

90

Fruchtenbaum

*Various Views on Romans 9-11*  
Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

## VARIOUS VIEWS ON ROMANS 9 - 11

by Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

Excerpted from Israelology:  
The Missing Link in Systematic Theology  
c Ariel Ministries  
P.O. Box 3723  
Tustin, CA 92681

I. COVENANT POSTMILLENNIALISM

In Romans 9:1-5, Paul introduced his discussion of Israel by pointing out his own sorrow over Israel's unbelief in light of Israel's privileged position. Commenting on versé 2, Hodge's reason for Paul's sorrow was that the unique national position Israel enjoyed is now to be removed because Israel had "wickedly rejected" them.<sup>1</sup> Nationally speaking, Israel was now "without hope, either for this world or the next." Important to Hodge's Postmillennialism is that, nationally speaking, Israel has been rejected by God and will have no future distinct national privilege. Although there will be a future national conversion, this conversion will not lead to a national restoration with national privileges, but will simply be an amalgamation of the saved nation into the Church. Both Shedd<sup>2</sup> and Murray<sup>3</sup> concur.

In verses 4-5, Paul listed the privileges Israel had. When Paul said his subject was *Israelite*, Hodge takes this to be the physical nation of the Jews and interprets the term to mean, "the peculiar people of God."<sup>4</sup> Hodge accepts the belief that the Jews as a people were the chosen ones in the Old Testament: "As it (i.e., the name Israel) was given to Jacob as an expression of God's peculiar favour, . . . its application to his descendants implied that they too were the favourites of God."<sup>5</sup> Murray states that there are actually two Israels, identifying one as "ethnic Israel." However, he holds off identifying the second Israel until his commentary on 9:6. Nevertheless, there is an

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1886; reprint ed., 1950), p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1879; reprint ed., 1967), p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 2:3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

advantage of belonging to ethnic Israel.<sup>1</sup> The first privilege that Paul listed was *the adoption*. Hodge reaffirms his belief that the Jews as a people were the chosen people of God during the whole period of the theocracy.<sup>2</sup> Hodge goes on to declare that this national sonship of Israel to God was a type of the believer's sonship to God in every dispensation.<sup>3</sup> The second privilege was *the glory*, which Hodge interprets to mean the *Shechinah* glory, or the presence of God. He writes: "It is probable, therefore, that Paul intended by this word to refer to the fact that God dwelt in a peculiar manner among the Jews, and in various ways manifested his presence, as one of their peculiar privileges."<sup>4</sup> The third privilege was *the covenants*. Hodge comments: "The plural is used because God at various times entered into covenant with the Jews and their forefathers; by which he secured to them innumerable blessings and privileges."<sup>5</sup> Murray identifies these as the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.<sup>6</sup> The fourth privilege is *the giving of the law* which Hodge interprets to be the Law of Moses and states: "... the possession of the law was the grand distinction of the Jews, and on which they peculiarly relied."<sup>7</sup> The fifth privilege was *the service of God* which Hodge interprets to be "the whole ritual, the pompous and impressive religious service of the tabernacle and temple."<sup>8</sup> The sixth privilege was *the promises* which Hodge says were "... the promises of Christ and his kingdom. This was the great inheritance of the nation. This was the constant subject of gratulation and object of hope."<sup>9</sup> The seventh privilege was *the fathers* on which Hodge states: "The descent of the Jews from men so highly favoured of God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was justly regarded as a great distinction."<sup>10</sup> The eighth and last privilege was *of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*. The point is that Jesus was a Jew, and Hodge comments: "This was the great honour of the Jewish race. For this they were separated as a peculiar people, and preserved amidst all their afflictions."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:4.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 298-299.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:5.

<sup>7</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 299.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

In Romans 9:6-24, Paul deals with the doctrine of salvation and predestination, emphasizing that salvation never was and never is on the basis of merit, but on the basis of sovereign grace. The issue in Israelology concerns the role of Israel as a nation as over against Jewish and Gentile individuals in this plan of salvation, and what is the place of Israel as a nation at the present time. In no uncertain terms, Hodge views these verses as teaching that God has "rejected the Jews," has "cast off his ancient covenant people," and has now extended "the call of the gospel indiscriminately to all men."<sup>1</sup> The Jews as a people or a nation have been rejected, and God is now calling the Gentiles.

Crucial to Israelology is Paul's statement in verse 6: *For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel*. Here, Paul distinguishes two Israels. All agree that one of these Israels is a reference to physical Israel, meaning all Jews who are physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The disagreement is over the second Israel. Covenant Theologians generally (but not exclusively) interpret the second Israel as being the Church. Dispensationalists take it as a reference to believing Jews within the nation as a whole. Hodge, a Covenant Theologian, takes it to be believers in general.<sup>2</sup> He paraphrases the statement as "all who are in the (visible) Church do not belong to the true Church."<sup>3</sup> Shedd reduces the covenant promises God made to Israel to "gratuitous justification," or "the promise of salvation through the Messiah."<sup>4</sup> Israel did not believe and, therefore, nationally did not receive this justification; but this does not mean that "God's covenant with their fathers was a *total* failure." Actually, these promises were made to spiritual and not physical Israel. Shedd refers to this spiritual Israel as "spiritual descendants of Jacob." Murray differs from Shedd and states that "it is not necessary to identify 'Israel' here as Jacob specifically."<sup>5</sup> In this verse, Paul speaks of two Israels, one of which has already been identified as physical or "ethnic Israel." Those are "the natural descendants of the patriarchs," meaning all three: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The second Israel is an Israel "within ethnic Israel"; that is, they are Jews who believe. Instead of following the usual Covenant Theology approach, which is to make the second Israel the Church composed of both Jews and Gentiles, Murray sees Paul as making a different distinction. This is not a general distinction between believers and unbelievers, but a specific distinction between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. The former is spiritual Israel, and the latter is "all Israel" or "ethnic Israel"; but the former is within the latter: "There is an 'Israel' within ethnic Israel." This second Israel is the "true Israel." This "true Israel," however, is still "of Israel" or

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 303-304.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Shedd, *Romans*. pp. 279-280.

<sup>5</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:9-10.



part of national or ethnic Israel. This should be understood in the same way that Jesus addressed Nathanael as "truly an Israelite." He was a believing Jew and, therefore, a "true Israelite" and part of national or ethnic Israel. Murray points out that the purpose of making a distinction between Israel the whole and the true Israel is to show that "God's covenantal purpose and promise" has not failed. While Israel the whole did reject and disbelieve, the true Israel did not.

Also crucial to Israelology is Paul's statement in verse 7: *Neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children.* Paul not only distinguishes between two Israels, but he also distinguishes between two seeds or descendants of Abraham. All would agree that one seed refers to physical descendants of Abraham and the other to spiritual descendants of Abraham. It would also be agreed that the spiritual seed of Abraham includes both Jewish and Gentile believers. The disagreement is whether the spiritual Israel and the spiritual seed of Abraham are one and the same. Dispensationalists would keep the two distinct and Covenant Theologians for the most part would not. Hodge's interpretation is consistent with his Covenant Theology.<sup>1</sup> It is agreed by all groups that insofar as salvation is concerned, the promise of salvation is given to believers only, regardless of physical descent, and there is no salvation for unbelievers, regardless of physical descent. Salvation is only for the spiritual seed of Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles. The issue, however, remains: Does this mean that God has "cast off Israel" and "rejected Israel" so that there is no longer any hope in this world or the next? Hodge concludes: "As he rejected Ishmael notwithstanding his natural descent from Abraham, so he may reject the Jews, although they also had Abraham as a father."<sup>2</sup> Murray's comments on 9:7 follow the same pattern as his comments on 9:6.<sup>3</sup> For Murray, "Abraham's seed" is the same as "of Israel" or ethnic Israel in 9:6. The "children" are the same as the true Israel of 9:6.

In his comments on 9:8, Shedd, like Hodge, affirms that in history Israel was the chosen people in a national sense.<sup>4</sup> The Jews are the "people of God" because "they have been selected from other nations." However, this did not guarantee their spiritual salvation, for only those who have "a second election" will be spiritually saved. This second election includes both Jews and Gentiles. All Jews are "of Israel" but are not "Israel" (i.e., spiritual Israel for Shedd). All Jews are "the seed of Abraham," but not all are "the children of the promise." The covenant promises, according to Shedd, were made to the spiritual and not the physical descendants; this is being fulfilled, so God's plan has not failed. Furthermore, although the elect nation has not believed, members of that nation are part of the "second election" and so are "subjects of his special grace."

---

<sup>1</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 305-306.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:10.

<sup>4</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 282.

Shedd makes a similar point in his comments on 9:9.<sup>1</sup> The Abrahamic Covenant did not apply to all lineal descendants of Abraham, but only to such Jews who believed or had the same faith as Abraham, along with Gentiles who had the same faith. Murray's comments on 9:8-9 follow his view of verses 6-7 concerning the meaning of the two Israels.<sup>2</sup>

Later, in commenting on 9:10-13, while defending his position that Romans 9 is not only speaking of a national election, but an individual one as well, Murray once again makes a distinction between Israel and true Israel, children and true children, seed and true seed, and never identifies the true Israel, children, or seed as being the same as the Church.<sup>3</sup> As a Covenant Theologian he would include them as being part of the Church; but in this context, Murray limits the meaning to the text and still sees the distinction as being between believing and unbelieving Israel. His point is that it is only those within elect Israel who have had another election that receive salvation. Shedd's terminology would be the "second election." Murray prefers a different terminology for the distinction: "the elect of Israel and elect Israel." On this very point Murray further states that the remnant of Israel is that part of ethnic Israel which has "obtained the righteousness of faith."<sup>4</sup> Israel's national election did not guarantee the salvation of every individual Jew, for that was achieved only by grace through faith and by God's individual election.

In Romans 9:25-33, Paul elaborated and proved his concluding statement of the previous section in verse 24: *Even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles.* It is the spiritual seed of Abraham, comprised of both individual Jews and Gentiles, that have received salvation on the basis of grace through faith. That this would someday be the case was already predicted by the Old Testament prophets, and this is what Paul set out to show in verses 25-33. Hodge concludes that "the Jews, as Jews are rejected."<sup>5</sup> The Jews as a nation have been rejected and no longer have a privileged national destiny. Shedd's comments on 9:24 also identify spiritual Israel as the elect that includes both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>6</sup> In his comments on 9:30-31, Shedd asserts that the Jews as a nation have been rejected and are now "the objects of God's spiritual reprobation."<sup>7</sup> Now it is the Gentiles who are "the objects of

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2:18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2:18-19.

<sup>5</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 326.

<sup>6</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 300.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 304-305.

God's spiritual election." Of course, not every individual Gentile has been elected, and not every individual Jew has been rejected; but generally this is true, for the Gentiles were believing "in multitudes" and Jews were rejected "in multitudes." Though Shedd uses different language than Hodge did, their conclusions are the same. Murray still limits the true Israel, the true children, and the true seed to the Jews, though admittedly the promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant had a broader scope to include Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> While "the covenant promise" was to include believing Gentiles, Murray did not include these Gentiles as belonging to the "true Israel" that Paul was speaking of in Romans. That same theme continues in his comments on 9:27-29.<sup>2</sup> The covenant promise did not "guarantee the salvation of all ethnic Israel," but only of the remnant that believed. Later, Murray repeats: "This Scripture demonstrates that God's promises do not pertain to the mass of Israel but are fulfilled in the remnant."<sup>3</sup>

In Romans 10, Paul continues his discussion on Israel. In chapter 9, he pointed out that Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus did not catch God by surprise, but was very much part of the divine plan. Furthermore, regardless of special national calling and privilege, salvation itself was never on that basis. Now, in chapter 10, Paul emphasizes that salvation is freely offered to all men, Jews and Gentiles, and every individual who calls *upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*. (v. 13) In Romans 10:1-10, Paul points out that it was Israel's failure to submit to God's way of salvation that led to their rejection of the salvation through Jesus the Messiah.

Important to Israelology is Paul's statement in Romans 10:4: *For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth*. The Greek word translated *end* may mean two things: that the Messiah was the "goal" of the law, i.e., the intent of the law was to point the Jew to the Messiah; or, it may also mean "termination," i.e., that with Messiah's death, the law was terminated for some reason or in some way. Hodge states that Christ terminated the law by fulfilling it.<sup>4</sup> Hodge does not limit the "law" of verse 4 to the Mosaic Law but expands it to mean "the whole rule of duty prescribed to man" of which the Law of Moses was only a part. Furthermore, Hodge makes this law the covenant of works, which in Covenant Theology is "a rule of justification," so it was the covenant of works which was abolished and not the Law of Moses. Hodge states the "law is abolished by Christ, not as a rule of life, but as a covenant prescribing the condition of life." Hodge takes the position that Christ was "the end of the law" in the sense of "termination," that is, with Christ the law came to an end. Shedd, while not dismissing Hodge's view, nor the view that sees the "end" as the "aim" of the law, prefers a third option: "end" in the sense of "fulfillment," in that Christ

---

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:37-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:39-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:40.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 336-337.

did fulfill all the requirements of the law.<sup>1</sup> Murray begins his discussion on this verse by stating his objection to one common interpretation, that "end" means purpose (i.e., that the purpose of the law was fulfilled in Christ) and gives four reasons for it.<sup>2</sup> Murray opts for the meaning "termination," that Christ is the termination of the law. However, Murray maintains that the law mentioned here is not the Law of Moses, but "the most general sense of law-righteousness," and of law "as a commandment" that is "demanding obedience."

Important to Israelology is Paul's statement in verse 12: *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek . . .* Many have quoted this verse to teach that all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles have been erased in this age of grace. This has been true among both Covenant Theologians and Dispensationalists. In this context, the specific area where there is no difference is in the area of salvation. This is as far as Hodge carries it as well.<sup>3</sup> Murray also limits the "no distinction" to the way of salvation: that both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way.<sup>4</sup> There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles as far as "sin and condemnation" is concerned, and as far as "opportunity of salvation" is concerned. "God justifies Jews and Gentiles through faith."

Although the way of salvation is the same for both Jews and Gentiles without distinction, Israel as a nation rejected this way according to 10:16 on which Murray comments:

At verse 16 the apostle returns to that subject which permeates this section of the epistle, the unbelief of Israel . . . Although states in a way that would hold true if only a minority had been disobedient, yet the mass of Israel is viewed as in this category.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, according to 10:19, the Gentiles received the gospel to provoke the Jews to jealousy. Important to Israelology is the identification of the "no nation" with whom God will provoke Israel. Murray does not identify this group with any individual nation, but says it is a group composed of "all peoples" and "strangers and aliens."<sup>6</sup> Though Murray does not say so specifically, there is little doubt that he would identify this group as the Church. Hodge again concludes that God has forever "cast

---

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Romans*. p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:49-51.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 345.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:57.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:60.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:62.

off" or "rejected" Israel.<sup>1</sup> To say that God would someday provoke the Jews to jealousy with a "no people" means "that the Jews were in no such sense the people of God," and so were "cast off" while others were called.

Hodge concludes his discussion on chapter 10 by commenting on verse 21 that Israel is no longer the people of God.<sup>2</sup> In his comments on 10:20-21, Murray states that in spite of Israel's rejection, God loves Israel still.<sup>3</sup> Israel has indeed failed, but this is not "the terminus of God's lovingkindness to Israel."

