

“And So All Israel Will Be Saved”—Romans 11:26

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Introduction

The unspeakable horrors inflicted on the Jewish people during the holocaust of WWII, along with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the subsequent wars with neighboring Arab states, and the pledge of the American government to support Israel has fueled tremendous interest in the Christian Church concerning God’s plan for Israel. After the coming of Jesus Christ and His creation of the Christian Church, is there still a distinct role for the nation of Israel in the history of salvation? If so, what is the nature of that **role**, and does that role lend support for a future earthly Millennial Kingdom? Before we begin our observation of this text, we should note that there is nothing in this text or the near context of verses 11-32 that speaks of a Millennium in any of the forms in which the Christian Church has historically spoken of a Millennium. There is no mentioning of the binding of Satan or the reign of Christ on the earth, no Temple, no earthly peace or bliss, not even the Christianization of the nations. In short, one’s understanding of Revelation 20 is not contingent upon how Romans 11:26 is understood. For example, in your handout you will note that option #3 is quite extensive in terms of those who support that particular interpretation. You will also notice that the support is drawn from numerous respected advocates of all the major millennial views. So however one interprets Romans 11:26, that interpretation does not necessarily lock a person into a specific millennial view. That is important to know, for although Christians may differ in their theology of the millennium, it is clearly possible for those who hold differing millennial views to hold a common view respecting the salvation of all Israel.

A second point I would like to make before looking at our text is the sentiment expressed in Leon Morris’s commentary on Romans—a sentiment with which I agree. Morris comments that a person may hold his/her view on the salvation of all Israel with conviction and passion. Yet, Morris says, “...it cannot be said that [any interpretation] has been able to bring forward an argument so decisive that it makes the position of the other[s] untenable.”¹ I believe Morris is correct. Each one of these options presented in the handout is plausible; each position has its strengths and each one has its problems. The question is which interpretation makes the best sense out of the text, harmonizes with the whole of the Bible, and has the least amount of problems. Of course that is all very subjective—what makes the best sense of the text to me may not make sense at all to you. So what I’m saying is that there is room for disagreement amongst brethren on this issue.

Background and Purpose of Romans

What N. T. Wright says of Romans 9—11 in general can be said of Romans 11:26 in particular, it “is as full of problems as a hedgehog is of prickles.”² I think some of these “prickles” can be reduced if we first try and set this verse in the broader context of the purpose of the book. From what Paul says of Phoebe in 16:1, it appears that he is writing

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 418-19.

² N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 231.

Romans from Corinth, near the end of his third missionary journey—around the year A.D. 57.³ His immediate plans are to travel to Jerusalem to deliver a monetary gift from the Gentile churches of Greece and Asia Minor to the impoverished mother church of Jerusalem (15:25). From the Corinthian letters we learn that this contribution was of vital importance to Paul (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8—9) for at least two reasons: (1) it was a tangible demonstration of the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles in the Gospel; and (2) the gift for Paul probably signified the fulfillment of the OT prophecies concerning the Gentiles bringing their wealth to Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-3; 45:14; 60:5). As Thomas Schreiner notes, by the Gentiles giving of their substance to the Jerusalem Church and the Jerusalem Church's acceptance of the gift, it would thereby signal Gentile inclusion into the people of God.⁴ Immediately following the delivery of the gift, Paul plans to travel to Rome on his way to Spain (15:28). Although Paul did not plant the church at Rome, he knew many of its members personally (16:3-16). He was well aware of the tension between Jews/Gentiles at large in the city of Rome, a tension which was also present in the church. In Acts 18:2 (around the year A.D. 49) we read of the Emperor Claudius expelling all the Jews from Rome. The Roman historian Suetonius writing in about A.D. 120 tells us that Claudius banished the Jews from the city on account of their rioting over one name *Christo*. We can infer from Suetonius that this conflict between Jews and Gentiles over the person and work of Christ was a source of constant turmoil in metropolitan Rome.⁵ The deportation of the Jews no doubt had a great effect on the Roman Church reducing it to an exclusively Gentile believing community. However, with the death of Claudius in A.D. 54 and the ascension of Nero to the throne, the Jewish ban was lifted and many Jewish Christians returned to the city and their church. By the time Paul pens Romans, a small number of the Jewish believers such as Prisca and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, and Herodion (16:3, 7, 11) had returned to the church, but the church was basically Gentile in its ethnic make-up.

So why did Paul write Romans? The Epistle indicates a three-fold reason. First, Paul's own personal situation with the completion of the ministry in the eastern part of the Roman Empire served as the occasion for him to seek a new base of support in order to promote the Gospel in the West, namely Spain (15:24). Thus, Paul introduces himself to the church at Rome as an Apostle of Jesus Christ in order to enlist their support for the mission to Spain (1:1, 5, 8-15).⁶ Second, the racial problems between Jews and Gentiles which had spilled over from the city into the church in the days of Claudius continued to trouble the Roman Christians (Rom 14—15:13). So, on the micro level, Paul writes to resolve the conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers in the church at Rome. However, as Douglas Moo reminds us, “the divisions in the Roman church mirrored the tensions of the church at large in Paul's day.”⁷ Little wonder then that the Law of Moses and the role of Israel in the history of salvation loom large in Romans. On the macro level, Paul writes to resolve the conflict between the Jews and Gentiles at large by demonstrating that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of OT Scriptures

³ Douglas Moo, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 3.

⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 776.

⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

⁶ Moo, 16.

⁷ *Ibid*, 20.

respecting the Law of Moses and the role of Israel and the Gentiles in salvation history. As Schreiner indicates, the third and primary purpose for the writing of Romans was to unify the entire Christian Church so that the worship of God and His mission in the world might go forward.⁸

Theme and Structure of Romans

After his opening greeting to the church, whereby he introduces himself as “a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,” Paul spells out the content of the gospel, saying it was “promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (1:1-4 ESV). In light of the purpose of the book, it is noteworthy that Paul says the gospel was promised in the OT. The gospel is not something completely new and unrelated to what had gone on before. Rather the gospel has grown out of the soil of the OT as the fulfillment of that which the OT promised (cf. 3:21).⁹ Paul moves quickly to the theme of his epistle in 1:16-17. A summation of Paul’s thesis in these two verses might go like this: The gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God¹⁰ appropriated by faith alone. Paul’s quotation of Habakkuk 2:4, proof that God’s saving righteousness is appropriated by faith, serves as the structural outline of the epistle. There are some textual differences between Paul’s wording of Hab.

