.**

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 698: “The olive tree image makes clear that the Gentiles' very spiritual existence depends on their partaking of the tree whose indispensable nourishing roots are planted in the soil of Jewish patriarchs and promises and to which, therefore, Jews naturally belong.”

<sup>20</sup> Craig S. Keener, *IVPBBCNT* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Ro 11:17–24: “Grafting of trees (adding a shoot of one tree to another tree) is reported in both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. Sometimes shoots from a wild olive tree would be grafted onto a domestic olive tree that was bearing little fruit in an attempt to strengthen or save the life of the tree. The unproductive original branches would be pruned off, and the new graft was considered ‘contrary to nature.’”

<sup>21</sup> Grant R. Osbourne, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Lexham Press, 2017), 351: “The olive tree was well known for the huge amount of sap it produced, so this is an apt picture of the bounty that the Christian has in Christ.”

<sup>22</sup> Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Mt 22:5: “Ignoring the king would be scandalously rude, would probably suggest treasonous feelings and would certainly invite a king's wrath; this parable's original hearers would thus feel incensed at these subjects' unbelievable stupidity.”

<sup>23</sup> The parable is similar to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:6-9. Evidence suggests that in the marriage supper of the Lamb, believers are both the bride and the invited guests. This may be true in Jesus's parable as well. See Grant R. Osbourne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2010), 798.

You might say, **“That hurts my feelings, Pastor Tony. That’s really humbling!”** Well... good! That’s exactly what Paul wants to accomplish in this passage. He wants to provoke humility in us.<sup>24</sup> He wants to provoke jealousy among the Jews, and he wants to provoke humility among the Gentiles.<sup>25</sup>

Here’s how I know that. Paul says in **verse 18**.

<sup>18</sup> *do not be arrogant toward the branches.*

**You know, Martin Luther said some terrible things about the Jews in his day. I love Martin Luther. You guys know I love Martin Luther. But I don’t love him for that. Shame on him for that. Let’s not be guilty of arrogance towards the branches that have been broken off.**<sup>26</sup>

Why? Because...

*If you are [arrogant], remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.*

We are connected to the root. We are supported by the root of the OT saints and the OT Scriptures. How could you be antisemitic when you realize that your roots as a Christian are Jewish and your Messiah is Jewish?<sup>27</sup>

**I heard a pastor say this last week that whenever he travels to Israel, which he does quite a bit, and whenever he encounters a Jewish person, he always says, “I love Jewish people!” He says, “64 out of the 66 books of my Protestant Bible were written by Jewish people. And my Messiah is Jewish. His mother was Jewish. She was a descendant of King David. And his adoptive Father, Joseph, was Jewish too.”**<sup>28</sup> **Don’t ignore your roots, Messiah Bible Church, you wild olive branches you!**

Paul says in **verse 18**, *do not be arrogant toward the branches.* And then to reinforce that point, he says in **verse 19**,

<sup>19</sup> *Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”* <sup>20</sup> *That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.*

Here’s why we don’t get cocky. We didn’t get saved and put on that tree because we are so much better than the rest of the world, or because we are so much more worthy than the rest of the world. Our faith in Christ is the reason we are saved. And the work is his work not ours.<sup>29</sup> **We are humble, because we should be humble. We are not arrogant, because arrogance is delusional, self-deception.**

So, says Paul... *do not become proud, but fear.* The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, says the **Book of Proverbs**.

<sup>21</sup> *For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.* <sup>22</sup> *Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you [Gentiles], provided you continue in his kindness [i.e., perseverance of the*

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<sup>24</sup> Keener, *The IVPBBCNT*, Ro 11:15–24: “Earlier in Romans Paul had opposed Jewish arrogance against Gentiles; here he opposes Gentile arrogance against Jewish people.”

<sup>25</sup> Osbourne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*, 350: “While olive trees were the most highly cultivated fruit in the Mediterranean, wild olive trees did not produce a great deal of fruit. Because of this, farmers would normally take branches for grafting onto cultivated trees. Paul is deliberately turning the image around to make his point that this is God’s grace, and the Gentiles have nothing to boast about. They are wild olive shoots and have done nothing to warrant God’s mercy to them.” See also Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 220: “The normal process of grafting called for cultivated shoots to be joined to the branches of a wild olive tree that had been cut back. The exposed ends were smeared with clay and bound with cloth or date straw. That Paul reversed the process in order to illustrate the engrafting of the Gentiles (the “wild olive shoot”) into historic Israel (“the olive root”) is simply the literary freedom allowed to any writer. It does not betray some critical lack of horticultural knowledge. In fact, he later noted that grafting of the wild shoots into the cultivated tree was contrary to nature (11:24).”

<sup>26</sup> Jerome’s testimony is helpful here: “Whenever I see a synagogue, the thought of the apostle always comes to me—that we should not boast against the olive tree whose branches have been broken off but rather fear. For if the natural branches have been cut off, how much more we who have been grafted on the wild olive should fear, lest we become like them.” Quoted from Gerald Bray, ed., *Romans (Revised)*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 283–284.