In Romans 11:1-10, Paul points out that although the majority of the Jews have rejected Jesus as the Messiah, not all did: A segment of the Jewish people, a remnant, have and do believe. In the first verse, Paul clearly contradicts what Hodge has been claiming: *I say, then, Did God cast off his people? God forbid.* Hodge's interpretation of Paul's statement is that God has rejected the Jews as a nation.<sup>4</sup> Hodge insists that God really did cast off his people as a nation by claiming that the national promises of Israel were never made to Israel as a nation, but only to the spiritual Israel. In his *Systematic Theology*, Hodge claimed that the spiritual Israel is the Church. God, indeed then, has not cast off "his people." The "people" here are not the Jews as a nation, but the spiritual Israel which is the Church. Hodge states that "the rejection of the Jews as a nation, was consistent with all that God had promised to their fathers." Hodge only allows Paul to say that God has not rejected the Jews totally, for there are Jews who affirm the Messiahship of Jesus. God did not reject "all Israel," but he did reject Israel as a nation. As with Hodge, Shedd affirms that Israel's rejection is not total, for some Jews are "elected and saved."<sup>5</sup> Like Hodge, Shedd also points out that the rejection of the Jews is not final, but has a twofold goal: the salvation of the Gentiles, and a national salvation of Israel thereafter. This is good traditional Postmillennialism. What Hodge refers to as "the rejection of the Jews," Shedd refers to as "the reprobation of the Jews." Commenting on 11:1, Shedd reaffirms that while God did reject the Jews as a nation, he did not "thrust (them) out entirely" so as to allow for no exceptions so that "Jews were not entirely alienated from the kingdom of God."<sup>6</sup> While the verse seems to say that God did not cast off his people, both Hodge and Shedd reach the opposite conclusion: that God really did cast off his people, but only the majority and not in totality. Murray's interpretation follows the same line of

---

<sup>1</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:63.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 353.

<sup>5</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 328-329.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 329-330.

thinking as other Postmillennialists.<sup>1</sup> He interprets this verse to mean that God has not *totally* cast off his people, though he has cast them off as a nation.

In verse 2, Paul reaffirms what he said in verse 1: *God did not cast off his people which he foreknew*. After admitting that *his people* might mean "the Jewish nation," Hodge chooses to go another way.<sup>2</sup> Hodge declares that "God has indeed rejected his external people, the Jewish nation as such, but he has not cast away his people whom he foreknew." Since *his people* is not the Jewish nation, then they must be "the elect, his spiritual people, or the true Israel." In other words, as Hodge has already shown elsewhere, it is the Church. God's promises were not unfulfilled, for they really concerned the true Israel, i.e., the Church. External Israel really has been rejected; but what Paul really means in verses 1-2 is that the spiritual Israel has not been rejected! Hodge has already admitted that Paul never stated that God has cast off the nation of Israel, but he claims that this is what Paul implied in the two previous chapters. Shedd's claim that God did cast off Israel as a nation, but not entirely, is repeated in his commentary on 11:2.<sup>3</sup> Shedd interprets *his people* as referring to physical Israel. The very fact that the Jews were *his people* nationally clearly implies that God would still elect, call, and save some Jews. The same point is made by Murray in his comments on 11:2, where he also deals with the meaning of "his people."<sup>4</sup> Hodge's view is that "his people" refers only to the believing remnant and not to Israel as a whole. Murray points out that to make *his people* mean one thing in the first verse and another in verse 2 is inconsistent exegesis. If the *his people* of verse 1 means "Israel as a whole," then this must also be its meaning in verse 2. Murray, differing from Hodge, takes *his people* in both verses to mean the whole of Israel, not just the believing remnant. In fact, Paul's point is that "it is the election of a remnant from Israel that offers proof that God had not cast off Israel as a people." This statement by Murray seems to contradict his earlier assertion that God did cast off his people as a nation. However, Murray later qualifies his statement by saying: "So in the present instance the election of grace is the demonstration that Israel as a people had not been *completely* cast off by God" (*italics added*).

Murray makes another interesting statement in his comments on 11:4:

This example is adduced to prove that God had not cast off Israel as his chosen and beloved people. The import, therefor, is that the

---

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:65-66.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 353-354.

<sup>3</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 329-330.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:67-68.

salvation of a small remnant from the total mass is sufficient proof that the people as a nation had not been cast off.<sup>1</sup>

Murray vacillates between Israel being cast off or not cast off, and he does not always emphasize that the issue is one of totality, though that is his position as stated earlier in his commentary. It is not always stated clearly, and the above quote by itself would imply that Murray does not believe that Israel has been "cast off" as a nation. However, based on his earlier comments, Murray probably means to say that they have not been cast off "completely," to the point that no Jews can be saved. What Murray does affirm is that the Jews as a nation are still the chosen people.

In verse 5, Paul points out that even today, as in Elijah's day, there is a believing Jewish remnant: *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* Hodge does make the remnant here a Jewish remnant and not the Church as a whole;<sup>2</sup> but he still insists that this remnant only means that "the rejection of the Jews is not total." Insofar as the nation is concerned, "amidst the general defection of the Jews, and the consequent rejection as a people, there is a remnant . . . that is graciously chosen." The existence of the remnant is the evidence that God did cast off Israel as a nation and by grace chose to save a few. Shedd sees this as evidence that God has not cast off his people *totally*; but as a nation, God has cast them off.<sup>3</sup>

Commenting on 11:5-6, Murray states that God did reject his people, but he did not do so "utterly," as evidenced by the existence of a remnant.<sup>4</sup> Also important to Israelology is that among the Jews, there will always be a believing remnant no matter how "widespread may be Israel's unbelief and apostasy." In fact, according to Murray, the existence of such a remnant is a "necessity" because of the fact of Israel's national election, "that Israel God loved and elected." The very fact that Israel as a nation is *his people* guarantees that there will never be a total casting off. As a people, there has been a "rejection on God's part," except for this remnant. Because Israel as a nation is *his people*, there will always be a believing remnant. The seven thousand non-Baal worshippers constituted this remnant in Elijah's day. The Jewish believers in the Messiahship of Jesus, constituted the remnant in Paul's day. Such a remnant will always exist. Furthermore, consistent with his previous exegesis, Murray does not make this remnant the Church as such (though he would certainly believe that they are part of the Church), but the segment of Israel the whole that believes, or in Murray's terms, "the distinctive segment of Israel defined by the election of grace."

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 2:69.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 331.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:69.

In his comments on 11:7, Shedd delineates between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe.<sup>1</sup> Other Covenant Theologians distinguish between unbelieving Jews and the elect as a whole (as Shedd did on chapter 9); but here Shedd makes the distinction to be between Israel the whole as over against Israel the remnant, i.e., that portion of Israel the whole that believes. Murray simply reaffirms that Israel has been cast off because of unbelief, but not totally, for there is a remnant that does believe.<sup>2</sup>

In Romans 11:11-36, Paul concludes his discussion on Israel by pointing out that there was a divine reason why the plan of God included the rejection by Israel of the Messiah: Gentile salvation. Furthermore, a day will come when Israel will believe and be saved. If there is to be a future conversion of Israel as a nation, then why was Israel rejected? According to Hodge, the reason it was necessary for God to reject Israel as a nation was to facilitate the preaching of the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of Gentile salvation, according to verse 11, is to provoke the Jews to jealousy so they, too, can be saved. Hodge sees this primarily as being in the future when, according to verse 26, all Israel will be saved.<sup>4</sup> According to Shedd, the divine purpose was that "the rejection of the gospel by the Jews led to its acceptance by the Gentiles," and "the rejection of the gospel by the Jews facilitated its progress in the Gentile world." Murray understood Paul as having taught that Israel did stumble and fall.<sup>5</sup> Murray interprets this verse to mean that Israel did not stumble and fall just for the sake of falling, or falling as an end in itself. Rather, the purpose of Israel's stumbling and fall, according to Murray, is for the purpose of promoting Gentile salvation. This was "the overriding and overruling design of God in the stumbling and fall of Israel." Furthermore, Murray maintains that this Gentile salvation is itself a subordinate purpose to yet another one, which is to provoke the Jews to jealousy. The first purpose is "represented as subserving the saving interests of Israel." Murray derives several other conclusions which he enumerates, and all are important to Israelology. First, he says that there is still an ethnic distinction between Jews and Gentiles so that not all distinctions between the two groups have been erased. Murray's basis is the statement, "to provoke them to jealousy," which he sees as viewing "the salvation of Israel . . . in their distinct racial identity." Therefore, "God's saving design" does "embrace Israel as a racial entity." Murray agrees that there are no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles as far as spiritual privileges are concerned, and as far as receiving the benefits of Christ's resurrection are concerned; but he does not claim that all distinctions have been erased. Second, the real ultimate purpose of Israel's stumbling and fall is not

---

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:70-71.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 361-362.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>5</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:75-77.



Gentile salvation, which is a subordinate purpose, but "the restoration of Israel's faith" or Israel's national salvation. Third, the subordinate purpose of Gentile salvation is "to provoke the Jews to jealousy" in order that they may turn to faith in the Messiah Jesus. Fourth, Israel's unbelief was for the purpose of promoting "the salvation of the Gentiles"; but this is not to prejudice "Israel's salvation; it is to promote it."

According to verse 12, Israel's failure to believe has resulted in blessings for the Gentiles. Hodge, a believer in Israel's future conversion, affirms that when the national salvation comes, it will bring even more blessedness:

*Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?* Although there is considerable difficulty in fixing the precise sense of the several clauses of this verse, its general meaning seems sufficiently obvious. 'If the rejection of the Jews has been the occasion of so much good to the world, how much more may be expected from their restoration?' In this view it bears directly upon the apostle's object, which, in the first place, is to show that the restoration of the Jews is a probable and desirable event. There is in the verse a twofold annunciation of the same idea. In the first, the sentence is incomplete. 'If the fall of them by the riches of the world, *how much more their recovery?* If their diminishing, how much more their fulness?'<sup>1</sup>

In his comments on 11:12, Shedd again reaffirms his belief in a future salvation of Israel:

The Gentile world is enriched, indirectly, by the falling away of the Jews . . . If the rejection of the Jews has proved to be such a blessing to the Gentiles, then much more their future restoration will be a blessing to them.<sup>2</sup>

According to Murray,<sup>3</sup> not only has Jewish unbelief promoted Gentile salvation, Jewish belief will someday lead to "the riches of the Gentiles," which Murray takes to mean the same as "the riches of the world," defined as "the salvation that has come to the Gentiles." The kingdom of God has been taken from the Jews; this is the "loss" of this verse. Murray also insists that "their fulness" must be Israel's fulness, since it applies to the same people whose was the stumbling, fall, trespass, and loss. He then defines the "fulness" as Israel "characterized by the faith of Christ." Hence, what Paul contemplated in this verse is "nothing less than a restoration of Israel as a people to faith, privilege,

---

<sup>1</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:77-79.

and blessing." That this would definitely occur was the firm faith of Murray's Postmillennialism. When this comes, it will mean "for the Gentiles a much greater enjoyment of gospel blessing than that which was occasioned by Israel's unbelief." Gentiles will enjoy this blessing "in their distinctive identity as such," that is, as Gentiles. As for Israel's national salvation, "the conversion of Israel" will be "on a scale commensurate with that of their earlier disobedience," meaning, the majority of the Jews will believe. As for what the "greater blessing" will be in that day, Murray states that "the enlarged blessing would be the expansion of the success attending the gospel and of the kingdom of God." This is good Postmillennialism.

Hodge's comments on verses 13-14 further elaborate his position that Gentile salvation is to lead to Israel's salvation.<sup>1</sup> In his comments on 11:13-14, Shedd points out that Paul never stopped being interested in Jewish evangelism:

Ver. 13, and 14, guard the Gentiles against a false inference from the foregoing, viz.: that the apostle felt no interest in the Jews . . . "I magnify my office, indeed, *but* I wish to stimulate my brethren. . . . if so be that:" he is not absolutely certain, yet is hopeful that the more he urged the evangelization of the Gentile, the more he should savingly benefit the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Murray again reaffirms that while "the salvation of the Gentiles is thus the theme," this does not "conflict with the interests of Israel"; for the ultimate is "Israel's conversion." For that reason, Gentile salvation and Jewish salvation are interrelated, since the more that Gentile salvation "is crowned with success," the more this furthers "the cause of Israel's salvation." Paul's massive work among the Gentiles still had the purpose of saving "some" Jews then and ultimately "a mass restoration of Israel" in the future.

When he comes to 11:15, Hodge interprets the last phrase to mean nothing more than a "joyful and desirable event."<sup>3</sup> The relationship of Jewish reprobation to Gentile salvation and Gentile salvation to Jewish salvation is discussed in Shedd's comments on 11:15.<sup>4</sup> The rejection of the Jews, or "Jewish reprobation," resulted in "Gentile reconciliation." Even so, "the conversion of the Jews" will result in "the fulness of the Gentiles." That, in turn, cannot help but "result in the greatest possible blessing to the Jews themselves." More than once, in keeping with traditional Covenant Postmillennialism, Shedd affirms that a day will come which will see a national salvation of Israel. The argument and line of reasoning that Murray developed from verses 11-14

---

<sup>1</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 364-365.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 336-337.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 365.

<sup>4</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 337.

are now concluded with his comments on 11:15.<sup>1</sup> Again, the purpose of Gentile salvation is "the fulness of Israel." This was Paul's goal and why he labored so strenuously among the Gentiles. Murray reiterates what the theme of this section is: "The thesis in this section . . . is that the apostasy of Israel is not final." A day will come for Israel's "fulness." For that reason, Paul pursued "his ministry to the Gentiles and to glory in that office," for the more successful the ministry among the Gentiles, "the more Israel's salvation is promoted"; and the salvation of Israel will mean "a more abundant blessing of the Gentiles." In this verse Paul wrote, *if the casting away of them . . .* Murray<sup>2</sup> takes this *casting away* to mean a "rejection" of "the mass of Israel," for the "kingdom of God was taken from them." Hodge and Shedd believed that Israel was cast off to the point that Israel was no longer the people of God or the chosen people. Murray has consistently refused to do so thus far and has taken the *casting off* to apply mostly to the mass who are not recipients of election. In other words, those who are now the majority of believers are no longer Jews, but Gentiles. The way that God has cast off his people is that "the stumbling and trespass refer to the mass of Israel." The taking away of the kingdom of God and the giving of it to the Gentiles is "the riches of the Gentiles." The casting away of Israel did not mean that Israel had ceased to be God's people, but it meant "the salvation of the Gentiles, the riches of the world, and the riches of the Gentiles." The *casting away* means "rejection from the favor and blessing of God and reflects therefore on the attitude of God to Israel and the relation he sustains to them." The emphasis of the *casting away* is "upon God's attitude and action there." According to Murray, then, Israel has been *cast off* from the place of blessing and not from their position as *his people*. In keeping with his definition of the *casting away*, Murray defines the *receiving* to mean "the reception of Israel again into the favour and blessing of God," and the emphasis is "on the changed attitude of God to the mass of Israel." Israel's *fulness* is to be restored back to the place of blessing, not to become *his people* again since they never left that position.

In verse 16, Paul begins to use illustrations to picture his teaching. His first illustration is a comparison of the firstfruits and the lump, the root and the branches. To Hodge, this first illustration also points to a future salvation of the nation of Israel.<sup>3</sup> In commenting on 11:16, Shedd reaffirms that the Jews were the chosen people of God.<sup>4</sup> The reason a national salvation of Israel is to be expected is because "the Jews were the chosen people of God." The "first fruits" are identified by Shedd as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were "Jewish patriarchs and their descendants (who) all stood in the same covenant relation to God, as the chosen people." It is because of "this original relation" that it can be anticipated that Israel as a nation will be saved. This national salvation, however, will not result in a restoration of Israel as a saved nation in the land, but it will

---

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:80.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:81-82.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 367.

<sup>4</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 337-338.

result in "their admission into the Christian Church." It is the fact of Israel's outward or external calling that justifies the expectation of a future inward calling of Israel. As Shedd put it earlier, their first election is a good reason to believe in their second election. According to Murray, the first illustration is interpreted to represent the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is with these that the Abrahamic Covenant was made. Jews are descendants of these three men. For Murray, that is another reason that there "cannot be irremediable rejection of Israel" and why there must be an "ultimate recover of Israel."<sup>1</sup>

In verses 17-24, Paul gives a second illustration of the Olive Tree with roots, natural branches, and wild olive branches grafted in. The proper identification of what these things symbolize is crucial to Israelology. Boettner identifies the Olive Tree as being Israel in the Old Testament, and the Church in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> He concludes that there is only one people of God, for "Israel and the Christian Church are not two distinct olive trees, but one." His closing statement is, "A clearer illustration of the continuity of the Old Testament Israel into the New Testament Church could hardly be imagined." Boettner refers to these Gentile believers as "New Testament Israelites."<sup>3</sup> Boettner adds, "Thus Christian believers originally were and continue to be New Testament Israelites, and the New Covenant relates exclusively to them."<sup>4</sup>

Hodge interprets the tree to represent the Church.<sup>5</sup> In his comments on verse 17, Hodge identifies the "root" to be the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and adds that "the ancient theocracy was merged with the kingdom of Christ" or that "the latter is but an enlargement and elevation of the former," for to Hodge this is the Church. Hodge only allows for one people of God, or as he states, "There has, therefore, never been other than one family of God on earth." Hodge's commentary on verse 18 identifies the natural branches as Jews and the wild olive branches as Gentiles.<sup>6</sup> He views the natural branches as being Jews as a people that have been cut off, and the wild branches as being Gentiles as a people who may also be cut off.<sup>7</sup> Hodge's comments on verse 23 again identify the Olive Tree as representing the Church.<sup>8</sup> His

---

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:85.