⁸ Schreiner, 21-22.

⁹ John Murray, *Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 1:4. Schreiner’s comments on these opening verses are important. He writes: “Paul never conceived of his gospel as antithetical to or contradictory of the OT. He understood it to fulfill the OT in a way that surpassed the expectations of both Jews and Gentiles (see esp. Rom. 9—11).” Schreiner, 38.

¹⁰ The critical words in 1:17 is the phrase “the righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). The noun “righteousness” and its genitive construct “of God” are both intensely controversial and crucial to the message of the Gospel. In general there are three basic views. One, “righteousness of God” is a possessive genitive expressing an attribute of God. This is the traditional Roman Catholic interpretation which understands the righteous nature of God as being infused into the soul of the believer for justification. For support see J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 262. Second, “righteousness of God” is a genitive of source—a status from God. This is the traditional Protestant interpretation which understands righteousness as the status which God gives as a gift to the believer in justification. For support see C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977) 1:95-99. Third, “righteousness of God” is a subjective genitive descriptive of God’s saving power—righteousness shown by God. This is more of a redemptive-historical interpretation which understands the righteousness of God as a technical term in the OT expressing God’s saving intervention in behalf of His people. For support see Ernst Kaseman, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 21-32. Both Moo and Schreiner opt for a composite interpretation that combines both the genitive of source and subjective genitive view. Moo asks, “Could we not take ‘righteousness of God’ here to include both God’s saving activity of ‘making right’—saving, vindicating—and the status of those are so made right in a relational sense...?” Moo, 74. Schreiner concurs, “I would suggest that it is a mistake to opt for an either-or here, and thus I conclude that the term ‘righteousness of God’ is both forensic and transformative.” Schreiner goes on to say that it is the context in which the term is found which determines exactly which aspect (forensic or transformative) is predominate. He concludes his discussion by saying, “The term ‘righteousness of God’ in Rom 1:17, however, is clearly fundamental for all of Romans, and it is unlikely that it can be confined solely to forensic or transformative categories. Those whom God vindicates he also changes.” Schreiner, 66-67.

2:4 as found in both the Hebrew and LXX of the said verse.¹¹ However, the main problem is the meaning that Paul draws from the text. In the OT, the prophet is instructing a righteous man on how he may be preserved through the upcoming Babylonian invasion. The righteous (i.e. the Jewish nation) will be preserved alive through their steadfast faithfulness to God. But Paul appears to use the quote to describe how the individual might attain righteousness with God and so live eternally.¹² Following the literal word order in the Greek text “The one righteous by faith shall live” the structure of the Epistle unfolds.¹³ 1:18—4:25 expounds how it is that one can be righteous by faith. 5:1—8:39 expounds how the one righteous by faith is to live.

The Theodicy of 9—11

For the average Christian who reads Romans, chapters 9 through 11 seem to be a long digression that Paul has included in order to clarify the doctrine of predestination. In the last half of chapter 8, Paul has pointed his readers forward to the consummation of their salvation in the resurrection of the body (8:18-25). Moreover, he gave them strong assurances that they will surely attain unto that final salvation, for the Holy Spirit helps in all the weakness of this life (8:26-27), God’s eternal purpose—which can never fail—is a guarantee of future glory (8:28-29), and the love of God is the unbreakable bond that succeeds in delivering them into eternal glory (8:31-39). What more needs to be said other than to press home to his readers the responsibility to live in this world as the heirs of the glories to come?¹⁴ But to read Romans 9 through 11 as if it were a parenthetical by-path on the way to the Christian responsibility of presenting one’s body to God as a living sacrifice (12:1) is a serious misread of the Epistle! These three chapters are an integral part of the book and have been called the climax of Paul’s argument by Schreiner.¹⁵ Paul declared that the Gospel of God’s saving righteousness is for “the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:16). He argued that the gospel was absolutely essential because both the Gentiles (1:18-32) and the Jews (2:1-29) were under the power of sin (3:9). Since the Jews, like the Gentiles, were sinners who violate the Law, then neither their possession of the Law (2:12-24) nor submission to the rite of circumcision (2:25-29) will be able to shield them from the wrath of God (2:5).¹⁶ Moreover, Paul argued that the

¹¹ The Hebrew text of Hab 2:4 reads: וְצַדִּיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה (But the righteous one by his faith will live); The LXX reads ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται (But the one righteous by my faith will live); Paul’s translation reads ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται (But the one righteous by faith will live).

¹² If the prepositional phrase ἐκ πίστεως “by faith” modifies the verb ζήσεται “will live,” as in the translations of the KJV, NIV, NASB, and ESV, then the meaning of the quote reflects that which is found in the OT text. A righteous person will be preserved through the perils of life by steadfast faithfulness to God. However, if the prepositional phrase “by faith” modifies the noun and the subject of the clause ὁ δίκαιος “the righteous one,” as in the marginal reading of NASB, then the meaning reflects the content of Romans, namely how one may attain righteousness before God and live eternally. Schreiner and Murray think the traditional translation is probably right. Schreiner, 74; Murray, 1:33. However, Cranfield, 111-12; Moo, 76-78; Morris, 71-72; Kaseman, 32; Robert Mounce, *Romans* (Nashville: B & H, 1995), 74; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 80-81 all agree with variant translation as expressed in the margin of the NASB. This is the best understanding, in the opinion of this writer.

¹³ Cranfield, 102.

¹⁴ Bruce, 182.