<sup>27</sup> Keller, *Romans 8-16 For You*, 94: “It is most inappropriate for the Gentiles to be disrespectful of the Jews. We have a Jewish Bible and a Jewish Messiah.”

<sup>28</sup> See Tommy Nelson’s sermon “All Israel Shall Be Saved,” Romans 11:11-27:

[https://www.dbcmmedia.org/sermons/all-israel-shall-be-saved/?shopp\\_orderby=newest](https://www.dbcmmedia.org/sermons/all-israel-shall-be-saved/?shopp_orderby=newest)

<sup>29</sup> Mounce, *Romans*, 221: “How subtle yet powerful is the human tendency to presume that ‘accomplishments’ in the realm of the Spirit are due to one’s own persistence and acumen!”

**saints].** Otherwise you too will be cut off.<sup>23</sup> And even they [the Israelites], if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

In other words, some of those pruned branches that were removed, could very easily be put back on again. Think about those priests that got saved in **Acts 6**. It's entirely possible that the priests who got saved in **Acts 6** were responsible earlier for persecuting the apostles and even crucifying Jesus. They got hewn off because of their unbelief. But now, they have embraced Christ by faith and they are grafted back on the tree. Hallelujah!

God has the power to graft them in again.

I'm not so sure that Paul wouldn't put himself in that category. He was hewn off. But then after the Road to Damascus, he was grafted back on.

<sup>24</sup> For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

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### And here's a sixth thing that's happening with Israel.

6) God will one day bring about a future large-scale **restoration** of Israel (Rom 11:25-27)

Most of what I've recounted to you thus far involves Jews in the church age. But Paul's going to look beyond that here. Paul says in **verse 25**,

<sup>25</sup> Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening

Remember God still has his remnant. Paul's part of that!

a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

There is a mystery concerning God's plan of salvation for the Jews. There is something yet to come for the Jewish people in salvation history.

<sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";<sup>27</sup> "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

So Paul says here that there will be a coming deliverance of Israel, prophesied in the OT, that still hasn't happened yet. Paul quotes here from the prophet **Isaiah (59:20-21)**. And this is the same **Isaiah** who said that Gentiles will come into the kingdom of God. This is the same **Isaiah** who prophesied that Gentiles will get saved and enjoy the promises of Abraham. Those mysteries have been revealed and experienced by Gentiles.

But there's a mystery that still remains. Because that same Isaiah said that Israel will experience a mass conversion at some future date.<sup>30</sup> They will return to their God.<sup>31</sup> They will be saved. Deliverance will come to them from Zion, that is "Jerusalem." This will happen at some time in the future!

Now when will this happen? Well, I believe that this will take place in what's called the tribulation. What Paul says here lines up with what we've said over the last seven lessons. After the church is removed from the world, God will direct his attention once again to Israel.<sup>32</sup> And there will be great oppression of the

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<sup>30</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 552-3: "'All Israel shall be saved' does not mean that every Jew who has ever lived will be converted, but that the Jews living when the Redeemer returns will see Him, receive Him, and be saved. Zechariah 12-13 give the details. It seems to me that there are too many details in these Old Testament prophecies of national restoration for Israel for us to spiritualize them and apply them to the church today." See also F. F. Bruce, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 218: "'All Israel' is a recurring expression in Jewish literature, where it need not mean 'every Jew without a single exception', but 'Israel as a whole'. Thus 'all Israel has a portion in the age to come', says the Mishnah tractate *Sanhedrin* (10.1), and proceeds immediately to name certain Israelites who have no portion therein." MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, 128 sees "all Israel" as "the entire nation that survives God's judgment during the Great Tribulation."

<sup>31</sup> See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 727-9 for more on Paul's use of this quotation from Isaiah 59:20-21: "With this quotation, then, Paul not only suggests *when* Israel's deliverance will take place; he also makes clear *how* it will take place: by Israel's acceptance of the gospel message about the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ."

<sup>32</sup> My view is consistent here with what is referred to as a premillennial dispensational view of eschatology. This view necessitates a differentiation between the church and Israel. But many non-dispensationalist hold to a large-scale conversion of Jews based on their exegesis of Romans 11. See Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 861: "Both Protestant and Catholic theologians outside of the dispensational position have said that the church includes both Old Testament believers and New Testament believers in one church or one body of Christ. Even on the nondispensational view, a person may hold that there will be a future large-scale conversion of the Jewish people (Rom. 11:12, 15,

Jewish people by a one-world government ruled by the antichrist. The Lord will raise up an army of Jewish believers—the 144,000 from the **Book of Revelation (7:1–8; 14:1–5)**. And at the end of this intensive seven-year period of tribulation and a large-scale conversion of Jews, Christ will return to the earth and set up his 1,000-year reign from Mount Zion (see **Rev 19:11-20:6**), which we call the millennial kingdom.