<sup>2</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 244-245.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 380-381.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

<sup>5</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 368.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

exposition on verse 24 concludes that there will be a future conversion of the Jews as a nation.<sup>1</sup> He reiterates his belief that there will be a restoration of the Jews to the olive tree, but sees it as being a restoration "to the blessings of the church of God."

Shedd interprets the Olive Tree as being the place of blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant rather than the Church as such.<sup>2</sup> Here he would depart from Hodge and other Postmillennialists, but it is an interpretation that many Dispensationalists would feel comfortable with. In his comments on 11:20, Shedd points out that not only can Jews be removed from the place of blessing, but so could Gentiles in the same way--by unbelief.<sup>3</sup> Since "unbelief was the reason for this rejection of a part of the Jews," therefore "there is no security for the Gentile"; for on the basis of unbelief, they, too, can be removed. Shedd says even more along this same vein in his commentary on 11:21.<sup>4</sup>

Murray identifies the Olive Tree as representing Israel, but he also identifies the broken natural branches as being Israel as well.<sup>5</sup> Murray makes the two the same. The wild olive branches are identified as Gentile believers. When Murray comments more specifically on 11:17-21, he comes close to seeing the Olive Tree as representing the place of blessing.<sup>6</sup> He says the place into which the Gentile wild olive branches were grafted is a place of "privilege." They have been grafted "among them," meaning believing Jews who have retained their place in the tree. This is "the remnant according to the election of grace." The place of privilege that the Gentiles are now enjoying is one of "intimate association with Jews." Murray's comments that "Gentiles are reminded that they draw all the grace they enjoy from the tree whose root is Israel's patriarchs," and that "Gentiles and Jews partake together of the privilege that stems from the same root": bring him very close to reinterpreting the Olive Tree as being the place of blessing rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant rather than being Israel as such. On 11:18 he again speaks of the Olive Tree as "the place of privilege and honor." Furthermore, these Gentiles occupy their place "in the kingdom of God by the displacement of Israel"; but any boasting or arrogance on the part of the Gentiles is condemned. Furthermore, the Gentiles can also be removed from the Olive Tree, and the broken Jewish branches can be grafted back in. On this, Murray elaborates in his

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 370-371.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 340-341.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>5</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 2:85-86.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2:86-87.

comments on 11:23-24.<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes the regrafting of the Jewish natural branches into "the privileged position" that mostly Gentiles now occupy. He teaches that those Gentiles who thought that Israel, once cut off, cannot be grafted back, do not understand the power of God. It is only natural that this should occur, since it is *their own olive tree*, that is, the olive tree belongs to the Jews.

While denying a national restoration of Israel, Postmillennialists have generally believed in a national salvation of Israel. Kik<sup>2</sup> and Iain Murray<sup>3</sup> have amassed documentation from many parts of Church history showing this to be the traditional view of the Church. Proponents of Postmillennialism believe in the national salvation of the Jews before the second coming of Christ. In Hodge's own words: "In Romans xi.25, Paul teaches that the national conversion of the Jews is not to take place 'until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.'"<sup>4</sup> The Covenant Premillennialist also believes in a national salvation of Israel but would not agree on its relationship to the establishment of the kingdom. In Covenant Postmillennialism the salvation of Israel is a necessary prerequisite to the second coming: "The second great event, which, according to the common faith of the Church, is to precede the second advent of Christ, is the national conversion of the Jews."<sup>5</sup> Hodge defends his thesis in four points.<sup>6</sup> First, previous prophecies concerning the Jews have been literally fulfilled, so it is natural to expect that the future prophecy of Israel's national salvation will also be literally fulfilled. Second, there has been a continuous cycle in which Israel disobeys God, is punished for disobedience, which leads to Israel's repentance, and that, in turn, brings restoration. Israel's present dispersion and suffering is a punishment for rejecting the Messiah. This last cycle will only be completed by Israel's national salvation and restoration to the Lord. Third, there are clear prophecies in the Old Testament that predict a national salvation, such as Zechariah 12:10-13:1. Fourthly, it is also the teaching of the New Testament in Romans 11. Hodge concludes, "There is, therefore, to be a national conversion of the Jews." Hodge also argues that this national salvation will occur before the second coming.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 2:89-90.

<sup>2</sup> J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 8-14.

<sup>3</sup> Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971; reprint ed., 1975), pp. 41-50, 78-177.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (London: James Clarke & Co., 1960), 3:803.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3:805.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3:805-807.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3:807.

The one main passage which is the foundation for the belief in a national restoration of Israel in Postmillennialism is Romans 11:25-33, especially verses 25-27. Kik, for example, interprets these verses as speaking of a literal Israel, and, therefore, of the "conversion of Israel after the flesh."<sup>1</sup> This national conversion of Israel will take place after the mass conversion of the Gentiles, and it will result in riches for the Gentiles. Iain Murray shows that this passage was the basis for the Puritan hope for a national salvation and defends that position with his own exegesis.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the three postmillennial commentaries, they all support the traditional postmillennial view of Romans 11:25-33. Verses 25-26 are especially relevant to Israelology in general, and important for postmillennial Israelology. In verse 25, Paul wrote: *For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.* Hodge takes this verse to mean:

... a great and general conversion of the Jewish people, which should take place when the fulness of the Gentiles had been brought in, and that then, and not till then, those prophecies should be fully accomplished which speak of the salvation of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

While affirming a future conversion of the Jews as a nation, Hodge did not believe that this would include every individual Jew.<sup>4</sup>

The key issue here is the meaning of Paul's phrase, *when the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.* Hodge interprets the phrase to refer to a mass conversion of Gentiles in the last days.<sup>5</sup> Hodge's outline of the future is simple. First, Israel's blindness will continue until there is a mass turning of Gentiles to Christ. Second, after this mass turning of Gentiles, Israel's blindness will be removed and she will be saved as a nation.

When Shedd comes to Romans 11:25-27, he closely follows Hodge and other Postmillennialists by interpreting it as speaking of Israel's national salvation. Shedd views verse 25 as speaking of "the future of the church, as composed of Jews and

---

<sup>1</sup> Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, pp. 28, 75-76, 81.

<sup>2</sup> Iain Murray, *Puritan Hope*, pp. 61-79.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 373-374.

Gentiles."<sup>1</sup> While Postmillennialism believes in a national salvation of Israel, it does not teach a national restoration, only an amalgamation of saved Israel into the Church. The fact that "the reprobate are only a part of the Jews implies a time when the present apostasy and rejection of the Jews will cease," and Shedd interprets this verse as teaching that it will, indeed. Just as *the fullness of the Gentiles* implies a great number, the same must hold true for the Jews. As to the time of Israel's national salvation, this will follow, in keeping with Postmillennialism, "the Christianization of the globe." Following a mass conversion of Gentiles will come "the Christianization of the Jews."

The understanding and interpretation of this verse and the next is especially crucial in delineating the Israelology of Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, and Premillennialism. For this reason, John Murray deals with it at length.<sup>2</sup> First of all, he shows the importance of what Paul is about to say by emphasizing the *mystery* aspect of it. It is this aspect of the truth that makes what follows a great and precious truth. Second, the content of this mystery which has been hidden in the mind of God but now revealed is ". . . that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in . . ." (v. 25). Murray points out the two things which he has felt is the point of Romans 11 all along: first, "the hardening of Israel is partial not total"; and, second, it is "temporary not final." The end product will be the salvation of Israel, already implied several times earlier. Third, Israel's "partial hardening . . . will have a terminus," and this terminus is when "the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Fourth, the "fullness of the Gentiles" involves "enlarged blessings for the Gentiles"; and, since *be come in*, according to Murray, means "entering into the kingdom of God and life," it speaks of "Gentiles coming into the kingdom of God"; the *fullness* includes the concept of a mass of Gentiles entering into this kingdom still future to Paul's day. Murray gives three reasons why the amillennial understanding of verse 25 is incorrect: that the *fulness of the Gentiles* simply means the full complement of elect from among the Gentiles past, present, and future. Murray's first argument is based on the usage of *fulness* earlier in the chapter. Israel's *fulness* in verse 12 could not mean "the total elect of Israel," because in that verse *fulness* is contrasted with "Israel's trespass and loss." The "fulness must, therefore, refer to the "faith and repentance of Israel." To interpret *fulness* merely as the "total number of the elect of Israel or the number necessary to make up this total would not provide this contrast nor express the restoration which the passage requires." The usage of *fulness* in verse 12 is a contrast between "a saved remnant" and a "saved mass." The amillennial interpretation fails to take this into account. Murray concludes: "The evidence is decidedly against it." Murray's second argument is that the very expression *be come in* is envisioned as something future. The amillennial approach would include those who have already come in, and Paul's future perspective rules out this view. Even if an alternative amillennial position is taken into account, that the *fulness* does not mean all elect Gentiles of all time but all elect Gentiles yet to be added, this too fails to account for the analogy of verse 12, which "intimates a proportion such as supplies contrast with what goes before." Therefore, the issue is not

---

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 346-348.

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, *Romans*, 2:91-94.



merely an added number of Gentiles, but "a greatly increased influx of Gentiles into God's kingdom." Murray's third argument is that *the fulness of the Gentiles* of verse 25 must be consonant with the fulness of Israel in verse 12. According to verse 12, Israel's fulness would result in "the greater expansion of the blessing . . . as the riches of the world and of the Gentiles." To merely interpret *the fulness of the Gentiles* as "the full tale of the elect Gentiles" would mean that "the fulness of Israel would terminate any further expansion among the Gentiles of the kind of blessing which verse 12 suggests." Murray responds to objections to his postmillennial view of verse 25.<sup>1</sup> His postmillennial interpretation would be flawed, says he, if the *fulness of the Gentiles* were interpreted to mean "the consummation of blessing for the Gentiles and leave room for no further expansion of gospel blessing." This is the amillennial view of this verse, and if it were the correct meaning of *the fulness of the Gentiles*, then that would be a valid criticism; but Murray contends that this is not the proper understanding of *the fulness of the Gentiles*. This expression does denote "unprecedented blessing" for the Gentiles, but it does not exclude "even greater blessings to follow." From that perspective, the postmillennial understanding does not bring "incoherence into Paul's teaching."

In verse 26, Paul writes: *And so all Israel will be saved*. Hodge's interpretation here is the same as in the previous verse:

Israel, here, from the context, must mean the Jewish people, and *all Israel*, the whole nation. The Jews, as a people, are now rejected; as a people, they are to be restored. As their rejection, although national, did not include the rejection of every individual; so their restoration, although in like manner national, need not be assumed to include the salvation of every individual Jew. (All Israel) is not therefore to be here understood to mean, all the true people of God, as Augustin, Calvin, and many others explain it; not all the elect Jews, *i.e.*, all that part of the nation which constitute "the remnant according to the election of grace;" but the whole nation, as a nation.<sup>2</sup>

Hodge interprets *all Israel* to be literal Israel and not the Church as such, though Hodge would say that once *all Israel* is saved, they will be amalgamated into the Church. Shedd rejects two other common interpretations of the meaning of *all Israel* and follows the traditional postmillennial view that it refers to literal Israel.<sup>3</sup> For Shedd, as for Hodge, this verse refers to "the great mass or body of the nation, who are to be converted after the evangelization of the Gentile world." There is to be a reversal of the present condition. In the present state, the majority of the Jews "are blinded," "only a remnant of them are among the spiritually elect," and "the nation as a whole is reprobate."

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 374.

<sup>3</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 348.

"When the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come into the church," then the "nation as a whole will then be spiritually elect and 'saved,' and only a fraction spiritually rejected." According to Shedd, then, the deliverance of verse 26 is not "the small fraction" spoken of earlier, but "refers to the future conversion of the nation as a whole."

The amillennial interpretation of the Israel of this verse is that it is the Church, or the entire body of the elect. Murray rejects this interpretation as "exegetically impossible."<sup>1</sup> Since throughout the chapter Paul has been making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, it would contradict the context to make the *Israel* of this verse anything other than "ethnic Israel." Therefore, the Israel here "could not possibly include Gentiles," for that reduces the preceding verse to an "absurdity." Murray also refutes an alternate amillennial view of *all Israel*, which is that it means only "the elect of Israel" or "the true Israel in contrast with Israel after the flesh." The first reason is that it is too obvious that "all the elect of Israel, the true Israel, will be saved," so to assert this truth at this point "would have no particular relevance" to what Paul is actually saying. Furthermore, the fact that the elect are going to be saved is a clearly revealed truth that would not qualify as a *mystery*, but the salvation of *all Israel* as ethnic Israel would. The second reason is that this interpretation implies "no more than the salvation of a remnant of all Israel in all generations"; but this verse "brings to a climax" something Paul has been leading up to, and this is not that all the elect of Israel will be saved. Rather, he is dealing with "the climactic developments for Jew and Gentile" in "God's plan of salvation." The third reason is based on the sequential relationship between verses 25 and 26. The point of verse 25 is that "the hardening of Israel is to terminate and that Israel is to be restored." The point of verse 26 is to positively state the fact of Israel's national salvation. This is Israel's *fulness*, Israel's *receiving*, and Israel's "grafting in again." To make the *Israel* of verse 26 mean anything other than a reference to Israel's national salvation is "exegetical violence." In a footnote on this verse, Murray points out further why trying to interpret Romans 11:25-26 by Galatians 6:16 (the Israel of God) is untenable.

"It is impossible to entertain an exegesis which takes 'Israel' here in a different sense from 'Israel' in verse 25" . . . It is of no avail to appeal, as Calvin does, to Gal. 6:16. In the present passage there is the sustained contrast between Israel and the Gentiles. There is no such contrast in the context of Gal. 6:16. . . . Besides, how anticlimactic in this context would be the general truth implicit in all of Paul's teaching that all the elect will be saved.<sup>2</sup>

Murray then proceeds to give his interpretation as to the meaning of *all Israel*.<sup>3</sup> The expression *all Israel will be saved* is interpreted by Murray to be the national salvation of

---

<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Romans*, 2:96-97.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2:98.

Israel, or in Murray's words, "the fullness, the receiving, the ingrafting of Israel as a people, the restoration of Israel to gospel favour and blessing and the correlative turning of Israel from unbelief to faith and repentance." However, Murray does not interpret *all* to mean every Jew living after *the fullness of the Gentiles be come in*. His reasoning is that "the salvation of Israel must be conceived of on a scale that is commensurate with their trespass, their loss, their casting away, their breaking off, and their hardening, commensurate, of course, in the opposite direction." In other words, when God *cast off* Israel, he did not include every individual Jew, for there was "a remnant according to the election of grace." It did include the majority of the Jews, however. By the same token, *all* Israel means that the majority will be saved, but a minority will persist in unbelief. It is the "mass of Israel" that will be saved. Murray's final point on the issue of *all Israel will be saved* is that this phrase cannot be interpreted as merely "the relative proportion of saved Jews in the final accounting of God's judgment," an amillennial interpretation. This event is a future one.

On 11:27 Shedd repeats his view of the chronology of future events: first, there must be the conversion of the Gentile world as a whole; and, second, then will come the conversion of the Jews as a whole.<sup>1</sup> He also emphasizes that there is no specific timing for these events. Obviously, if the first event must precede the second, and the second event must precede the second coming, then the millennium is a long, long way off. When Murray comes to 11:27, he shows what the basis of Israel's national salvation is.<sup>2</sup> The reason that there must be a national salvation of Israel is because of the nation's covenantal relationship with God. "The future restoration of Israel is certified by nothing less than the certainty belonging to covenantal institution." Once again, Murray affirms that Israel is still the people of God, and its covenantal relationship to God still holds. Because it does, the future national salvation is assured.