¹⁵ Schreiner, 469.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

gospel of the saving righteousness of God has been made available to all—both Jew and Gentile—being obtained through faith alone in the atoning work of Jesus Christ (3:21-26). Works of the Law play no part at all in the justification for either the Jews or the Gentiles (3:27-31). The great Scriptural proof of justification by faith alone is Abraham, the father of the Jews, who was reckoned righteous by faith even before he received the sign of circumcision (4:1-12). Furthermore, the promise made to Abraham and his descendants that he would be the heir of the world is realized not through works of the Law, but by faith. And the Gentiles who share in the same faith of father Abraham are counted as seed—all who believe in Him who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead (4:13-25). God is fulfilling His promise of salvation for the whole world by including Gentiles into His family. Thus, the promises of God made to Israel in the OT now belong to believers in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. Christians are now the heirs of Abraham; they are God’s adopted children (8:14-17), the possessors of the Holy Spirit (8:1-11), and destined to participate with God in His own eternal glory (8:18-30).¹⁷ Now if it is true, as Paul has argued that both the Jews and the Gentiles are equally lost in sin and under the wrath of God, and if both have equal access to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and if the salvation promised Israel in the OT is now the possession of the Church so that the Church can be considered the seed of Abraham, then what are we to make of all the OT promises to Israel? Has the promises of OT Israel simply been transferred to the NT Church? Has the unbelief of the vast majority of the Jewish people in rejecting their Messiah negated the promises of God, so that Israel has been disinherited?¹⁸ This is a major problem. How can it be that Israel’s Messiah can bring salvation to the world without the nation—the very chosen people of God (Deut 7:7)—being saved? Is it possible that the very Word of God itself has failed? Can man through his sin thwart God? Such are the questions raised by the Gospel at this point in the book of Romans. As Schreiner points out, the unbelief of the Jews in light of the OT promises of God (as critical as that is) signals really a deeper problem—a problem respecting the character of God! Is the God who made these saving promises to Israel faithful to His Word?¹⁹ So Romans 9—11 is not a minor digression in the argument of the book. It is a theodicy—the defense of God Himself, the faithfulness of His own character to His Word. So these three chapters are a vindication of God’s own way of saving sinners. A quick outline of the three chapters could go something like this: Israel’s *fall* in relation to God’s promises (9:1-29); Israel’s *fault* in rejecting God’s promises (9:30—10:21); Israel’s *future* according to the promises of God (11:1-32).

Israel’s Fall in Relation to God’s Promises

After expressing his heart-felt lament over Israel’s stubborn rejection of Christ²⁰ in spite of all their glorious privileges (9:1-5), Paul vigorously asserts: But it is not as though the Word of God has failed (9:6). The Word of God contextually at this point refers to the

¹⁷ Moo, 549.

¹⁸ Keith A. Mathison, *From Age to Age: The Unfolding of Biblical Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 566.

¹⁹ Schreiner, 471.

²⁰ The lament echoes that of Moses following Israel’s debacle of the golden calf at Mount Sinai (Ex 32:32).

privileges mentioned in verses 4 and 5 with particular emphasis falling on the promises.²¹ It is impossible for God's will to be thwarted, and so the apostle moves to explain how it is that the promises of God to Israel have not failed, even though the vast majority has rejected Christ. His explanation is: "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (9:6). In short, what Paul is saying is that not all who belong to Israel through natural physical procreation belong to Israel spiritually. This can be illustrated with a large circle signifying all the ethnic descendants of Israel, and within that large circle, there is a smaller circle signifying all the spiritual/believing Jews. Paul's point is that a lack of Jewish believers does not mean that the Word of God has failed, because God never promised to save all ethnic Jews. Israel's corporate election as a national people of God never guaranteed salvation to all the people. God never based salvation on ethnic descent but upon grace. There has always been a smaller individual election of grace within the larger corporate election of the nation. And just as the Jews had erred in assuming that the possession of the Law and the sign of being a member of the covenant, circumcision, shielded them from the wrath of God; so also, they have erred in assuming that God's corporate election of the nation was a guarantee of salvation. Even though Paul does not use the terms "physical Israel"²² and "spiritual Israel," he is clearly making a division within the term "Israel," so that some Jews are mere ethnic descendants of Abraham while others are both ethnic descendants as well as believers. This double reference to Israel has led some, like N.T. Wright, to conclude that the Church (which consists of both believing Jews and Gentiles) is to be understood in the second usage of the word Israel.²³ This view is almost certainly incorrect because (1) the context is referencing ethnic Israel—Paul's brethren according to the flesh, v. 3-5; (2) the subsequent verses 7-13 provide examples of God's sovereign election within ethnic Israel; and (3) verses 27-29, which are closely related to 6-13, reference an elect group—a remnant—within ethnic Israel.²⁴ Paul supports this distinction within ethnic Israel, proving that God never promised to save all ethnic Jews, by citing Gen. 21:12 in verse 7 and Gen. 18:10 in verse 9. The point is Abraham's own family proves an individual election within a larger corporate election. Abraham had many sons Ishmael, Isaac, and those born from his second wife Keturah, but only Isaac, not the others, was the chosen son of the promise. In the second generation, Isaac has two sons—Esau and Jacob. Twin boys who before they were even born and before they had done either good or evil, Gen. 25:3 said, "The older will serve the younger," and in Mal. 1:2 God said, "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated." Why? In order that it might be known that salvation is a matter of God's unconditional grace, not of anything in the human being—either biological descent or good deeds. This of course provokes a protest of injustice from the human heart.

²¹ Moo, 537.

²² He does use the term Israel according to the flesh (Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα) in 1 Corinthians 10:18, which may imply that Paul thinks there is also an Israel according to the Spirit. See David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 478-79.

²³ Wright says: "What counts, exactly as in Romans 3:21—4:25 or Galatians 3—4, is grace, not race. And the cross-reference to Romans 4 in particular shows how unwise it is to imagine that the true 'seed' of Abraham in 9:7 is simply a subset of ethnic Israel. In 4:16 it is already clearly a worldwide family." Wright, 238.

²⁴ Moo, 574; Schreiner, 494.

Paul answers the objection of injustice with quotes from Ex. 33:19 and the incident of the golden calf in verse 15, and a quote from Ex. 9:16 with God's declaration to Pharaoh in verse 17; he concludes the matter with an illustration of the Potter and the clay in verses 19-23. In summary, Paul's point is that election is a matter of Divine prerogative. God is God after all. He is free to choose whom He will and He is free to reject whom He will—and no mere mortal has the right to question what He does. The Creator is not answerable to the creature! Why God chooses to save one and not another is ultimately known only unto Himself. He has not revealed to us His mind on this matter, but we know God is just, and His decisions are not arbitrary, rather they are grounded in the wisdom of His goodness. Even for the non-elect vessels of wrath, He manifests His patience and goodness to them (9:22-23). His longsuffering and mercy is extended not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles (9:24).