And when those Jews get saved in the tribulation period, they won't be saved apart from faith in Christ.<sup>33</sup> When Paul envisions the future “full inclusion” of the Jews, he means that they will put their faith in Christ.<sup>34</sup> There's no salvation apart from Christ for Gentiles or Jews. Paul writes here about a future mass conversion of Jews to their Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Again you might say, **“When's that going to happen, Pastor Tony? Can you give me more specifics about this? When's the rapture going to happen? When does the Tribulation begin? When's all this going to take place?”** Here's my answer to that, and I know you probably hate it when I say this. I don't know. Jesus said, “no one knows the hour or the day” (**Matt 24:36**). But Paul tells us here that it's coming. A large-scale conversion of Israelites will take place at some point in the future. **Verse 26** is a future tense verb in Greek.

<sup>26</sup> *And in this way all Israel **will be** saved,*

It's future tense from Isaiah's perspective (700 years before Christ). It's future tense from Paul's perspective (2,000 years ago). It's still future tense from our perspective today. We still haven't seen a mass conversion of ethnic Jews. It's still to come.

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### **Here's a seventh thing that's happening with Israel.**

7) God remains faithful to His **covenant** promises toward Israel (Rom 11:28–32)

Paul says in **verse 28**,

<sup>28</sup> *As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake.*

This is Paul talking to us Gentiles about the Jews. They may be “enemies” as regards the gospel. The Jews were Paul's enemies in his day. They tried to kill Paul just about everywhere he went in the **Book of Acts**. There was even a group of forty Jews who swore by oath that they wouldn't eat or drink till Paul was dead (**Acts 23:12–13**).

Yeah, they were enemies of Paul as regards the gospel! And the same may be true in our day where the predominant number of Jews reject the Christian gospel.

But Paul says,

*But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.*

Meaning God has a future plan for Israel that is anchored to God's promise to the Jewish forefathers.<sup>35</sup>

**So don't despise the Jewish people as enemies, Gentiles. Instead realize that they are future recipients of God's mercy as a result of his promise.**

<sup>29</sup> *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* <sup>30</sup> *For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,* <sup>31</sup> *so they [the Jews] too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.* <sup>32</sup> *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.*

What Paul is saying here is that what God has done in your life, showing you your disobedience and your need for mercy, God is going to do that on a cosmic scale at some time in the future with a massive

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23–24, 25–26, 28–31), yet that this conversion will only result in Jewish believers becoming part of the one true church of God—they will be grafted back into their own olive tree (Rom. 11:24).”

<sup>33</sup> Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 224: “Israel's salvation would be on the same basis as anyone else's, that is, by responding in faith to the forgiveness made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Moo, *Romans*, NICNT, 724: “[Paul's] point seems to be that the present situation in salvation history, in which so few Jews are being saved, cannot finally do full justice to the scriptural expectations about Israel's future. Something ‘more’ is to be expected; and this ‘more,’ Paul implies, is a large-scale conversion of Jewish people at the end of this age.”

<sup>34</sup> Cyril of Alexandria is correct: “Paul shows that both Jews and Gentiles were guilty of the same thing and that they were likewise cleansed by one and the same grace.” Quoted in Gerald Bray, ed., *Romans (Revised)*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 289.

<sup>35</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, TNTC, 219: “Paul means that the promises which God made to the patriarchs when he called them are secured to their descendants, not on the ground of merit, but on the ground of God's fidelity to his word of grace, as verse 29 emphasizes.”

number of ethnic Jews. They are going to be shown their disobedience and rebellion. They are going to repent of it. And they are going to receive God's mercy. And it's going to be glorious.

And that's the way God works. God consigns to disobedience so that he may show mercy. Look again at **verse 32.**

<sup>32</sup> *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.*

You might say, **“That’s confusing, Pastor Tony. Why would God do it that way? If I were God I wouldn’t do it that way. I’d just show everyone mercy.”** Well if you just showed everyone mercy without exposing their disobedience, no one would be aware of their need for mercy.

You might say, **“Why does God show Jews in the future their disobedience and bring them to his mercy, but not the Jews in Paul’s day? Why not the Jews in Israel right now? Why not the Jewish family that lives on my block in San Antonio, right now?”**

That’s an excellent question. And to be honest, I don’t know why God does what he does. **But I pray for God to show his mercy to them, and quite honestly to everyone who I come into contact with—Jews and Gentiles both. I preach the gospel and I leave the results to the Lord. Who can know the mind of God and who has been his counselor?**

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It’s another reason, and I’ll close with this, why we need to humble ourselves before a mighty all-knowing God. It’s another reason for us to “not get cocky.”

I do find it fascinating that after all this... after all this deliberation over who Israel is and what is Israel’s ultimate destiny in **Romans 11**, Paul just close with doxology in **Romans 11:33–36**. Maybe those verses also function as a close to **Romans 9–11** and all that other talk about Israel and the church. Or maybe this a close to **Romans 1-11**, which if you’ve ever read before in one sitting, just about makes your head explode with all the ideas and tightly argued theological reasoning.

And what’s there left to do? What’s there left for us to do after eight week of studying eschatology? And what’s there left for us to do after trying to make sense of how God differentiates the church from Israel? There’s really nothing left to do but praise.

**So let’s do that. Let’s stand together and I’ll read this over you. Romans 11:33–36:**

<sup>33</sup> *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

<sup>34</sup> *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* <sup>35</sup> *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”* <sup>36</sup> *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

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