Having stated things about the future of Israel in verses 25-27, Paul returns to the present situation in verses 28-32. Because of Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus, Paul in verse 28 states that Israel has become the enemy of the gospel, but nevertheless is still beloved by God. Hodge makes a disjunction of the two phrases<sup>3</sup> and makes the first part a reference to the present Israel, presently rejected by God. The beloved election is the future Israel that will be saved. In his interpretation of 11:28, Shedd states that the basis for this future national salvation is the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>4</sup> For Shedd, this is a summary "concerning the temporary rejection and final election of the Jews." The rejection was in order to facilitate and hasten "the entrance of the Gentiles into the church"; but because "God still remembers his covenant with Abraham," he intends "to bring into the church the great body of his descendants."

---

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, *Romans*, 2:99-100.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 375.

<sup>4</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 349-350.

Again, Israel's national salvation will result in her amalgamation into the Church. In his comments on 11:28, Murray explains in what way the Jews have become enemies.<sup>1</sup> Murray softens what initially appears to be a harsh statement about Jews. To say that the Jews *are enemies* is not to be understood as subjective hatred of either Jews toward Gentiles or Gentiles toward Jews. This enmity is a positional one: "the alienation from God's favour and blessing." According to Murray, *enemies* means the same thing as the *casting away*. *Enemies* means the same thing as the "rejection of Israel." By the same token, they are *beloved for the fathers' sake*, that is, they are beloved by God because God's covenant was made with the fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and this status is also a positional one. The above explanation would mean that Israel is both rejected by God and beloved by God at the same time. Murray states that Israel as a nation is "both 'enemies' and 'beloved' at the same time."<sup>2</sup> They are *enemies* in relationship to the gospel, but they are *beloved* in relationship to the election. Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus means that "they have been cast away" and so have become *enemies*. The result of this is that "the gospel had been given to the Gentiles." Their relationship to the patriarchs means that "they were beloved." This means, according to Murray, "that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with their fathers." Murray points out that the *election* of this verse is not an individual election, but the national election. Furthermore, this *election* includes not only to the remnant of Israel spoken of earlier, but "Israel as a whole." This election then "is the election of Israel as a people." The point Murray is making is that positionally Israel is still the chosen people of God. There is no problem for Murray that Israel is both *enemies* and *beloved* at the same time. Because of Israel's unbelief, Israel has *been broken off* and are *enemies* in that sense; but because they are still the chosen people, "God still sustains his peculiar relation of love to them, a relation that will be demonstrated and vindicated in the restoration."

The reason Israel is still around, according to verse 29, is: "*For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of.*" Hodge<sup>3</sup> clearly sees this to be a reference to Jews as a nation and not to Jews as individuals. He applies the truth to Israel past and future while insisting that Israel present is cut off and rejected. Murray sees this verse as once again affirming what the previous verse taught: that Israel is still the people of God.<sup>4</sup> "The adoption, the covenants, and the promises in their application to Israel have not been abrogated." Israel is still the "covenantal" people in spite of their unbelief.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Romans*, 2:100.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:101.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p. 375-376.

<sup>4</sup> John Murray, *Romans*, 2:101.

Murray interprets 11:30-31 as simply restating several points made earlier.<sup>1</sup> The points repeated are (1) Gentiles have become partakers of God's mercy, and their salvation was promoted by the disobedience of Israel; and, (2) it is by the mercy and salvation of the Gentiles that Israel's conversion is realized.

Shedd's comments on 11:32 summarize much of what he has already said:

As the Gentiles, viewed as a whole, obtained the benefits of redemption, instrumentally, through the unbelief of the Jews, so the Jews, viewed as a whole, will hereafter obtain the benefits of redemption, instrumentally, through the belief of the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup>

The above discussion shows that Postmillennialism generally held to the belief in a national salvation of Israel. However, Boettner, a contemporary Postmillennialist, disputes this very cardinal point of mainline Postmillennialism. In his discussion on Romans 11:25-26, Boettner never mentions a national regeneration or salvation of Israel. Whereas Hodge and other Postmillennialists interpret the *all Israel* to refer to the Jews as a nation, Boettner rejects this view. He has already disallowed any distinction between the Jews and Gentiles and has already claimed that the Jews as a nation have ceased to exist. The *all Israel* is not a reference to a future conversion of Israel, but is "the sum total of the elect, God's people composed of both Jews and Gentiles." On this point, Boettner is closer to Amillennialism than to traditional Postmillennialism. Finally, Boettner identifies the *all Israel* or all the elect with *the Israel of God* in Galatians 6:16. While affirming the possibility of salvation of individual Jews, Boettner denies that there will be any national salvation of the Jews at the end of the age.<sup>3</sup> He challenges Covenant Premillennialism on its teaching that there will be a national salvation of Israel,<sup>4</sup> though this was also a teaching of traditional Postmillennialism. Boettner concludes: "We see no special mission in the future for the Jews, other than that they individually, like those of all other nationalities, be converted to Christianity as the church progresses throughout the world."<sup>5</sup> Boettner denies a future national salvation of Israel:

That leaves no space for a future nationalistic conversion. In accordance with this the entire system of Judaism has been abrogated, finished, brought to an end; and the church has taken

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 2:101-102.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, p. 352.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 312-313, 319.

<sup>4</sup> Loraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977), p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

its place. The New Covenant is now the authoritative instrument for God's dealings with his people. This biblical doctrine of the covenants, in my opinion, renders impossible both the historic premillennial and the dispensational premillennial position. It is compatible with either the amillennial or the postmillennial position.<sup>1</sup>

## II. COVENANT AMILLENNIALISM

For the most part, the amillennial interpretation of Romans 9:1-11:15 is the same as the postmillennial with a few exceptions. So this will concentrate on 11:16-32.

Allis' interpretation of the Olive Tree is: (1) the new branches represent Gentile Christians; (2) these Gentiles entering the Christian Church become members of a body; (3) this new body has its roots in the Abrahamic Covenant; (4) this Olive Tree represents the true Israel; and, (5) this true Israel is also the Church, which is also a theocracy.<sup>2</sup> Allis states that "spiritual blessings promised to Israel are to be secured only by faith, and are the common possession of all believers, both Jew and Gentile," and that Paul's "proclamation of the gospel . . . made no distinction between Jew and Gentile."

In his discussion on the Olive Tree in Romans 11:17-24, Hoekema states several premises:<sup>3</sup> there is only one Olive Tree, both Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way; both become members of the same Olive Tree; and, both Jewish and Gentile branches are grafted in simultaneously. Hoekema then concludes that "every thought of a separate future" for Israel "is here excluded." There is no "separate program for Jews."

Cox identifies the remnant of Israel with the Church and also as being the Olive Tree of Romans 11:

Beginning with the faithful remnant out of national Israel, God added to the church all who were saved through the earthly ministry of Jesus. The New Testament aspect of the church started out as a Jewish body. In fact, Cornelius would seem to have been the first Gentile convert to be added to the church in Jerusalem. Then God raised up the apostle Paul as a missionary

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-102.

<sup>2</sup> Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1945), pp. 108-110.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 143.

to the Gentiles; and many Gentile believers were added to the one olive tree which constituted the one body of God.<sup>1</sup>

When Berkhof approaches Romans 9-11, he states, "it may be thought that Romans 11:11-32 certainly teaches the future conversion of the nation of Israel. . . . but even its correctness is subject to considerable doubt."<sup>2</sup> He interprets chapters 9-10 as teaching that the promises of God did not apply "to Israel according to the flesh, but to the spiritual Israel." As to identification of the "spiritual Israel," Berkhof identifies it with the Church rather than with the believing Jewish remnant within Israel. When he comes to 11:1-10, Berkhof interprets it as God still having "His elect among Israel," but Berkhof does not limit the term "spiritual Israel" to that believing "elect among Israel." It is with this background that Berkhof arrives at his interpretation of Romans 11:11-32. Berkhof interprets these verses to teach that "the hardening of the greater part of Israel is not God's final end, but rather a means in His hand to bring salvation to the Gentiles," which in turn "may provoke Israel to jealousy." Berkhof also affirms that this section teaches that "the hardening of Israel will always be partial, for through all succeeding centuries there will always be some who accept the Lord." Berkhof's treatment of verses 25-26 denies that it teaches the national salvation of Israel *after* "the fullness of the Gentiles." Berkhof's interpretation is that "God will continue to gather His elect remnant out of the Jews during the entire new dispensation until the fullness (*pleroma*, that is, the number of the elect) of the Gentiles be come in, and so (in this same manner) all Israel (its *pleroma*, that is the full number of true Israelites) shall be saved." The *pleroma* is defined as "the number of the elect." The *fullness of the Gentiles* is the number of elect Gentiles. According to Berkhof, *all Israel* is not "a designation . . . of the whole nation," but only "the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant people." The *all Israel* is not all Jews living after *the fullness of the Gentiles be come in*, but only all the elect from the Jewish people in the new dispensation. As Berkhof notes, "Premillanarians take the twenty-sixth verse to mean that, after God has completed His purpose with the Gentiles, the nation of Israel will be saved," but Berkhof rejects this on the basis that earlier Paul taught "that the promises were for spiritual Israel" and therefore verse 26 cannot be a reference to physical or national Israel, for that "would come as a surprise."

To deal with the timing element implied by these verses, that only after the fullness of the Gentiles be come in is all Israel saved, Berkhof defines the Greek word to mean "in this manner." Berkhof concludes that with "the fullness of the Gentiles the fullness of Israel will also come in."

---

<sup>1</sup> William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1966), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), pp. 698-700.

Cox insists that if the verse is teaching that "every Jew living when Christ returns . . . is to have Paul contradicting himself."<sup>1</sup> Cox admits that the "context clearly indicates that Paul is referring to national Jews," but insists it refers *only* to the present remnant of Israel and not a future national turning.<sup>2</sup> *All Israel* only refers to the whole remnant of Israel. God "permitted a part of Israel to be blinded to the gospel, in order that the full number of elected Gentiles would be saved." So, "in the same manner all the elect of Israel . . . are also being saved." The fact is that throughout Romans 11, Paul has been making distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. It is inconsistent exegesis to make that Israel of 11:1-10 national Israel, and the Israel of 11:25-26 the Church. This Cox does not do. Cox does limit the *all Israel* to be only the remnant. Cox also states that if "taken literally at face value," 11:26 teaches that every Israelite is assured salvation; but he claims that the verse would then require the salvation of every Jew "past, present, and future." If this were the case, then it would be an "unbiblical teaching." Cox claims that such an interpretation would do "violence to Paul as well as to the entire New Testament."

Hendriksen deals with three different interpretations of this verse, two of which he rejects. The first is: "*All Israel* indicates the entire people of God: the total number of the elect out of both Jews and Gentiles; that is, the church."<sup>3</sup> The first view is that the "Israel" of Romans 11:26 is the Church as a whole. This was the view of John Calvin and is the view of many Covenant Amillennialists. They use Galatians 6:16 as corollary evidence of this view; but Hendriksen rejects this position,<sup>4</sup> primarily for contextual reasons. Throughout Romans 9-11, *Israel* is consistently used for Jews in contrast to Gentiles. This interpretation would require this verse to be the exception. Hendriksen feels that *Israel* here must also be the Jews. The second view is: '*All Israel* refers to the Jews as a people or collectively.'<sup>5</sup> The second view is that this refers to a national salvation sometime after "the fullness of the Gentiles." There are two variations to this position. There are those who view it to mean that sometime in the future there will be a mass turning of the Jews to Jesus that will include the majority of the people. This is the view of Covenant Postmillennialists, Covenant Premillennialists, and some Dispensationalists. The second variation is that it will include all the Jews. This is the view of many, if not most, Dispensationalists. Hendriksen also rejects this

---

<sup>1</sup> William E. Cox, *Biblical Studies in Final Things* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 77-78.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> William Hendriksen, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-43

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 38.



view,<sup>1</sup> for it requires an eschatological future that Covenant Amillennialism denies. As he has already stated, whatever is future is in the Church alone. The third view is: '*All Israel*' indicates the full number of the elect from among the Jews; in other words, the remnant.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, does Rom. 11:26a actually mean, and what is meant here by "all Israel"? . . .

. . . After what has already been said little evidence needs to be added to prove that the term refers to *the full number of elect Jews whom it pleases God to bring into the kingdom throughout the ages until the very day when also the full number of the Gentiles shall have been brought in*. "All Israel" is "the remnant according to the election of grace" (11:5).<sup>3</sup>

The third view is that *all Israel* is the entire Jewish remnant being saved between the first and second comings. This is now in the process of being fulfilled, and it is not a future eschaton. In this way, Hendriksen can remain consistent with the context in which "Israel" obviously refers to Jews in contrast with Gentiles and still deny a future national salvation of Israel, and so deny any future for national Israel. His main defense is contextual, for he points out that throughout Romans 9-11 Paul has been dealing with the remnant.<sup>4</sup>

What will this view do to God's promises to Israel? Hendriksen states:

It might seem to some that God had completely rejected his ancient covenant people. This, however, raised a problem: Was it true, then, that God had become unfaithful to his promises to Israel? "No," says Paul, as it were, "but you must remember that even during the old dispensation these promises were intended to be realized only in the lives of true believers. The rest were hardened. But there was always 'a remnant according to the election of grace.' At the present time there *is also* (see 11:5) a remnant. The hardening is not complete, though it might at times seem to be. But it is not (11:25). In fact, throughout this entire dispensation, until the very time when the full number of elect

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-49.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

Gentiles shall have been gathered into the church, elect Jews will be saved. 'And so all Israel shall be saved.'"<sup>1</sup>

Hendriksen's conclusion is that at the same time that "the full number of elect Gentiles shall have been gathered into the church, elect Jews will be saved." Hendriksen further states: "The apostle does not say that Israel shall be saved on a very large scale; but he says that 'all' Israel shall be saved. This 'all' clearly indicates *the total number* of elect Jews, without a single exception: *all* the elect."<sup>2</sup> In his concluding paragraph, the author shows that Israel as a nation or a people have no special place in the plan of God:

It has become very clear, therefore, that the proposition, "God is finished with the Jews," is an error. God has his elect people among the Africans, the Indian tribes, the French, the Dutch, the Mexicans, the Argentinians, the Australians, and so forth, and so forth; and certainly also, he has his elect among the Jews!<sup>3</sup>

Like Hendriksen, Hoekema also recognizes three views as to what Paul is actually saying.<sup>4</sup> The first view is that it refers to a national salvation of Israel following "the fulness of the Gentiles." This view, held by Covenant Postmillennialists, Covenant Premillennialists, and Dispensationalists, is rejected by the author. The second view is that it refers to "the salvation of all the elect," both Jews and Gentiles. This is held by many Covenant Amillennialists but is also rejected by Hoekema. The third view is that it refers to the "salvation throughout history of the total number of the elect from among the Jews." This is the view that Hoekema accepts. This view affirms two things:

This view agrees . . . in understanding the words "all Israel" as not designating the nation of Israel as a totality to be saved in the end-time, but as referring to the number of the elect to be saved throughout history. It differs from the second interpretation, however, in restricting the meaning of the word *Israel* to the Jews.<sup>5</sup>

Hoekema's interpretation is as follows: (1) Israel has been partially blinded; (2) because it is only partial, Jews will always be coming to Christ right up to the second coming; (3) at the same time, the fullness of the Gentiles is being brought in and this too will continue until the Parousia; and (4) at the Parousia, by which time all the elect

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*. pp. 139-140.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

of Israel will be saved, thus all Israel will be saved. This is the same view as Hendriksen's. Hoekema's solution to the obvious contrast between the partial of Romans 11:5 and the *all Israel* of 11:26 is to claim that 11:5 speaks of the remnant of one particular generation, while 11:26 speaks of "the sum total of all the remnants throughout history." While other Amillennialists totally ignore Paul's contrast between the partial and *all Israel*, Hoekema does not. Combining his view of the Olive Tree and the meaning of *all Israel shall be saved*, he argues against the view that there will be a national salvation of Israel in the future with two objections.<sup>1</sup> The first is to say that "the way in which Jews are now being saved, . . . must not be separated from the way in which Gentiles are saved, since God now deals with both groups together." The second objection is that to interpret verse 26 as referring to "a time of salvation for Jews which will be separated from . . . the time when Gentiles are saved is to go contrary to the main thrust of the chapter." Hoekema does not deny the possibility of a future mass turning of the Jews to Jesus.<sup>2</sup> However, while the other three major theological groups feel that Romans 11:25-26 requires a mass national turning, Hoekema is non-committal and states that the passage neither demands one nor disallows for it. If it does happen, it will be contemporary with and not subsequent to the fullness of the Gentiles. The last thing Hoekema states about Romans 11:26 is to relate it to Jewish evangelism:

The sign of the salvation of the fullness of Israel, . . . tells us that Jews will continue to be converted to Christianity throughout the entire era between the first and second comings of Christ, as the full number of the Gentiles is being gathered in. In such Jewish conversions, therefore, we are to see a sign of the certainty of Christ's return. In the meantime, this sign should bind on our hearts the urgency of the church's mission to the Jews. In a world in which there is still a great deal of anti-Semitism, let us never forget that God has not rejected his ancient covenant people, and that he still has his purpose with Israel.<sup>3</sup>

### III. COVENANT PREMILLENNIALISM

As with Covenant Amillennialism, the interpretation of Romans 9:1-11:15 in Covenant Premillinnialism largely follows the pattern of Covenant Postmillennialism with some exceptions. The following will concentrate on 11:15-32.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

Except for a passing reference in which he states that the Jewish believers are the firstfruits of Romans 11:11,<sup>1</sup> Buswell does not deal with this passage. As for LaSor, he only provides some hints of his viewpoint.<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Olive Tree, LaSor does identify the natural branches as Jews and the wild olive branches as Gentiles, but he does not say what the Olive Tree itself represents. He does conclude that Paul teaches that "God has not rejected Israel" and the future of the Jews is one of "restoration." It is the restoration of Israel that cannot be "fulfilled in the Christian church" but can be fulfilled only in Israel--the Israel that Paul is talking about in these chapters, as distinct from the Gentiles in the Church.