Now for the first time in this chapter, Paul brings the Gentiles into the picture. The Gentiles become an illustration of God's longsuffering and mercy to those who normally would be considered as vessels of wrath. Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to show that the OT Scriptures predicted that the vessels of mercy would be drawn (i.e. called) not only from the Jews, as would be expected, but also from the Gentiles, which is something of a surprise.²⁵ What is even more surprising is Paul's use of Isa. 10:22 in verse 27 and Isa. 1:9 in verse 29 to show that the OT predicted that the majority of the vessels of mercy would be drawn from the Gentiles, while only a small minority—a remnant—would be drawn from Israel, the ethnic descendants of Abraham.²⁶ In a remarkable way, through these OT quotes, Paul has just proved the main point he set forth in verse 6: God's Word has not failed. The pitifully few number of Jews who have responded to the Gospel coupled with massive response of the Gentiles who believe and are now counted as the people of God is exactly what the Word of God foretold!²⁷

Before leaving this section, it ought to be noted that Paul is applying the quotes from Hosea in a way that was not anticipated by the context of the OT itself. In the OT, the prophet is speaking of the ten tribes that made up the northern kingdom of Israel, a nation whom God disowned, calling them “not my people” on account of their idolatry. And yet, the prophet also predicted that the time would come when God would restore that nation saying to them “My people,” even calling them the “sons of the living God.” Now, Paul applies this text not only to the Jews whom God calls unto faith but also those whom He calls from among the Gentiles. However, S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. takes issue with George E. Ladd for saying the OT promises made to ethnic Israel apply to the NT church. Johnson prefers to say that Paul is using the OT analogously, rather than reinterpreting the text in light of the coming of Christ. He says God's calling of the Gentiles operates on the same principle as His gracious promise to restore the ten northern tribes of Israel in the future.²⁸ This, however, is unlikely as Ladd's article

²⁵ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “Evidence from Romans 9-11” in *A Case For Premillennialism*, ed. by Donald K. Cambell & Jeffery L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 205.

²⁶ Schreiner, 526.

²⁷ Moo, 610.

²⁸ Johnson, 209.

explained²⁹ for the following reasons: (1) the context is referring to God’s creation of vessels for honor and dishonor from the same lump of clay—surely it is God’s sovereign right to count the Gentiles as His people; (2) more than an analogy is required to establish the Gentiles as God’s people—verse 25 is a direct application of the Hosea text to the Gentiles; and (3) the first person plural personal pronoun “us” (ἡμεῖς) in verse 24 clearly refers to the Roman church.³⁰

Israel’s Fault for Rejecting God’s Promises

Moving from God’s work as the potter in sovereign election and calling, Paul elaborates on this surprising turn in redemptive history, namely that Israel has failed to obtain the saving righteousness of God whereas the Gentiles have obtained it (9:30-31). “According to Paul, the current situation is to be explained by one crucial aspect of the gospel—the necessity of faith (9:30-33; see also 3:27—4:25).”³¹ The paradox is that the Gentiles who never had the Law to guide them in God’s will obtained righteousness, while Israel possessing God’s Law used it wrongly and failed to achieve their goal. Why? Paul says, because Israel sought to obtain righteousness by personal performance in Law keeping rather than trusting in Christ who is God’s gift of righteousness—the very end of the Law for righteousness (9:30—10:4).³² Paul unpacks the meaning of righteousness based on the Law contrasted with the righteousness based on faith. The righteousness based on the Law depends upon doing all the commandments (i.e. something which is impossible for sinful human beings 10:5), whereas the righteousness based on faith depends upon belief (10:10). Moreover, the righteousness based on faith is available to both Jew and Gentile (implying that the righteousness based on the Law was available only to the Jews since the Law was given to them), because God is Lord of both and is rich in mercy, bestowing His blessings of salvation on everyone who calls upon Him (10:11-12). This leads to the

²⁹ George E. Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. by Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 20-25.

³⁰ Moo concludes “that this text reflects a hermeneutical supposition for which we find evidence elsewhere in Paul and in the NT: that OT predictions of a renewed Israel find their fulfillment in the church.” Moo, 613. Schreiner agrees that Hosea’s prophecy is fulfilled in the calling of the Gentiles. “The church,” he says, “is the renewed Israel and the arena in which God’s promises find their fulfillment. Paul wants to show his Jewish contemporaries that the calling of the Gentiles was not without precedent; it fits the surprising way God has always acted. Indeed, Paul likely anticipates the mystery shared in Rom. 11:26.” However, Schreiner goes on to say that the application of Hosea’s prophecy to the Gentiles, proving that the Church is the eschatological people of God, does not mean that we should conclude “that there is no future salvation for Israel” for such is the point of chapters 9 through 11. Schreiner, 527-28. For further support of Ladd’s original insight see Mark Seifrid, “Romans” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 648.

³¹ Mathison, 568.

³² Commentators are divided over the meaning of “end” (τέλος). Is the sense that of goal, meaning Israel should have perceived that Christ was the goal to which the Law was point? Or is the sense that of termination? Hence, the Mosaic Law is no longer in force with the coming of Christ. Or is the sense a combination of both? Schreiner concludes that both nuances are theologically correct, but that Paul is probably not making a universal statement on the relationship between the Law and the Gospel at this juncture. Instead his point is experiential. “For everyone who believes” (10:4b) in Christ for righteousness, ceases (i. e. terminates) trying to use the Law to establish their own personal righteousness. This fits the context which references Israel’s wrong use of the Law to establish their own righteousness and is better than viewing the text as making a theological assertion about the relationship between the Law and the Gospel. Schreiner, 544-548.

necessity of Gospel proclamation in order for people to call upon the Lord. Apart from hearing the Gospel no one will believe, for people can not believe in someone of whom they have never heard (10:13-15). Yet Israel's unbelief can not be attributed to the lack of an opportunity to hear the Gospel. Quoting Isaiah 53:1 Paul implies that they heard but rejected the Gospel (10:16). He goes on to explicitly affirm from Psalm 19:4 that Israel did hear the Gospel (10:18), and from Deuteronomy 32:21 he asserts that they understood it (10:19). Nevertheless, citing Isaiah 65:2, he says that Israel has remained a recalcitrant people (10:21); whereas from Isaiah 65:1, he proves that the Gentiles have been included in the people of God (10:20)—just as OT Word of God predicted. Surely, the Word of God has not failed (9:6)!

Israel's Future according to the Promises of God

Israel's stubborn rejection of the Gospel leads to the question "has God rejected his people?" and the answer is Paul's emphatic "By no means!"³³ This is the basic theme of chapter 11. Paul gives two proofs that God has not rejected His people: first, himself (11:2), and second, the elect remnant (11:5-7). In this section, he makes a distinction between Israel as the theocratic people of God (11:1) and Israel as the "people whom he (i.e. God) foreknew" (11:2).³⁴ Paul's point is that in spite of the unbelief of Israel as a nation, God has never totally rejected His people. There has always been a believing remnant. He himself is proof of that truth (11:1), so also are those who would not bow the knee to Baal in the days of Elijah (11:4), and even to the present time (11:5). God has always had a saved remnant according to the election of grace, even though the majority of the nation was hardened (11:7). A representative text from each section of the OT is cited as proof: Deut. 29:4 from the Torah and Isa. 29:10 from the Prophets in verse 8, and Ps. 69:22 from the Writings in verses 9-10. Again, God's Word has not failed!

Despite the presence of an elect remnant among the nation, the outlook for the Jewish people appears very grim. This provokes Paul to ask if this unbelief on a nation scale will continue in perpetuity. "So I ask, did they stumble in order³⁵ that they might fall?" (11:11). Again, Paul vigorously denies that Israel's national apostasy was for the purpose that the nation might be irretrievably hardened. Rather, God's plan was that through Israel's apostasy salvation might go to the Gentiles, with the intent of stimulating Israel to jealousy, and inciting them to follow the example of the Gentiles by calling upon the name of the Lord for salvation.³⁶ The stirring of Israel to jealousy by the salvation of the

³³ μή γένοιτο

³⁴ Murray argues that the term "his people" in verse 1 is identical to "his people whom he foreknew" in verse 2. But since Paul will go on to say that only a remnant of the people is saved, Murray is forced to understand foreknowledge in the generic terms of Amos 3:2. See Murray, 68. This is unlikely in light of the salvific content Paul gives to foreknowledge in 8:29. Schreiner's understanding is more probable. Paul's thinking has returned to 9:6 and his dual understanding of the term Israel. The term "his people" bears that same distinction in 11:1-2. In verse 1, Paul understands the term "his people" in light of God's theocratic election of the nation. But in verse 2, he understands the term "people whom he foreknew" in the soteriological sense of individual electing grace. In both instances (9:6 and 11:1), only ethnic Jews are in view—those who constitute the nation as a whole and those who believe in Christ. See Schreiner, 578.

³⁵ In light of the preceding context which spoke of the sovereignty of God in election, it's probably best to take ἵνα in the sense of purpose, as is reflected in the ESV translation.

³⁶ Mounce, 218.

Gentiles clearly implies the promise of restoration.³⁷ Paul unpacks this implication with two *a-fortiori* arguments from the lesser to the greater. “Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and their failure means the riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!” (11:12). The lesser benefit accruing to the world from Israel’s fall is Gentile salvation; the greater benefit will be from Israel’s full inclusion. What does Paul mean by “their full inclusion”? The Greek term is πλήρωμα which in this context seems to have quantitative meaning. Thus fullness would mean the total number of Jews destined for salvation.³⁸ After explaining his role in the promulgation of the Gospel to the Gentiles in verse 15, Paul picks back up with the second *a-fortiori* argument clarifying what is meant by the greater benefit the world is to receive by the full inclusion of Israel. “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” If the lesser benefit in the rejection of Israel has been that Gentiles are experiencing the reconciling work of Christ, what will be the results of God’s restoration of Israel to Himself? Paul says it will be nothing less than life from the dead. The meaning of this expression is disputed. Murray argues that the expression should be understood figuratively—“an unprecedented quickening for the world in the expansion and success of the gospel...[the expression] denotes the vivification that would come to the whole world from the conversion of the mass of Israel and their acceptance into the favor and kingdom of God”³⁹ Moo argues that a more preferable understanding is to take the expression literally referencing the unparalleled blessing of the bodily resurrection.⁴⁰ Schreiner agrees saying the greater benefit resulting from Israel’s salvation is the resurrection of the dead, not a future greater success of the gospel among the Gentiles. Verse 26 is determinative. The salvation of all Israel will be the climax of this age resulting in the resurrection of the dead. Schreiner says it is “inconceivable that there will be a great ingathering among the Gentiles after this event.”⁴¹

Paul illustrates Israel’s future restoration with two parables—the loaf and the olive tree (11:16-24). The first illustration of the loaf is drawn from Numbers 15:17-21 where an offering is made to the Lord from the first portion of the grain harvest. The acceptance of the first fruits as holy sanctifies the whole that is to follow. The second is that of the root and the branches of the olive tree. If the root of the tree is accepted as holy, then all the branches generated from the root are also holy. The most likely meaning of the first fruits and root is the patriarchs mentioned in verse 28, the lump and the branches would signify their descendents (i.e. ethnic Israel). Along with this, the olive tree itself is usually understood as the believing people of God.⁴² The olive tree serves as an

³⁷ Mathison, 571.

³⁸ Moo, 689.

³⁹ Murray, 84. This interpretation alone is not enough to land Murray in the Postmillennial camp, but it surely reflects a Postmillennial outline of the future of the world—the apostasy of Israel leading to the conversion of the Gentiles, Gentile conversion leading to the mass conversion of Israel, the mass conversion of Israel leading to historically unparalleled Gentile conversions.

⁴⁰ Moo, 695.

⁴¹ Schreiner, 599. This interpretation leaves open the possibility of a Premillennial understanding of the future. However, when taken together with Romans 8:18-25, that view evaporates, leaving the Amillennial understanding of the future as being that which is most in line with Paul’s teaching.

⁴² Ibid, 604-5. However, this writer does recall hearing S. Lewis Johnson teach that it could be that the olive tree represented the Abrahamic Covenant.

illustration to explain God’s work in the history of redemption. When Paul says some of the branches were broken off, he is alluding to the apostasy of national Israel—those Jews who disbelieve the Gospel (11:17). Those not broken off represent the believing Jewish remnant.⁴³ The wild olive branches are said to be “you,” the believing Gentiles who are grafted into the olive tree—(i.e. the believing people of God). Paul warns the Gentiles not to be arrogant with respect to broken off branches (11:18), and not to boast about their new status as being a replacement for the broken off branches (11:19), because their inclusion into the olive tree is an act of God’s grace which they have both received through faith (11:20). And if God did not spare the natural branches when they would not believe, neither will He spare the Gentile branches if they do not persevere in faith (11:21). But if the natural branches cease their unbelief, then God will graft them back in (11:23-24). Paul concludes the illustration with another *a-fortiori* argument, this time a greater to the lesser argument. If God has done the more difficult work of grafting in wild olive branches (i.e. the Gentiles) into His people, surely he can do the simpler work of grafting the natural branches back into their own family!⁴⁴