Concerning Paul's discussion of the issue of election in Romans 9, Ladd interprets the passage as speaking of literal Israel guilty of rebellion and apostasy, but "God has been patient with the unbelief of literal Israel that through it he might show mercy upon true Israel."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, God had "a purpose in Israel's stumbling and unbelief," which was "to bring salvation to the Gentiles"; unbelieving Israel became "vessels of wrath." To replace these, God made "vessels of mercy," which "are a mixed company consisting of both Jews and Gentiles." At this point, Ladd notes that Paul cited two passages from Hosea which "in their Old Testament context refer to Israel and applies them to the Christian church which consists largely of Gentiles." Ladd sees this as evidence of reinterpretation of the Old Testament by the New. He interprets this to mean that Paul cited these verses from Hosea "to prove that the Old Testament foresees the Gentile church." Ladd concludes:

Here, in two separate places, prophecies which in their Old Testament refer to literal Israel are in the New Testament applied to the (Gentile) church. In other words, Paul sees the spiritual fulfillment of Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 in the church. It follows inescapably that the salvation of the Gentile church is the fulfillment of prophecies made to Israel. Such facts as this are what compel some Bible students, including the present writer, to speak of the church as the New Israel, the true Israel, the spiritual Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Ladd admits that the "rejection of Israel is not final or irremediable." He also understands that in the original context, Hosea was speaking of "the future salvation of

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), pp. 468-469.

<sup>2</sup> William Sanford LaSor, *Israel: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 78-82, 95-101.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for the Layman* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 22-23.

Israel in the Kingdom of God." However, he then claims that the prophecy of Hosea was "radically reinterpreted and given an unforeseen application" by the New Testament. The reason is that what "the Old Testament applies to literal Israel," the New Testament "applies to the church." To support the above contention, Ladd's basic argument is that since the New Testament teaches that all believers become the children of Abraham, then that means they, the Church, constitute "the true spiritual Israel."<sup>1</sup> This conclusion, Ladd claims, "follows inescapably."

Ladd deals with the Olive Tree in some detail. In an early work, as he sets out to develop his view of the relationship of Israel and the Kingdom of God, he reveals his view of the Olive Tree of Romans 11.<sup>2</sup> Ladd does distinguish Israel and the Church to some degree, but he insists that "we must speak of only one people of God." For this to be the case, Israel was the people of God in the Old Testament, but the Church became the people of God in the New Testament, at least as of Acts 2. For his evidence he goes to the Olive Tree of Romans 11, which he claims will make his contention "vividly clear." He interprets the Olive Tree as representing the people of God. Since there is only one olive tree, there is therefore only one people of God. This Olive Tree has many branches. During the Old Testament period, "the branches of the tree were Israel." Now, "because of unbelief, some of the natural branches were broken off and no longer belong to the tree." However, some of the branches were not broken off because "some Jews accepted the Messiah and His message of the Gospel of the Kingdom," and these "came into the Church." He identifies the wild olive branches as Gentiles, but he identifies the natural branches as Israel rather than as Jews in contrast to Gentiles. As far as Ladd goes with it, for him the Olive Tree represents the people of God. The natural branches are Israel, and the wild olive branches are Gentiles. Later, Ladd summarizes his view of the Olive Tree as being "one people of God, which consisted first of Israelites and then of believing Gentiles and Jews." Only in this concluding statement do the natural branches cease to be national Israel and become individual Jews. Ladd then concludes that "it is impossible to think of two peoples of God through whom God is carrying out two different redemptive purposes without doing violence to Romans 11." Ladd never clearly states that the olive tree is now the Church, but he implies it. When speaking of the natural branches, he declares they are Jewish believers who "came into the Church." Furthermore, it is a necessary logical conclusion for Ladd. He insists that there can be only one people of God. He also insists that the Church is the people of God and that the olive tree is the people of God. Therefore, the Olive Tree is the Church today. In a later work, Ladd is more explicit.<sup>3</sup> he points out that there are two Israels: physical and spiritual. While all Jews are part of physical Israel, only believing Jews are part of spiritual Israel. Not all Jews could claim to be of spiritual Israel. This "true Israel" is the Church.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 117-118.

<sup>3</sup> Ladd, *Last Things*, pp. 19-20.

Buswell<sup>1</sup> believes in a national salvation of Israel and takes Paul's statement in Romans 11:25-32 quite literally; but he sees this as a new form of the Church. The Rapture will bring to a completion "the Gentile church," and Israel's salvation will once again bring in a Jewish Church. Like all Covenant Theologians, Buswell views Israel as merely being amalgamated into the Church. Finally, the national salvation of Israel comes at the second coming while the final restoration will follow the second coming.

In his discussion on Romans 11, Ladd deals with the statement that *all Israel will be saved*.<sup>2</sup> As a Covenant Premillennialist, Ladd does believe in the national salvation of Israel. While Israel has indeed been hardened, this is "only partial and temporary." Eventually when "the full number of Gentiles has come in," Israel will then "believe and be grafted again into the people of God." Ladd rejects that *all Israel* means the Church. Yet he still insists that in "a very real sense . . . the Church is Israel." To what degree, of course, is based on his Israelology. What is not clear is Israel's national status when she is grafted back into the Olive Tree. Does she maintain a separate identity, or is she merely assimilated into the Church since the Church, like the Olive Tree, is the people of God? Ladd rejects the concept "that God has for ever cast off Israel after the flesh." This cannot be for two reasons: first there is a spiritual remnant today which is the "natural branches which were not broken off because they received Christ"; and, second, in the future, "Israel as a whole" will also be saved.

Ladd also finds support for a national salvation of Israel in the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39 and Luke 21:24.<sup>3</sup> Ladd affirms that there will be a national salvation of Israel when *all Israel will be saved*. This will happen "when Israel will recognize Christ as her Messiah . . ." Because of the emphasis on Jerusalem as a city, Ladd also affirms that there will be a national restoration of Israel which is in keeping with his Premillennialism.

Later, Ladd draws the following conclusion:

One fact, however, is very important: so far as the New Testament is concerned, the salvation of Israel is an essential part of God's single redemptive purpose. The work of God's Spirit in the formation of the Church and the future divine visitation of Israel by which the natural branches are regrafted into the olive tree ought not to be seen as two separate and unrelated purposes but as two stages of the single redemptive purpose of God through His Kingdom. There is a single olive tree, and there is one Kingdom of God. The final stages of the reign of God in Christ

---

<sup>1</sup> Buswell, *Systematic Theology*.

<sup>2</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

by which He will put all His enemies under His feet (I Cor. 15:25) will include the salvation of Israel after the flesh. The people of God through whom the Kingdom of God is working in This Age is the Church which consists largely of Gentiles; but the people of God in whom the Kingdom will come to its consummation will include Israel (Rom. 11:12). But there is one Kingdom and there is one people.<sup>1</sup>

Ladd affirms again a national salvation of Israel and sees this as "an essential part of God's single redemptive purpose." He then proceeds to make some ramifications. Israel's national salvation and her regrafting back into the Olive Tree must not be viewed "as two separate and unrelated purposes but as two stages of the single redemptive purpose of God." He reaffirms that "there is a single olive tree" by which he concludes that there can only be one people of God, since he insists that that is the meaning of the Olive Tree. He also reaffirms that there is only "one Kingdom of God," though he clearly recognizes that there are at least two different facets to God's kingdom program. God's kingdom program "will include the salvation of Israel after the flesh," but Ladd is again very vague as to Israel's status when this occurs. He clearly states that the people of God "in This Age is the Church." He also clearly states that the people of God in the future "will include Israel"; but what does this mean? Does the saved national Israel merely assimilate into the Church? Ladd does not say this in so many words, but that is the logical conclusion since "there is one Kingdom and there is one people of God."

Having declared the Church as "the true spiritual Israel," what then is the future of literal Israel? To answer this question, Ladd again gives his interpretation of the Olive Tree.<sup>2</sup> He interprets the olive tree to be "the people of God, seen in its entirety." The natural branches are the Jews and the wild olive branches are the Gentiles. While Israel did stumble, it was "not that she should forever fall." At this point, Ladd reaffirms that there will be a national salvation of Israel. This is interpreted to mean "the vast majority of living Jews, will be saved." However, Ladd's belief in a national salvation is not based on the Old Testament prophecies since, because they have been "reinterpreted," one cannot be sure if they really refer to Israel or to the Church. For Ladd, the only basis for believing in a national salvation of Israel is the New Testament.

Concerning Israel's salvation, Ladd further states:

We could wish that Paul had written more about the way in which Israel will be saved. The words "the Deliverer will come from Zion" may well refer to the Second Coming of Christ. One

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 120-121.

<sup>2</sup> Ladd, *Last Things*, pp. 24-25.

of the purposes of his return will be to redeem Israel as well as to take the church unto himself.

However, two things are clear. *Israel must be saved in the same way as the church--by turning in faith to Jesus as their Messiah (Rom. 11:23), and the blessings which Israel will experience are blessings in Christ--the same blessings which the church has experienced.*<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. DISPENSATIONALISM

The dispensational view of these crucial chapters of Romans and of the Olive Tree can be gleaned from their theological works and commentaries on the Book of Romans. This work will first deal with the former and then three dispensational commentaries will be compared.

Chafer, while discussing Soteriology makes a passing reference to Romans 9-11<sup>2</sup> and points out that the "Apostle distinguishes clearly between Israel the nation and 'spiritual Israel.'" Like Covenant Theologians, Dispensationalists recognize that Paul is speaking of two Israels; but unlike many Covenant Theologians, Dispensationalists do not view the two Israels as being ethnic Israel and the Church as Israel, but rather Israel the whole and the believing Israel within the nation. Chafer discusses the passage again later.<sup>3</sup> According to Chafer, the question being raised by the text is: "What has become of the oath-sustaining Israelitish covenants?" This question was raised because it was obvious that "the Jewish covenants are *not* being fulfilled in the present age." The question is, "What, then, has become of these covenants?" Chafer points out that there are two wrong answers: first, that "God had changed His mind and withdrawn the promises of an earthly kingdom for His chosen earthly people"; or, second, that "Israel had no such promises really," but these promises were intended to be understood by "a spiritual interpretation to be fulfilled in what is now in progress in the world," that is, the Church. The correct answer is to be found in this passage: first, God has not cast away His people and so Israel is not "either forsaken or mistaken with respect to her covenants or that these covenants are realized in a spiritual way by the Church;" second, while a "blindness has been imposed upon Israel as a nation" that is temporary "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," or "until the Church--'the fullness of the Gentiles'-be come in"; third, at that point God will forgive the sins of Israel "according to

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 3:105, 108.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4:267-270.



covenants made with Israel"; and, fourth, the reason all this is so is because "the gifts and the calling of God respecting Israel are without repentance on His part."

Ryrie states that, according to this passage, God has not cast away His people and that people is "natural Israel."<sup>1</sup> While Paul does make a distinction between the remnant and the non-remnant, "that distinction cannot vitiate the irrevocable promises made to Abraham." Although there has been a hardening in part, "the hardening is not permanent." However, the positive side of Israel's fall is that riches have come to the Gentiles in that the "the gospel has come unto them." Paul then asks that if this is true, "how much more their [Israel's] fullness?" As Ryrie states, "the fullness of blessing for Israel will be 'much more.'" This statement alone is conclusive evidence "that Israel will have a future." Ryrie then proceeds to give a dispensational view of the Olive Tree. The Olive Tree is neither Israel nor the Church, but it is "the place of privilege" or the place of blessing. Israel was "the first definite group to be called to this place, but because of unbelief she was set aside or broken off." Now it is the Gentiles who are in this place of blessing. However, "it is perfectly clear that Israel will again be grafted into the olive tree."

Walvoord discusses this passage when refuting the amillennial view:

This chapter deals with the question whether God has cast off Israel. To this leading question Paul replies in positive terms, "God forbid." His argument may be summarized as a denial of this question. God has not cast away His people. There has always been a remnant in every age true to God. The unbelief of the nation Israel has never caused God to cast off His people as a whole (Rom. 11:3-4). There has always been a continuing program for Israel as witnessed in the present election of grace. Some Jews are being saved. While unbelieving Jews are blinded now, their present blindness will be lifted and replaced by sight and faith. When this glad day comes "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26), meaning a group or national deliverance in contrast to the individual salvation offered now. At that time God's covenants with Israel will be fulfilled, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, sure and irrevocable. The whole tenor of the chapter is against either the idea that Israel has lost all future hope of fulfillment of their promises through cancellation or that the church has received these promises and Israel is disinherited.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of Premillennial Faith* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953), pp. 65-67.

<sup>2</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 172-173.

Walvoord's conclusion is:

On the basis of this brief study of terminology, the evidence has been examined and found to produce nothing indicating that the term Israel is ever used of Gentiles. Rather it is used of the godly remnant in all ages, Christian Jews, and the future national entity anticipated through the Scriptures. None of these usages support the amillennial contention that Israel has no national future.<sup>1</sup>

In the same work, Walvoord discusses the "general teaching of Romans 11."<sup>2</sup> Walvoord's position is that the "general teaching of Romans 11 is that Israel is to be restored." His evidences are: When Paul asked the question, "Hath God cast away his people?" he then answered "categorically, 'No'--'God forbid'"; in other words, "God has never cast away His people"; even in times of apostasy there was always a "Godly remnant" and today that godly remnant are the "Jewish Christian believers"; while it is true "that the nation Israel as a whole is unconverted and blinded," this was part of a divine purpose to bring "mercy to the Gentiles"; just as "the fall of Israel" resulted "in great Gentile blessing," by the same token, "Israel is destined for a glorious future"; and so, "Israel's time of fullness is still ahead." Walvoord then discusses briefly the Olive Tree which he interprets as "the fountain of blessing," or the place of blessing. Jews and Gentiles are interpreted literally, but not as "individual Gentiles or individual Israelites, but rather to each entity as a group." The point of the illustration is that "Israel is pictured as being cut off the olive tree and the Gentiles are grafted in." Just as Gentiles "who are like branches from a wild olive tree can be grafted into a good tree," by the same token "can Israel who is of the good tree naturally be grafted back in." The point of this passage is that someday they will be. Furthermore, the Gentiles can also be cut off if they fail to continue in faith. For now, it "is the time of Gentile opportunity while the Israel promises are suspended," but the "day is coming when the present time of Gentile blessing or fullness will come in and then Israel's hour of blessing will follow."