The parable leads to the climax of the theodicy—the prophecy of Israel’s restoration. “Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (11:25). 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’ (11:26). ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins’” (11:27). The first question is what is the mystery?⁴⁵ Contextually the mystery is God’s saving activity in redemptive history which Paul rehearsed in the parable of the olive tree.⁴⁶ In light of the preceding context, Schreiner says the mystery means three things: (1) A part of Israel is hardened for a limited period of time; (2) the salvation of the Gentiles will precede the salvation of Israel; and (3) all Israel will eventually be saved.⁴⁷ As Moo observes, the focal point of the mystery is the timing of Israel’s salvation. He says it was a wholly novel idea “that the inauguration of the eschatological age would involve the setting aside of the majority of Jews while Gentiles stream in to enjoy the blessings of salvation and that only when that stream had been exhausted would Israel as a whole experience these blessings.”⁴⁸ Thus, the point of the mystery is the reversal of the Jewish expectations concerning the sequence of the end-time events. Rather than Israel being restored first followed by the salvation of the Gentiles, the Gentiles are brought in while the nation is hardened. When the full number of the Gentiles has come into the people of God, then the hardening will cease and all Israel will be saved.⁴⁹

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Johnson reminds us that though the parable reveals the present state of things—unbelieving Israel broken off and believing Gentiles grafted in, the real thrust of the parable is to warn Gentile believers against pride and arrogance. Though believing “Gentiles have inherited with Israel’s believing remnant the covenantal blessings, they will suffer the same fate as the mass of Israel if they do not continue in faith.” Johnson, 213.

⁴⁵ μυστήριον in Paul refers to that which was eternally hidden in the counsel of God but now made known through Divine revelation.

⁴⁶ Moo, 712.

⁴⁷ Schreiner, 614.

⁴⁸ Moo, 716-17.

⁴⁹ Mathison, 575.

There are a number of questions in verse 26 that need to be answered. First, there is the grammatical question concerning the nuance of the adverbial expression καὶ οὕτως (i.e. “and so”). Some have suggested a temporal meaning, “and then.”⁵⁰ This, however, is a very rare use of the adverb and an unlikely solution. Another possibility is an inferential sense, “and consequently.”⁵¹ The view that Johnson prefers is correlative. The adverb οὕτως is understood comparatively with the following near adverb καθὼς “as.” Although this is a common usage of the adverbs, the καθὼς is paired with the verb “it is written,” which is a common Pauline formula for introducing an OT quote. Thus, it’s unlikely that this understanding is what Paul has in mind. The fourth, and most likely view, is that οὕτως is an adverb of manner linked to the previous context.⁵² The ESV translation “in this way” captures the thought. Therefore, what Paul means is that all Israel will be saved in the manner of the process discussed in verses 11-24.

This legitimate understanding of the grammar has led some Amillennial theologians to conclude that the salvation of all Israel will occur throughout the inter-advent era—that is, Israel’s salvation is parallel to and runs concurrent with the ingathering and the fullness of the Gentiles. Thus, according to Anthony Hoekema, the salvation of all Israel does not occur with a massive end-time conversion of Jews, rather it occurs throughout the entire inter-advent age.⁵³ There are, however, two major problems with Hoekema’s analysis. One, although it is true that οὕτως is an adverb of manner referencing back to the process of salvation during the inter-advent era, the context notes a temporal sequencing in the process of salvation. The hardening and breaking off of the majority of Israel, the saving and ingathering of the Gentiles while Israel is hardened, Gentile salvation in turn leading to the stimulation (i.e. jealousy) of Israel to seek salvation, with finally the fullness of the Gentiles precipitating the salvation of all Israel. As Moo has pointed out, although οὕτως does not have temporal meaning grammatically, it does have a temporal reference contextually: “for the manner in which all Israel is saved involves a process that unfolds in definite stages.”⁵⁴ In this light, the adverb ἄχρι (“until”) functioning as a conjunction in verse 25, clearly has a temporal nuance.⁵⁵ Thus, a model understanding of οὕτως, with its backward glance to the preceding context of 11-24, in no way precludes a future mass conversion of the Jewish people at the end of the age. Two, Hoekema’s understanding of “all Israel” in verse 26 as the sum total of the elect remnant of believing Jews throughout the inter-advent age is just not compelling for several reasons. First, the whole context of Romans 9 through 11 reveals Paul’s anguish over the Jewish nation as a whole—Israel has rejected Christ (9:1-5); they are not saved (10:1); they have stumbled (11:11); they have failed (11:12); they are rejected (11:15); they are broken off (11:17); they are in unbelief (11:20); they are partially hardened (11:25); they

⁵⁰ Bruce, 222.

⁵¹ Murray, 2:96, favors this interpretation. I would agree with Johnson that the sense is good, but that the usage is also too rare for this view to be a real option. See Johnson, 214.

⁵² Moo, 720.

⁵³ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 145-146.

⁵⁴ Moo, 720.

⁵⁵ BDAG, 160-61; Abbott Smith, *Manuel Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh; T & T Clark, 1977), 73. O. Palmer Robertson’s suggestion that ἄχρι means “up to” instead of “until” is not compelling. His support of Hoekema’s position finds greater strength in verses 30-31. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2000), 178-79.

are enemies of God (11:30); they are now disobedient (11:31)—and not the remnant of whom he is a member (11:11), who are saved (9:6, 29, 11:5, 7), and who have never been broken off (see “some” 11:17). In terms of salvation, the two (Israel and the remnant) stand in contrast in Paul’s mind; in this sense, they are not synonymous. Second, there is nothing hidden (i.e. “a mystery”) in the OT about God saving His elect people. Third, the “mystery” is stunningly anticlimactic if the change in Israel’s relationship to God, which the text anticipates (cf. 11:12, 15, 25), simply means that the believing remnant down through redemptive history will be saved!⁵⁶ If that’s what the text means, then Paul’s anguish makes little sense.

A second major question from verse 26 that must be answered, which we have just partially attempted, is what does “all Israel” mean? As already noted, one view says it means the elect believing remnant of the Jews throughout the inter-advent age. That view was found wanting. Another popular view is that Israel in this context refers to the Christian church which is composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles. Such is the interpretation of John Calvin. He wrote: “I extend the word *Israel* to include all the people of God...When the Gentiles have come in, the Jews will at the same time return from their defection to the obedience of faith. The salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be drawn from both, will thus be completed...In the same way, in Gal. 6:16, he calls the Church, which was composed equally of Jews and Gentiles, the Israel of God, setting the people, thus collected from the dispersion, in opposition to the carnal children of Abraham who had fallen away from faith.”⁵⁷ In this writer’s opinion, Calvin’s view is not easily dismissed for several reasons: first, in 9:25-26 the promises of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 made to ethnic Israel, calling the nation “my people,” is applied to the Gentiles—hence, the Christian Church. It is clear that Paul sees the Gentiles being grafted into the people of God (11:17-21) so that the Church can inherit the promises and even the terminology that in the OT belong only to Israel. Second, although contested by some notable scholars,⁵⁸ the expression “Israel of God” in Gal 6:16 more than likely is a reference to the Christian Church.⁵⁹ Third, the analogy of faith, whereby the meaning of a passage that is unclear in one text is read in the light of the meaning found in a parallel clear text is a legitimate method of interpretation. However, though these arguments are true in themselves, in the opinion of this writer, they cannot be sustained in Romans

⁵⁶ Schreiner, 617.

⁵⁷ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians*, trans. R. Mackenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 255.

⁵⁸ Ernst Burton argues that the term “Israel of God” refers to elect believing Jews. See Ernst De Witt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 358.

⁵⁹ Gregory Beale lists five compelling arguments for this view. 1. It fits the contextual theme of the Epistle (3:7-9, 26-28; 4:26-31). 2. Paul’s primary point is to emphasize the lack of racial distinctions and to highlight the fact that the church is the unified new creation of God (6:15). 3. The “rule” of 6:16 refers to believers living in the light of no distinctions of race, gender, and so forth in the new creation of God. 4. There is no hint in the book of a part of the Church constituting a redeemed ethnic Israel entity. 5. The expression “peace and mercy” in 6:16 is a development of Isa 54:1-10, to which Paul appealed in 4:27. In Isa 54:5, Israel is God’s latter-day creation which Paul says is now being fulfilled in the Christian Church. 6. Though rare, the epexegetical use of καὶ is found in Paul—Rom 1:5; 1 Cor 3:5; 15:38 with Gal 6:16 being cited as an example of such use in some notable Greek grammars. G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 722-24. This interpretation of Gal. 6:16 is supported by the majority of the commentaries used in this paper—Schreiner, 614; Moo, 721; Murray, 2:9;-etc.

11:26 for the following reasons: first, concerning the analogy of faith, Romans 11:26 need not be read in the light of Galatians 6:16 (any more than Galatians 6:16 needs to be read in the light of Romans) for the context makes it clear who “all Israel” is. There is a sustained contrast between Israel and the believing Gentiles throughout chapter 11 (11:11, 12, 13, 17, 24, 25, 28, 30-31). The term is clear in Romans 11—Israel always refers to ethnic Jews, never Jews plus the Gentiles. Second, how could Israel be the ethnic nation in 11:25 (which is what this position says), and suddenly, with no forewarning, mean something totally different—the Church—in the very next verse? Third, the book of Galatians and the book of Romans have different purposes. Galatians, the first book Paul wrote, was written in the heat of the Judaizer conflict when the Church was being torn apart over admitting Gentiles into the community without the requirements of circumcision and the obligations of keeping the Mosaic Law (Acts 15). In Galatians, Paul is arguing for the full acceptance of the Gentiles into the family of Abraham apart from any works of the Law. His application to the Church of the OT terms, “seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:29) and its synonym, “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) is clearly appropriate in the light of the purpose of Galatians.⁶⁰ However, Romans was written with a very different purpose in mind—namely, to resolve the Jew/Gentile conflict in order to unify the Christian Church for the mission of the Gospel. In Romans, Paul is warning Gentile Christians against their proclivity for arrogance and prejudice against the Jewish people (11:18). He warns against their tendency to look upon themselves as the replacement for the Jewish people in the plan of God (11:19). He even rebukes their misguided efforts in attempting to force the believing Jews in the church at Rome to give up those practices which Jewish believers feel duty bound by the Law to follow (14:4-7, 10, 13, 20-23). Thus in Romans, it would be contrary to the background and purpose of the book to apply the term *Israel* to the Church. In this Epistle of Paul, *Israel* always means *ethnic Israel*.

A third question which needs to be addressed is the timing and nature of the salvation promised to all Israel. Concerning the time of Israel’s salvation, it appears that Paul’s usage of Isa 59:20-21 in verse 26b-27, and Isa 27:9 in verse 27b means that all Israel will be saved in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ. In the OT, the Deliver in Isa 59:20 is Yahweh, but for Paul the text most surely refers to Christ (cf. 9:5 where he designates Christ as God). In the OT, the Deliver comes to Zion (with Zion referencing Jerusalem). But in Rom 11:26, Paul alters the prepositions from “to zion” (לְיִרוּשָׁלַיִם) to “from zion” (ἐκ Σιῶν). Paul does refer to the “Jerusalem above” in Gal 4:26 and other NT writers speak of Zion as the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb12:22). If this is what is in Paul’s mind, and Moo thinks it is, then the OT quotes in verses 26-27 refer to the *Parousia* of Christ and the salvation of the final generation of ethnic Jews living at that time.⁶¹ Respecting the nature of salvation, it would be a misreading of Romans to suggest, as some do,⁶² that a mass conversion of the Jewish people living at the end of time makes salvation based on blood and not faith. Such a view overlooks everything Paul says about salvation in Romans. It is by grace through faith apart from any kind of works (3:22-25, 28; 4:3, 24-25; 5:1; 10:11-13). Israel’s problem in 9—11, is that they do

⁶⁰ Moo, 721.

⁶¹ Ibid, 728.