Pentecost gives an excellent dispensational view of the Romans passage:

The relation of the theocratic kingdom to this present age may be seen in the relation of the theocratic kingdom people, Israel, to the present program. This is traced in Romans 11. Paul makes certain statements there in tracing God's dealing. God has not cast Israel away (vv. 1-2), for God has always maintained a remnant for Himself (vv. 3-4) and there is a continuing remnant according to the election of grace (v. 5). National Israel has been blinded, judicially (v. 7), which blindness was anticipated in the Old Testament (vv. 8-10). Through this blinding of Israel God instituted a program with the Gentiles (vv. 11-12), in which, after

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the natural branches have been taken out of the place of blessing (vv. 13-16), wild branches, that is, Gentiles, have been grafted into the place of blessing (vv. 17-24). However, after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, that is, after the completion of the program with the Gentiles, God will bring Israel back into the place of blessing again (vv. 25-29) and will bring salvation to the nation (v. 26). This salvation (v. 26) is the salvation that was promised Israel in the Old Testament, which was to be realized when the Messiah instituted the millennial reign. Therefore Paul is showing us that after the rejection of Israel, because of the rejection of the offered kingdom, God brought the Gentiles into the place of blessing, which program continues throughout the present age. When that program is ended, God will inaugurate the theocratic kingdom at the return of the Messiah and fulfill all the covenanted blessings. Thus, throughout the New Testament the kingdom is not preached as having been established, but is still anticipated. In Acts 1:6 the Lord did not rebuke the disciples because their expectation of a yet future kingdom was in error, but only stated that the time of that kingdom, although future, was not to be known by them.<sup>1</sup>

The above quote is a good example of a dispensational view of Romans 11 and is self-explanatory. What should be especially noted is that "God has not cast Israel away," and that the Olive Tree is interpreted as "the place of blessing" rather than the Church. This passage is interpreted as affirming both a national salvation and a national restoration of Israel.

The three commentaries to be gleaned are by Alva J. McClain, former president of Grace Theological Seminary; Herman A. Hoyt, present president of the same; and, Charles Lee Feinberg, former dean of Talbot Theological Seminary.

Feinberg gives a summary of chapter 9 as a whole, which concerns Israel past.<sup>2</sup> The discussion of Israel's past naturally begins with the election of Israel. This election began with Abraham and carried through to Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's descendants. The basis of this election was God's love for Israel and not on the basis of Israel's size or righteousness, for both were lacking. Israel's election in the Old Testament is reaffirmed by Romans 9. Feinberg asserts that to fully understand Romans 9, one must distinguish between individual election, which is "an election to salvation, eternal life in Jesus Christ," and national election, which is "an election to outward privilege." Only Israel has been the object of a national election, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1958), p. 468.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lee Feinberg, *Israel: At the Center of History & Revelation* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), pp. 117-126.

"choice of Israel was within the sphere of time and had to do with temporal things." The point of similarity between the two types of election is that both are unconditional; but in a national election it is possible for the wicked to "partake of the temporal blessings of the upright," and for the righteous to "share in the judgments of the wicked." It is a fact that the remnant of Israel often suffers the fate of the nation as a whole. Romans 9 speaks of both elections. There is a national election of Israel "to privilege," but within national Israel there is "an individual election within a national election." Those Jews who are the objects of an individual election make up the remnant of Israel. Such a situation is only possible with Israel, "because she is the only nation in Scripture that has ever been nationally elected." Israel, as a nation, has been elected nationally to privilege, and individuals within that nation have been elected to salvation. "In spite of God's temporary rejection of the nation, it is eminently possible for individuals to be elected of God to eternal salvation at the same time."

The first section of this part of the epistle is 9:1-5. McClain<sup>1</sup> states that Paul begins his discussion with the admission that his kinsmen, the Jewish people, "are unsaved"; however, this "does not change the status of the nation before God." To Israel still belongs eight things. First is the *adoption*, and Israel is "the only nation that God ever called a son." For this reason, Paul used *Israelites* instead of "Jews," for "Israel" is their theocratic name. Second is the *glory*, which is the Shechinah Glory or "God's manifest presence." Third is the *covenants*, for "God has covenanted with this people as He has covenanted with no other people on the earth." Fourth is the *giving of the law*, and "no other nation had a code of laws that God gave." Fifth is the *service of God*, meaning "the temple ritual," and "the sacrificial system." Sixth is the *promises*, for "the Messianic promises were to Israel alone." Seventh is the *fathers*, the patriarchs, for "all those great men belonged to Israel, not to the Gentiles." Eighth is *Christ*, for the Messiah Himself, in His humanity, "came from Israel." The problem then is: "Israel has rejected the gospel and yet they are still holding their position in the Old Testament." McClain points out that if Covenant Theology is true, and "because of disobedience Israel had forfeited her favored position," and that "consequently now her promises and covenants are all to be transferred to the Church," this would have been the time to say it; but Paul never makes any such statement, because he "was too careful a student of the Old Testament Scriptures to cut the knot thus." On the contrary, Paul "acknowledges at once that Israel, although rebellious and unsaved, is still the chosen nation." The solution is to be found in making a distinction between "individual salvation" and "national favor." If "Israel's position as the divinely chosen nation had been conditioned upon the righteousness of her people as *individuals*, certainly this position would have been forfeited long before." Just as national election does not guarantee individual election, the salvation of every individual within the nation, by the same token, national election is not dependent upon individual election.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alva J. McClain, *The Jewish Problem and Its Divine Solution* (Winona Lakes, IN: B M H Books, 1972), pp. 8-9; and, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), pp. 178-179.

Hoyt comments more specifically on verses 4-5.<sup>1</sup> He defines the eight privileges of Israel the same way McClain does, and the conclusion is that in spite of Israel's unbelief, her status has not changed: "the sovereign choice of Israel as a nation remains an eternal fact."

Feinberg initially does not expound on the privileges of Israel, but chooses instead to deduct the meaning of the eight privileges:<sup>2</sup> they are "God's tokens of love to Israel." This, in turn, explains Paul's sorrow of 9:1-2 and wish of 9:3 for "he must love where God loves." "If God has singled them out by His overflowing love, then he, too, shall love them with a passion unsurpassed by any other man." Later, Feinberg elaborates on the national election and its privileges, and these privileges are listed in Romans 9:4-5.<sup>3</sup> The first is the *adoption*, by which Israel became the national son of God. The second privilege is the *glory*, which is identified with the Shechinah Glory, the visible presence of God in the Holy of Holies. The third privilege is the *covenants* within which Feinberg includes all five Jewish covenants: the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New. The fourth privilege was *the giving of the Law*, and the Law of Moses "was given to Israel only." The fifth privilege is the *service of God*, which is defined as "that characteristic feature of the religious life of Israel which differentiated them most strikingly from all their heathen neighbors." It included "a divinely instituted priesthood," and "atonement for all sins committed" through a "system of substitutionary sacrifices." The sixth privilege is the *promises*, which include the Messianic promises, and "all God's gracious promises to Israel in the Old Testament can be included." There are five such promises. First, an "eternal national entity" so that "Israel need never fear for her national existence." Second, an "eternal land" so "the right and title to it have irrevocably been given to them by God." Third, an "eternal King" so David will "never lack for a son to reign upon his throne." Fourth, an "eternal kingdom" so the Messiah's dominion will be "an everlasting dominion." Fifth, "an eternal throne" so David's "throne would exist forever." The seventh privilege was the Messiah Himself, and Israel is "the nation from which the Messiah came." Feinberg states that a "nation so favored of God is assuredly one well beloved of Him." Feinberg concludes this section by showing that Israel was elected and privileged for "a threefold purpose." First, Israel "was chosen to witness to the truth of the unity of God." Second, "Israel was to preserve the Scriptures" and did so "in their purity." Third, "Israel was chosen to be the channel of the Messiah." The unconditional Abrahamic Covenant promised a seed in whom "were all the nations of the earth to be blessed." This seed of Abraham was "passed from Abraham to Isaac and then to Jacob." This promise was fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

---

<sup>1</sup> Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christian Theology: Studies in Romans* (Winona Lakes, IN: B M H Books, 1977), pp. 101-102.

<sup>2</sup> Feinberg, *Israel*, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-126.

Commenting on 9:6, McClain<sup>1</sup> interprets Paul's words as a denial that Israel's unbelief has caused "the Prophetic Word of God" to be "driven out of its course being made of 'none effect.'" The fact is, the "Word of God has not failed," for the simple reason that "*not all* of the Israelites have rejected the Gospel message." Some Jews did believe, "and these are the *true* Israelites upon whom God is even now fulfilling His promises." According to 9:6-8, through the "believing remnant the continuity of the chosen nation is being preserved and assured." McClain, then, sees the two Israels as physical Israel and spiritual Israel, but both Israels are Jews. He does not make the latter Israel to be the Church. Physical Israel is still all Jews, and spiritual Israel is those Jews who believe. McClain clearly identifies spiritual or believing Israel with the remnant of Israel. Like McClain, Hoyt points out that there are two Israels, so not every person "who traces his physical lineage to Israel is counted as being a member of the nation of Israel as God looks at it."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Hoyt does not elaborate and clarify what constitutes each Israel in the way McClain does.

Commenting on 9:25-29, McClain sharply disagrees with Covenant Theologians<sup>3</sup> who use this section to prove that Paul taught that promises and prophecies made to Israel in the Old Testament were being fulfilled to and in the Church. Ladd referred to this as the "reinterpretation" of the Old by the New. McClain, while obviously familiar with this view, rejects it, for that view cannot be justified. McClain shows that exegetically, the passage allows for a different perspective, which is that Paul was interpreting the prophecies of Hosea as speaking to Israel and not to the Gentiles. The view of Covenant Theology is arrived at by connecting the last phrase of verse 24, *but also of the Gentiles*, with the first phrase of verse 25, *as he says also in Hosea*. However, McClain points out that another exegetical option is "to regard the introductory phrase of verse 25 as referring back to the whole central argument which has gone before in this chapter, that is, the fact of an election with Israel purely on the basis of sovereign mercy where no mercy was deserved." McClain feels that it is a better option because then "the two quotations from Hosea not only cease to be misinterpretations, but also are seen to be peculiarly appropriate." This option is further supported by verse 27 which states what Isaiah said concerning Israel. The point of Hosea is that Israel was to receive mercy, and the point of Isaiah is that this mercy was to be "limited to a remnant." Other Dispensationalists do not accept this option, but do see Paul as speaking of Gentiles when quoting Hosea. However, they view Paul's quotation of Hosea merely as an application to believing Gentiles because of a similar situation, and not that the Gentiles are fulfilling Israel's promises. Application of Old Testament passages to a New Testament situation because of one point of similarity is a common motif in the New Testament.

Hoyt is unclear on Paul's use of Hosea in 9:26-28:

---

<sup>1</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, pp. 16-17.

If this passage does not refer to Israel, then perhaps it reaches beyond Israel to the Gentiles. And undeserving though they may be, upon some of them God will set his sovereign love. . . .

The natural seed of Israel may be like the sand of the sea for number, but only a remnant will be saved. God will choose that remnant and they will respond in faith to His call.<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to McClain, Hoyt permits verse 26 to possibly speak of the Gentiles, though he affirms that the original Old Testament passage does speak of Israel. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on Paul's use of Hosea.

Commenting on 9:30-33, McClain draws a conclusion.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion is that while Israel the whole, national Israel, has failed, the remnant of Israel has achieved. So have many Gentiles. The reason is that Israel tried to achieve by means of works, while the remnant and the believing Gentiles arrived by grace through faith. Israel's effort to achieve by works led the nation to reject the Messiahship of Jesus. As a result, Israel "stumbled at the Stone of stumbling, the very Rock of Israel upon whom he might have leaned for salvation."

Moving on to Romans 10, McClain first discusses 10:1-4.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between chapters 9 and 10 is that in chapter 9, Paul "explains why some Jews are saved," and in chapter 10 he explains "why the others are lost." His prayer for Israel shows that Paul "saw nothing incongruous between prayer and the doctrine of sovereign election." On the contrary, "because God is sovereign the Apostle can offer up supplication for his kinsmen." Paul's prayer for Israel falsifies the view of those "people who say (and they are Christians, or at least, they call themselves Christians)--'God has cast off the Jew. That is the end of it.'" However, as this section of Romans will show, this is not the "end of it." The problem is that Israel, while zealous for the law, was nevertheless ignorant of God's righteousness. Had they submitted to the righteousness of God, they would have realized that Christ is the end of the law.

Hoyt's interpretation of 10:4 is:

Christ, a person, in His performance, is the end of the law. He brought the law to its end, or He put a stop to the law on the issues of righteousness by what he did at Calvary. There He took away the law which was "contrary to us" by "nailing it to his cross"

---

<sup>1</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

(Col. 2:14). There He "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." (Eph. 2:15) . . .<sup>1</sup>

Consistent with Dispensationalism, Hoyt teaches that the Law of Moses is no longer in effect, and he brings this out in several ways. First, Christ "brought the law to its end"; second, Christ "put a stop to the law on the issues of righteousness"; third, Christ "took away the law"; and, fourth, Christ "abolished . . . the law of commandments." The Law of Moses is no longer a rule of life.

On 10:11-15, McClain states:

Just as there was no difference between Jew and Gentile with respect to sin and condemnation, so also there is no difference between them with respect to the offer of righteousness and salvation, for "*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (vv. 12-13). this quotation taken from the prophet Joel (3:32) . . . brings together the very things taught by the Apostle in the ninth and tenth chapters of his Epistle. The prophet Joel declares first that "*Whosoever* shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered," and then adds that those who shall "escape" shall be "the *remnant* . . . whom Jehovah doth *call*" (Joel 2:32). Thus the door is opened just as wide as the word "whosoever" can open it.<sup>2</sup>

Both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way; in that realm, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. Not only does the quotation from Joel show that salvation is offered to all on an individual basis, it also shows that the remnant of Israel will come to saving faith.

Hoyt's comments on 10:12 are:

Even though the gospel came to the Jew first, this was only a priority in time, because in the plan of God it was through the Jews that He intended to reach the Gentiles. Being the God of Jews and Gentiles alike, God put no difference between them in making the riches of His grace available to both.<sup>3</sup>

Hoyt remarks that while "the gospel came to the Jew first, this was only a priority in time." He again fails to elaborate, and the statement, standing by itself, is not completely clear. By, "only a priority in time," does he mean that this "priority" is

---

<sup>1</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 115.



limited to the apostolic period, or is it limited to the present age? Some Dispensationalists believe that the gospel is "to the Jew first" throughout the Church Age, while others limit it to the apostolic age. Hoyt appears to take the latter view.

Commenting on 10:16-21, McClain states that Israel's unsaved state is not God's fault but Israel's for they did not believe the message of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Yet this very national unbelief was predicted by Isaiah 53, the very same passage which spoke of the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and "at which the unbelieving Jew had stumbled."

The most crucial chapter is Romans 11. McClain's introduction to this chapter is:

Only one question remains to be discussed, and it is one of supreme importance to the Jew and the Gentile. What is the present status of Israel as a nation in view of what has been said by the Apostle? Are we to understand that their unbelief has resulted in the canceling of ancient promises and privileges? Is this the end of *national* Israel? To use the opening words of chapter eleven, "Did God cast off his people?" The writer has already indicated in the first part of chapter nine what his general answer to this question will be, but now he devotes a whole chapter to a consideration of it.<sup>2</sup>

In Hoyt's introduction,<sup>3</sup> he shows that the dispensational approach to Romans 11 is to recognize "the fact that the administration of God varies with different companies of people and in different periods of time." Unless this is understood, it "is impossible to understand God's design for the nation of Israel." While "through all the varying administrations there runs one eternal purpose," nevertheless, "Israel, the nations, and the church do not lose their identity or distinctiveness, but each performs its function in contributing to that one eternal purpose." Hoyt does not state what that "one eternal purpose" actually is, but if he is in line with most Dispensationalists, that "one eternal purpose" is doxological, that is, the glory of God. The issue in Romans 11 is, "What is the present status of Israel as a nation?" It is important to note that in this chapter, "Israel is under consideration as a nation rather than as individuals." Paul points out in this chapter that "there is no canceling of the ancient promises and privileges granted to Israel." It is on "this firm foundation" that Paul discusses "the present status of Israel, not as a 'spiritual Israel' but as a national entity that traces its lineage back to Abraham." To use any other approach to the subject of this chapter causes "the issue at hand" to "vanish in a mist of subjectivism." The issue at hand is "the

---

<sup>1</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 122.

literal nation of Israel," and in this nation "the eternal purpose of God is now brought into bold relief."

Feinberg's introduction to this chapter is:

Paul proves conclusively that there is a prospect for Israel by three irrefutable arguments: (1) Paul himself in the past, (2) the remnant in the present, and (3) all Israel in the future.<sup>1</sup>

According to McClain, 11:1-10 deals with "Hath God Cast Off His People?"<sup>2</sup> or "A Present Election Within Israel."<sup>3</sup> The *his people* in the question, *Did God cast off his people?* is not a reference to the "elect remnant of believing Jews," for it is obvious to all that God would not cast them off. Here, Paul is "speaking of Israel as a nation." The question now "concerns the status of a *nation* before God." The question is, "Has God cast off Israel?" The answer to Paul was obvious: *God forbid!* The evidence for this conclusion is the fact that "there is a present election," and this means that "the present rejection of the nation is not total, but only partial; and furthermore that even this partial rejection is not final, but only temporary." Paul proceeds to cite three evidences that "God did not cast off his people." First, Paul is a Jewish believer, and if God had cast off Israel, then Paul would not be a saved man. Second, the foreknowledge of God forbids it, for God would not cast off his people *whom he foreknew*. McClain feels this may be a reference "to the many predictions of the Old Testament prophets regarding the continuity of Israel as the people of Jehovah." Third, it has always been true that in Jewish history the majority of the nation was in unbelief, and only the remnant believed. One example is the period of Elijah when only seven thousand Jews were believers and members of the remnant; but in Paul's day, there were considerably more than that. What this means is that the "present situation is therefore not worse than it has been before, and the nation was certainly not cast off back there." There is always a remnant *according to the election of grace*. McClain points out that the way one resolves all the questions of Romans 11 "will settle one of two methods of interpretation." One "school of thought" claims that "in the church God has fulfilled everything in the Old Testament and there is no future for the Jew as a nation." The second view is that "God has set Israel aside for an age, and at some future time (in the next age) God will fulfill to the letter every promise He has made to Israel as a nation."

According to Hoyt,<sup>4</sup> in answer to the question, *Hath God cast away his people?* Paul says, *God forbid*. This is first made evident by the way the question is

---

<sup>1</sup> Feinberg, *Israel*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> McClain, *Romans*, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 123.

phrased in the Greek, "for the form of the question expects a negative answer." It is true that Israel as a nation is in disobedience, but this was also true in the days of Elijah. In other words, just because the majority of the nation is in unbelief, this itself does not prove that God has cast away His people. Second, the negative answer "is vigorously stated with the declaration of 'God forbid,' or 'Let it not be.'" Whether one can fully understand all of Paul's proofs, "the emphatic denial cannot be missed by anyone." The first of these proofs that Paul provides is the "personal reference to himself." Since Paul is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh and belongs to the Tribe of Benjamin and is a believer, he obviously, "has not been cast away." Just as the grace of God has reached Paul, someday "the grace of God will reach the nation as a nation." The obvious conclusion is "that God has not cast away His people."

Commenting on 11:2-6,<sup>1</sup> Hoyt states that Paul, as if the emphatic denial of verse 1 was insufficient, in verse 2 "adds a declarative statement: 'God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. . ..'" Israel is still "His people." Regardless "of what He knew about them, what would develop in the course of the centuries, He chose them." As further evidence beyond himself, Paul resorts to the Old Testament and the story of Elijah. Even in Elijah's day the majority of the nation was in unbelief; nevertheless, "God reserved to Himself a remnant." By the same token, *at the present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* "The purpose of God is fulfilled in the creation of a peculiar people according to the flesh who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The remnant, then, is always a Jewish remnant and the existence of this remnant is evidence that God has not cast away His people.

When he comes to 11:7-11, Hoyt interprets this passage as distinguishing between Israel the whole and Israel the remnant.<sup>2</sup> The righteousness that Israel the whole sought "by means of law," they did not obtain; but the remnant of Israel obtained "by faith." The result was that "all the rest of Israel were hardened." Though Israel the whole stumbled, this stumbling "was not a stumbling merely to fall and nothing more"; and "Paul vigorously denies" that this "stumbling" was only for the purpose of falling. On the contrary, Israel's stumbling "leads to something wonderful," for it "brought salvation to the Gentiles." This, in turn, fulfills Genesis 12:3 in which "Gentiles become the spiritual seed of Abraham." Even this is not the end, for the purpose of Gentile salvation was to provoke the Jews to jealousy.

Feinberg takes a slightly different approach.<sup>3</sup> Commenting on 11:1, Feinberg states that the point of this verse is that if it is true that God has cast off Israel, then not even Paul would be saved, because he is part of Israel. Not only is Paul's own salvation evidence that God has not cast off His people, it is also evidence that like Paul in the past, the nation of Israel will be saved in the future. Feinberg goes on to say that in this

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Feinberg, *Israel*, p. 107.

"present Age of Grace" the nation of Israel "has been rejected from her position of privilege."<sup>1</sup> Feinberg draws this conclusion from Romans 3:9 where Paul concludes that the Jews, like the Gentiles, are "all under sin."

Commenting on 11:2-24, Feinberg states that the very existence of a believing Jewish remnant is further evidence that God has not cast away His people.<sup>2</sup> Though it is a remnant, it has always been a remnant, even in the Old Testament. These verses do not teach that "Israel is cast off for all time," but only that "there is a remnant in the midst of a seeming universal apostasy," but "the apostasy of Israel is never a complete one." The fall of Israel "is not final" and God wants Gentile Christians to provoke the Jews to jealousy. If "God wants them to be provoked to jealousy, surely He has not cast them off forever."

McClain, commenting on 11:11-24,<sup>3</sup> states that while God has not cast off His people, nevertheless, "Israel has stumbled terribly, and she is fully responsible for her sin." Yet God's "gracious purpose" can be seen in "the very disobedience of His people," for by "the fall of Israel salvation is come to the Gentile world." This, in turn, leads to a happy logical deduction. If Israel's "fall has been the riches of the world," then "how much more will this be true when their 'fulness' is come in." Furthermore, "if the casting away of them has resulted in the reconciliation of the world," then "what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead!" It is for this reason that Paul the "apostle to the Gentiles" spent so much time in Jewish evangelism, and always went to the Jew first. For this reason, he declared, *I magnify my office*. Paul magnified his office by preaching the gospel to Jews, for the "more Jews that are saved, the more Gentiles there will be saved, and the greater will be the ministry to the Gentiles." This means that Gentiles "should not be lifted up with pride" and "should not be anti-Semitic." Paul was teaching "what all the Old Testament prophets plainly declare, namely, a future restoration of national Israel back into the place of favor with God." Although "Paul knew the future blessing was to come, he was trying to save Jews, which in turn would bring more Gentiles."

At this point, McClain turns to the Olive Tree and gives a dispensational view of it. He interprets the tree to represent "the *place* of favor or privilege before God." This is the same as Pentecost's "place of blessing." Because grafting a branch into a tree, either wild or natural, does not change the nature of the branch, this means that "in Paul's olive tree Jews remain Jews, and Gentiles remain Gentiles." This is true, although "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile; all such distinctions cease." The root of the tree is identified with Abraham and probably the Abrahamic Covenant, "for through him and his seed the favor of God has flowed into the world." The natural branches are the Jews, for "salvation is of the Jews." The wild olive branches are the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 107-108.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, pp. 25-27.

Gentiles, for "during the present age the Gentile is enjoying a place of favor which properly belongs to the Jew." The Gentiles should not, however, become "high-minded," for if "God spared not the natural branches when they failed to live up to the responsibility of their favored position, neither will He spare the wild branches if they fail to take advantage of the favor shown them." They must never forget that "God is fully able to graft the Jew back into the tree of favor," for "this place belongs properly to the Jew." After all, this tree is "their own"; in fact, this is what God intends to do.

Commenting on 11:12, Hoyt states that the previous passage points out that Israel's fall led to Gentile salvation.<sup>1</sup> This leads to a logical inference: If the fall of Israel "resulted in God turning to the larger world of mankind with the riches of His grace," then logically "the fulness of Israel will unfold in benefits to the Gentiles far beyond anything ever dreamed." When this fulness comes, "then all that God intended for Israel will be realized," and "there will be a perfect fulfillment of the divine purpose in Israel." During this present age "God is working among Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name," but this will eventually end. Then, "the Lord will call the church out of this world," and at that point "He will then turn again to His people Israel and will bring them to Himself." This will follow in God working through Israel to "reach all the Gentile nations."

Commenting on 11:13-16, Hoyt states that while Israel is destined for a great future of fruitfulness, Paul wanted to see the salvation of many Jews in the present.<sup>2</sup> He called upon the Gentiles to practice Jewish evangelism. He wished to arouse among the Gentiles "such activity as will produce immediate response among his own people." In making this appeal to the Gentiles, "the apostle to the Gentiles" makes "the most out of his office." The motivation for Jewish evangelism is based on the "fact that the temporary casting away of Israel worked in such a way that it brought about the reconciling of the world." If "temporary rejection led to reconciliation, surely the permanent reception of Israel can only lead to resurrection." Hoyt understands the term "resurrection" figuratively rather than literally, the point being that the "salvation of the Jews will produce such an amazing response from among Gentiles that there will be a world revival." Jews will evangelize the Gentiles both in the Tribulation and in the Millennium, resulting in millions being "swept into the kingdom of God." The evidence is that since *the firstfruit was holy*, then the lump is also holy. Hoyt identifies the *firstfruit* as the three patriarchs, and the *lump* as "the abundance of the harvest," which "is yet future." The *root* is identified with Abraham, and so, because "he was holy, . . . what comes from him, the branches, must also be holy." Contained in the *firstfruit* and *root* is "the promise of the branches and the harvest."

---

<sup>1</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

When Hoyt comes to the section on the Olive Tree in 11:17-21, he merely quotes McClain, showing he takes the same view: The Olive Tree represents the place of blessing.<sup>1</sup> This becomes evident in his comments on 11:22-24:

Take a look at the goodness and severity of God. It was unbelief that brought the infliction of severity on Israel. It was goodness that placed the Gentiles in the place of favor. And that goodness will continue to be manifest so long as Gentiles continue in that goodness. Continuation requires the exercise of faith. When the nation of Israel forsakes its unbelief for faith, it will again be inducted into the place of favor. Since the Gentiles by grace were inducted into the place of favor, they may be sure that God will more than restore Israel in that place to fulfill His original purpose for Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning Romans 11:25-27, Chafer affirms that "Israel as a nation is to be saved from her sin," which is connected with the second coming "when He shall return to the earth."<sup>3</sup> Chafer does not make it clear whether this national salvation comes before, during, or after the second coming.

In Ryrie's view, at the second coming, all Jews who survive the Tribulation will be brought before Christ for judgment.<sup>4</sup> At this judgment as many as two-thirds will be purged out and "excluded from the kingdom." The remaining third, "who turn in faith when they see Him" will be the ones who will enter the kingdom along with the 144,000 Jews. These "believing survivors" are the ones who make up the *all Israel* of Romans 11:26.

Walvoord gives two reasons for the second coming. The first is to "deliver the elect":

The second advent of Christ to the earth not only brings judgment upon the wicked, but it is an event which brings deliverance to the elect, the saved of both Jews and Gentiles, and to the nation Israel as such. . . . The same idea is indicated in Romans 11:26-27 . . . Luke 21:28 indicates that when they shall see the second advent of Christ they are exhorted to "look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh." This is in keeping with many passages in the Old Testament which likewise describe

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 127-128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:105-108.

<sup>4</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), pp. 490-492, 514.

deliverance that will take place at the time of the second advent (cf. Zech. 14:1-4).<sup>1</sup>

The second is to "bring spiritual revival to Israel":

Along with the deliverance of the godly, the Scriptures predict that at the second coming Israel will experience spiritual revival. This is intimated in Romans 11:26-27 and is involved in the fulfillment of numerous Old Testament passages of which Jeremiah 31:31-34 may be taken as representative.<sup>2</sup>

Dealing more specifically with Romans 11:25-26, this passage concerns the removal of Israel's blindness and her national salvation. Chafer affirms that this passage clearly teaches a future national salvation of Israel.<sup>3</sup> While it is true that there is to be a future regathering of Israel into their land and a deliverance of Israel from her enemies, the main thrust of the passage is Israel's salvation "in connection with the second advent of Christ." Furthermore, this future national salvation is assured on the basis of the death of Christ, "but the final application of the value of Christ's death in behalf of Israel awaits the moment of her national conversion." This will be accomplished instantaneously, "in the briefest portion of time." Chafer's conclusion is "that the nation Israel will yet be saved and her sins removed forever through the blood of Christ."

Pentecost emphasizes the removal of the blindness.<sup>4</sup> He begins with a summary of what the New Testament teaches on this subject, which is that "the nation Israel is a blinded nation." They are blinded in two ways: first, "they are spiritually blind because they wilfully rejected their Messiah"; and, second, a divine judgment has come upon them so that the nation is judicially blinded." What Isaiah 6:9-10 predicted would happen is quoted by the New Testament as having had happened and Paul, in I Corinthians 3:14-15 stated that this blindness "was the continuing state of the people," though in verse 16 Paul also "anticipated that this condition shall change." The central passage on this issue is Romans 11:17-27, which teaches that "Israel has been set aside from the place of blessing so that the Gentiles might be brought into the place of blessing, from which Israel was cut off and to which they will be returned." In his exposition of this passage, Pentecost deduces five things. First, this "particular blindness is a *mystery*." This means it was unrevealed in the Old Testament, but is now revealed in the New. The very "fact that this blindness is a mystery shows that it is a kind of blindness hitherto unrevealed." For that reason, it cannot be a reference to "the spiritual blindness" common to all men because they are "children of Adam," nor can it

---

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, pp. 273-274.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:105-108.

<sup>4</sup> Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp. 301-304.

be a reference to "wilful blindness" also common among men, and both of these types of blindness were known in the Old Testament. Rather, this is "a new form of blindness, not hitherto experienced by men." This *mystery* blindness "was a divine visitation of Israel by God because of the national sin of rejecting the Messiah." Second, the "nature of this blindness is revealed," in that the Greek term pictures it as "the thick impenetrable covering" which is a result of "repeated rejection of the revelation that was given" and by now "has become the settled condition." Third, "this blindness is 'in part'" which "reveals that this blindness is not universal." It is possible for Jewish individuals to be saved, "though the nation has been judicially blinded." Fourth, this blindness is destined to "be removed from the nation." The very word *until* "anticipates the removal of this blindness at some appointed time." Fifth, "the *time of the removal* of this blindness is stated," which is, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Pentecost interprets this as speaking of "the rapture of the church when the time of Gentile privilege gives way to the time when Israel will be restored to the place of blessing." Pentecost then clarifies what the removal of the blindness will actually mean for Israel. It will not mean that all Jews will immediately have a clear understanding of spiritual truth, for they will still have the common human "blindness of his sin nature." It will render the truth understandable by all Jews who will now be restored "to a place alongside the Gentiles in the place of blessing again." It means that God will again be dealing with Israel as a nation, which He has not done "since their rejection of the Messiah." It will set the stage for "the final removal of blindness, . . . the spiritual blindness . . ." at the second coming. "The removal of the judicial blindness permits Israel to hear the good news of the kingdom . . . that is proclaimed in that day in order that they might be saved, both individually and nationally." It is the removal of the judicial blindness that "makes possible the setting aside of the 144,000, the calling out of the believing remnant, and Israel's ministry to the nations during the tribulation period."