⁶² See Wright, 238, 254.

not trust Christ by faith alone (9:30-32; 10:3; 11:20). And Paul says their salvation is contingent upon faith in Christ. Thus, Israel will be grafted back into the people of God only when they put their trust in Christ (11:23). Exactly how it is they come to faith in Christ and are grafted back into the one people of God, Paul did not spell out, but that they shall believe in Christ, and shall be grafted back in, in conjunction with the surrounding the events of Christ's return is intimated in the expression, "And so all Israel shall be saved."⁶³

Verses 28-32 function as an explanation which Paul uses to prove and explain to his Gentile readers why God will intervene and save all Israel at the last day. First, all Israel will be saved because of God's election of the nation and His irrevocable promises made to the Fathers (28-29). Verse 28 is a carefully balanced example of antithetical parallelism. On the one hand (μέν), according to the Gospel (κατὰ...τὸ εὐαγγέλιον), they are enemies (ἐχθροὶ) on account of you (δι' ὑμᾶς,). On the other hand (δὲ), according to election (κατὰ...τὴν ἐκλογήν), they are beloved (ἀγαπητοὶ) on account of the Fathers (διὰ τοὺς πατέρας). Israel's repudiation of the Gospel and resistance to its proclamation throughout the world renders the nation as God's enemy.⁶⁴ God's enmity towards the nation in their rejection of the Gospel opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles, as verses 11-16 have iterated. However, God's enmity toward the nation is not the whole story; they are the beloved of God on account of election and the covenantal promises made to the Fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁶⁵ In the present Gospel era, the nation of Israel is the rejected enemy of God with God's salvation having gone to the Gentiles; nonetheless, God's election of the nation along with all the gifts and prerogatives given that nation (cf. 9:4-5) have not been abrogated. God's electing grace and His faithfulness to the covenantal promises made to the Fathers guarantees the salvation of all Israel at the end of history.⁶⁶ Second, all Israel will be saved because of God's intent to manifest impartiality throughout the whole of redemptive history (30-32).⁶⁷ In verses 30-32, Paul summarizes the history of salvation he outlined in 11:11-27. The pronouns "you" and "they" indicate that Paul is addressing the Gentiles in the church at Rome reminding them of their own experience in the history of redemption. They were once disobedient to God (history prior to the coming of Christ), but now (νῦν, the new eschatological era introduced by Christ)⁶⁸ they have received mercy. With respect to the nation of Israel, they have now (νῦν), in the present Gospel era, become disobedient. A reversal has occurred in the history of redemption with God's people having apostatized, while the Gentiles who were formerly estranged throughout history have now received the Gospel.

⁶³ Johnson reminds us that the term "all" does not mean "all" in an absolute sense, but the Jewish people as a whole. He notes that the expression "all Israel" was common in the rabbinic literature of Paul's day. The Mishnah says all Israel will be saved, and then lists exceptions like heretics, magicians, etc. Johnson, 215.

⁶⁴ Murray observes that "enemies" and "beloved" reference Israel's contemporaneously dual relationship to God. "Enemies" points to God's rejection of the nation in their unbelief of the Gospel. "Beloved" points to the nation's corporate election and the covenantal promises made to Abraham. See Murray, 2:100-101.

⁶⁵ Schreiner notes that verse 29 eliminates all thought of merit as the grounds of Israel's election. God's love for the nation is grounded in His gracious calling and gifting. "God did not summon the fathers because of their virtue but because of the glorious freedom of his grace." Schreiner, 626.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 627.

⁶⁷ Moo, 712.

⁶⁸ Moo, 733.

Yet the mercy shown to the Gentiles does not exclude the Jews since God has intended that Israel, in the future, will yet be restored.

A textual problem is found in the final purpose clause of verse 31—“in order that these also might *now* (receive) mercy.” This third *now* (νῦν) has led some to conclude that Paul has not been talking about a mass conversion of ethnic Israel at the end of history, but rather to the present response of Israel in the oscillation of salvation from the Jews to the Gentiles and back to the Jews again within the inter-advent age.⁶⁹ However, in the opinion of this writer, the omission of the third *now*, rather than its inclusion is probably the better reading.⁷⁰ If this omission is the original reading, then there is no conflict with the salvation of all Israel being an end-time mass conversion of the Jewish people. If, however, the third νῦν is original this still doesn’t eliminate an end-time conversion of ethnic Israel. Paul would simply be summarizing both answers he has give to the problem of Israel’s apostasy. The apostasy is not total (11:1-10)—even *now* there is a remnant saved by grace. The apostasy is not final (11:11-27); at the end of time there will be a full restoration of the nation.⁷¹ Paul’s final comment on God’s method of salvation is that He uses the disobedience of both Gentiles and Jews to bring about mercy for both Jews and Gentiles. God has consigned all to disobedience in order that He might have mercy on all (11:32).⁷² Schreiner aptly concludes: “God’s unexpected mercy is the theme that dominates history. He intervenes to save both Jew and Gentile when they are plunged in sin. Moreover, the oscillation between the salvation of the Jews, then the Gentiles, and then the Jews again hammers home the point that no ethnic group deserves salvation and that God’s saving work is a result of his mercy alone.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Robertson, 170.

⁷⁰ Respecting the external evidence: the inclusion of νῦν is supported by **Σ**, **B**, two major 4th century uncials of the Alexandrian family of texts; and **D**, the leading 6th century uncial of the Western family of texts. The omission of νῦν is supported by **Π** 46, a 2nd century papyrus, and **A**, a 5th century uncial of the Alexandrian family, along with 81 and 1739, important 10th century minuscules in the Alexandrian family. Two 10th century Western uncials **F** and **G** and the mixed 8th century Western/Alexandrian text **ψ** all omit the word as does the entire Byzantine family of texts. Conclusion of the external evidence: Age favors omission; distribution across the family types favors omission (νῦν is represented by only 2 Alexandrian texts and 1 questionable corrected Western text); solidarity of family types is mixed with a slight favor going to omission. The internal evidence is mixed. The omission of νῦν favors the shorter reading, but is it the harder reading? The inclusion of the νῦν favors the context of verses 11-27 and the oscillation between Israel, the Gentiles, and Israel again in redemptive history. However, the very symmetry of the context may have been the reason a scribe added it to the text. The only reason that this writer could find for a scribe intentionally omitting an existing νῦν is that there is nothing in chapter 11 to suggest that Israel as a nation was *now* experiencing the mercy of God. In that light it is possible to conjecture that a scribe would omit the last νῦν in verse 31 so that the verse might harmonize with the overall context. The editors of the 4th edition of the UBS text give the inclusion of νῦν a **C** rating, whereas the 3rd edition of the UBS text gave inclusion a **D** rating. It is the opinion of this writer that the **D** rating reflected in the UBS 3rd edition is the most accurate. Hence, the omission of νῦν is most likely the original text of 11:31.

⁷¹ Mathison, 583.

⁷² While the first *all* (πάντας) is clearly universal (cf. Rom 3:23), the context limits the second *all* (πάντας) to the two ethnic groups under discussion—the Gentiles and Israel. Paul is not teaching that all people universally are the recipients of the mercy of God, but that all without distinction (both Jews and Gentiles) are the beneficiaries of God’s saving grace. Schreiner, 629.

⁷³ Ibid.