Walvoord turns his attention to the key verse of Romans 11:25 which speaks of the removal of Israel's blindness.<sup>1</sup> The dispensational position is "that Israel as used in this passage refers to the nation Israel and that what is predicted here is their release from the blindness or obtuseness of spiritual discernment which fell on them as a judgment of unbelief." This blindness was unique in that it was a special judgment upon Israel and for that reason this blindness is designated as a "mystery," a truth not revealed in the Old Testament. This mystery, "consisted in the special judicial blindness over and above any natural blindness common to Israel or Gentiles in the past." This very same special blindness "is scheduled for removal when 'the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.'" Just as "the fall of Israel is a parallel to the fulness of the Gentiles," by the same token "the end of the fulness of the Gentile would parallel the restoration of Israel." The very word "until" in this verse marks "the terminus of Gentile blessing, and the beginning of Israel's restoration."

---

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, pp. 188-189.



Also commenting on 11:25, McClain states that God intends to restore Israel,<sup>1</sup> and there is "a great mystery" concerning which "the Gentile Christians should not remain in ignorance of it lest they become wise in their own conceits." The content of the mystery is that "a hardening in part has befallen Israel," but this hardening is "only temporary until the 'fulness of the Gentiles' be come in." This will be followed by another: "all Israel shall be saved." The "fulness of the Gentiles" is "the present age during which God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." During this period, "God is visiting the Gentile nations, through the ministry of Gentile believers," collecting Gentiles for the body of Christ. Israel during this period "is in the background out of the divine favor"; but when "the body of Christ is complete" and when "the full number that God has chosen out of the Gentiles should be saved," then Christ will return and "Gentile times will finish and Israel shall be put in again." After the fulness of the Gentiles, *all Israel will be saved*, and this means "the Israel that is on earth is going to be saved." At the close of this age "there is to be a 'redemption' or 'salvation' for the nation," and since Paul "connects the salvation of Israel with the appearance of the 'Deliverer,'" this event will occur at the second coming. McClain spells out the prerequisite for the second coming: "only one thing was needed to bring Him back from heaven to usher in the glorious age for Israel, and also for the whole world," and this is Israel's national salvation. Not all Dispensationalists have been this clear as to what exactly is the basis of the second coming. McClain now presents a full picture of the content of the mystery: first, there "is to be a Gentile age during which God will take from all nations including even Israel, a people for His name"; second, the "nucleus of this people will be the Church formed by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost"; third, during the same period while "God is gathering out this people, Israel as a nation is set aside, though the Gospel is still offered to all as individuals"; fourth, once "the Gentile age has run its full course" and the body is complete, then the Messiah will return; fifth, "the natural branches shall be grafted back" into the olive tree, or the place of blessing; and, sixth, the Messianic Kingdom will be "visibly and universally established on earth," and also "all Israel shall be saved."

Turning to the issue of Israel's blindness in 11:25, Hoyt states that it is true that Israel has been blinded, but the Gentiles must not be ignorant concerning the nature and purpose of this blindness.<sup>2</sup> Ignorance can cause the Gentiles to "draw false conclusions" because they "do not see in perspective all the facts relating to the blindness." This ignorance has "led Gentiles to believe that they were somehow better than Jews," and to blame only the Jews for the crucifixion. Hoyt points out that such a conclusion is "utterly false," for "Christ died because of the sin of all people." "Representatively Gentiles as well as Jews were implicated in the crucifixion." As to the nature of the blindness, it is both "incomplete and temporary." Because it is incomplete, "Jews have come to Christ down through the Christian centuries, even though the vast majority have rejected Him." It is temporary, for "this blindness . . . will last only till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in." This is "the present age of the church during which

---

<sup>1</sup> McClain, *Jewish Problem*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>2</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 129.

God is taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name." When the *fulness* comes, that is, when "the last soul of those chosen from among the Gentiles answers the call of the gospel, the fulness will be complete." At that point, "God will turn again to Israel and place the nation in the very center of His operations." Until then, "Israel is dispersed from the land and suffers persecution."

Feinberg's view<sup>1</sup> of 11:25 is that this verse is evidence that God has not cast away His people for the fact is that "the blindness of the Jews is only partial and temporary," and the hope of Israel will yet find fulfillment. That hope is the national salvation and restoration of Israel. Israel is destined to be "grafted into her own olive tree," and the Olive Tree is the "restoration to blessing." Among the blessings are: the second coming, salvation, regathering, the Holy Spirit, the New Covenant, a renovated earth, the land, the temple, and the Messianic Kingdom. The *blindness* of Romans 11:25 is a blindness of the heart, but this is the "outcome of repeated disobedience" which in turn "renders men unapproachable with the truth." It is blindness that is a hardening "strictly a matter of the heart, which is the center of all spiritual life." Feinberg's emphasis is that the blindness upon Israel is a partial blindness.<sup>2</sup> Paul had declared earlier in Romans 9 that "all Israel never was the spiritual seed of Abraham." In Romans 11, Paul declared that "only some of the branches were broken off." The meaning of the *blindness in part* is not "that all Israel has been partially blinded . . . nor does it imply that the blindness is partial as to time." What it does mean is that "there will be some in Israel who will not be blinded," and these make up the remnant of Israel. For this very reason, those "who try to discourage Jewish evangelization" are wrong and are guilty of ignorance and "false notions." Feinberg then deals with the fact that there are three distinct remnants. First, "there was a remnant before Christ's advent," like the seven thousand of Elijah's day, for "God had always had a number in Israel who were loyal to Him." The second is the "remnant in the Church Age." This is the individual election within the national election. Feinberg then makes a distinction between the remnant of the Old Testament and the remnant in the New. The present remnant "belongs no longer to the commonwealth of Israel, but is one with all believers in Christ Jesus." This is a conclusion that Feinberg reaches because all believers today are part of the Church. The third remnant is the future one. The purpose of Israel's blindness, while it is a judgment, "has meant more than that," for the "casting away has meant the reconciling of the world." Feinberg concludes with a discussion of the end of Israel's blindness.<sup>3</sup> Feinberg points out that the word *until* denotes "the time up to which the blindness will continue." It is to continue until *the fulness of the Gentiles*. This phrase is interpreted as referring to "all the elect of this Church age," and this elect group includes believing Gentiles which are the ones God has now gathered for "a people for his name," and believing Jews who constitute the present remnant. This, of course, is the Church. Feinberg, like the majority of Dispensationalists, distinguishes

---

<sup>1</sup> Feinberg, *Israel*, pp. 109, 116-117.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

between "the fulness of the Gentiles" and "the times of the Gentiles." The former is an "ecclesiastical designation" which began with Pentecost in Acts 2 and will end at the Rapture. The latter is a "political designation" which began with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Captivity and will end with the Antichrist and the second coming.

The previous key verse now leads to the next one, Romans 11:26, which states, *And so all Israel shall be saved . . .* The dispensational view follows the literal perspective and so Walvoord interprets it as a reference to Israel's national salvation.<sup>1</sup> "Subsequent to the lifting of Israel's blindness . . . Israel will be restored." Dispensationalism insists that the "term *Israel* as it is used here is defined by the context as a genuine reference to the Jewish people . . . in contrast to Gentiles throughout the preceding context." The "word *Israel* means the Jewish people, not the church as such." The expression *all Israel* is to be understood "as a reference to the people as a whole." This verse is taken as a clear statement of Israel's national salvation and restoration in which "Israel will also be delivered in that day from her persecutors, regathered from all over the earth and brought back to her ancient land, and there blessed spiritually and materially." Romans 11 does not go into all these details because the purpose of the passage is "to speak to the point of whether Israel is 'cast away.'" The answer is that "Israel has a future, a glorious one, which will be fulfilled subsequent to the return of her Deliverer."

Hoyt states that following *the fulness of the Gentiles* will come the national salvation of Israel when *all Israel will be saved*.<sup>2</sup> This is in conjunction with the second coming, though Hoyt is not clear whether this comes before or after the second coming. The result will be a national cleansing of Israel from all their sins.

Feinberg states that Israel's future technically begins with the close of the Church Age,<sup>3</sup> with "the completion of the Body of Christ from Jews and Gentiles." At this time, "the blindness will be taken away from Israel," and then the prophetic time clock will enter the Great Tribulation, a period of time "which intervenes between 'the fulness of the Gentiles' and the time when 'all Israel shall be saved.'"

---

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, pp. 190-192.

<sup>2</sup> Hoyt, *First Christian Theology*, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Feinberg, *Israel*, pp. 160-161.

## V. ROMANS 9:1-11:36:

### AN EXPOSITION BY DR. ARNOLD G. FRUCHTENBAUM

The doctrine of the remnant of Israel teaches that there is always a segment of the Jewish people who are believers. The teaching of the New Testament is that the remnant of Israel today comprises the Jewish believers in the Messiahship of Jesus. In the New Testament, that doctrine is primarily found in Paul's Israelology in Romans 9-11. There is one other passage on the remnant of Israel relevant to Israel which is I Peter 2:1-10.

#### A. First Peter 2:1-10

By taking Peter's words in 1:1-2 literally, it is clear that the epistle was not written to the Church at large, nor to a body of Gentile believers, but to Jewish believers living outside the land within a majority Gentile population. This section of the epistle draws a contrast between the remnant and the non-remnant.

After describing the spiritual state of the remnant (vv. 1-3), Peter then deals with the topic of the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence (vv. 4-10). The Messiah Jesus is the living stone who, though rejected by men, is elect and precious with God (v. 4).

With Exodus 19:5-6 clearly in his mind, Peter states that the Jewish believers, because of the kind of salvation they have are two things (v. 5). They are, first, *living stones* and so are part of *a spiritual house*. This spiritual house is the spiritual house of Israel, the Remnant of Israel, or, in Paul's words, *the Israel of God*. Second, the Jewish believers are *a holy priesthood*. This too was the calling of the nation as a whole. The nation failed, but the Remnant of Israel has not failed and are today offering "spiritual sacrifices" to the Lord.

Peter then goes on to explain the distinction between the remnant and the non-remnant (vv. 6-8). He begins with the state of the remnant (vv. 6-7a) and quotes Isaiah 28:16 to point out that the chief cornerstone is the Messiah who before God the Father is elect and precious so those who believe in Him will not be shamed (v. 6). He then makes the application (v. 7a) and states that while the Messianic Stone is indeed precious, it is only precious for the remnant. Concerning the non-remnant (vv. 7b-8), Peter quotes from Psalms 118:22 (v. 7b) to show that it was already predicted that the Messianic Stone would be rejected by the leaders of Israel. He also quotes Isaiah 8:14 (v. 8a) to show that for the unbeliever, the Messianic Stone was to be the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence. In context, Isaiah was dealing with the contrast between the remnant and the non-remnant. Peter concludes with an application (v. 8b):

the non-remnant indeed stumbled, for those who rejected the Word were destined to stumble.

The passage concludes with a further description of the status of the remnant (vv. 9-10). According to verse 5, the remnant of Israel comprised a spiritual house and a holy priesthood. With Exodus 19:5-6 still in mind, Peter now adds four other descriptions to show the position of the remnant in contrast to Israel the whole (v. 9a). First, they are an *elect race*. This is based on Isaiah 43:20; being *elect* shows that they were chosen at God's initiative (I Pet. 2:4, 6). The Church, however, is not a race but composed of believers from all races. Second, the remnant of Israel is a *royal priesthood*. In verse 5 they were called a *holy* priesthood, emphasizing their right to approach the heavenly sanctuary. Now they are also a *royal* priesthood. Since the High Priest Jesus is a priest-king after the Order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-28), these believers are, therefore, a royal priesthood for they are both priests and kings. For now, they are functioning as priests, but in the future, they will function as kings and will exercise royal kingly authority in the Messianic Kingdom (Rev. 5:10; 20:6). While it is true that all believers comprise a priesthood, the priesthood of all believers cannot legitimately be derived from this passage; but it is taught in Revelation 1:6, 5:10, and 20:6. Third, the believing Jewish remnant is a *holy nation*. Israel became a nation at Mount Sinai and was called upon to be holy and separated from sin to God. However, the nation as a whole failed while the remnant has not failed. The Church is not a nation (Rom. 10:19), but is comprised of believers from all nations. Fourth, they are *a people for God's own possession*. This is not only based on Exodus 19:5-6, but also on Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Isaiah 43:21; and Malachi 3:17. While they became a nation at Mount Sinai, they became a people with Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. The remnant is God's own possession for those Jewish believers were purchased by the blood of the Messiah and so uniquely belong to God (I Pet. 1:18-19).

Having described the status of the remnant in this way, Peter next gives the purpose for their election (v. 9b): to show forth the excellencies of the attributes of the God who called them out of darkness and into His glorious light. They are to proclaim the message to those outside. The background to this concept is Isaiah 43:20-21. The section concludes with a reference to Hosea 1:10-2:1, 23 (v. 10). Formerly, in time past, they were part of the non-remnant being *not my people* and without mercy. Now they are members of the remnant and so are *my people* and have obtained mercy.

To summarize, Peter is not drawing a distinction between Israel and the Church or between unbelieving Jews and believing Gentiles. The distinction is between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. His point is that while Israel as a whole failed, the believing remnant of Israel has not failed and so the remnant of Israel is fulfilling the calling of the nation as a whole. Paul will make the same point in his theology of Israel in Romans 9-11.

## B. Romans 9:1-11:36

### 1. Introduction

These chapters of the Book of Romans are sometimes skipped in commentaries on Romans. Those commentators do not take what God says about Israel too seriously and teach that the Church is the new Israel. They, therefore, do not feel that these chapters are important. (Or is it because what Paul has to say here contradicts their theology?) There are commentaries that provide a verse-by-verse, word-by-word commentary that covers chapters 1-8, and then skip over to chapters 12-16. Chapters 9-11 are totally dropped. Other commentaries that do take chapters 9-11 somewhat seriously and do comment upon them will often refer to these three chapters as being merely parenthetical and not part of Paul's main argument. Before moving to the exposition of this passage, there are three things to note by way of introduction.

#### a. The Place of Chapters 9-11 in the Book of Romans

It is always wrong to ignore three whole chapters of Scripture that God has put into the text, because He certainly must have had a reason for revealing it. Furthermore, chapters 9-11 are not parenthetical. If anything, they are very pivotal, because these three chapters vindicate God's righteousness in His relationship to Israel.

In the first eight chapters of the Book of Romans, Paul dealt with the theology of the righteousness of God. After introducing the book in 1:1-17, he then spelled out the details of the theology of God's righteousness. In the first three chapters he pointed out that everyone has fallen short of the righteous standards of God, and that includes all sections of humanity: pagan Gentiles (1:18-32); cultured Gentiles (2:1-16); and, the Jews (2:17-3-18). Paul concludes that all have sinned and have come short of the righteousness of God (3:19-31). Having shown that everyone is a sinner, both Jews and Gentiles, and everyone has fallen short of the righteousness of God, Paul then describes what God has done in order to provide righteousness to men. He had provided righteousness through salvation in Jesus the Messiah, and this salvation has three tenses: past, present and future. The past aspect of salvation is justification (4:1-5:21). Once one believes, he is justified or declared righteous by God. The present aspect of salvation is sanctification (6:1-8:18). Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives today, conforming the believer more and more into the image of the Son of God. The future aspect of salvation is glorification (8:19-39). Glorification is guaranteed in light of the fact that believers have been justified and are being sanctified, and therefore will someday be glorified and be like Him. At the end of chapter 8, as he concludes the theology of God's righteousness, he points out that in light of all that God has done for believers in justification, sanctification and glorification, there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Nothing in heaven can separate us,

nothing on earth, nothing below the earth, nothing outside of us, nothing inside of us, not even we ourselves can separate us from the love of God.

One would think that Paul, having stated all this, would immediately proceed to deal with the practice of God's righteousness as he did in Ephesians. In Ephesians 1-3, he dealt with theology, and in Ephesians 4-6, the practical application of that theology. Yet in the Book of Romans, having spelled out the theology of God's righteousness, Paul did not immediately proceed to the practice of God's righteousness. This he does in chapters 12-16. Instead, between the theology of God's righteousness in chapters 1-8 and the practice of God's righteousness in chapters 12-16, he inserted three chapters dealing with God's righteousness in His relationship with Israel. Why? At the end of chapter 8, Paul concluded that in light of all that God has done, in light of his promises, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. At this point, one might object and say: "But did not Israel have promises from God, and did not God make certain promises and commitments to Israel, which included the national salvation and the worldwide restoration? Yet, the majority of Israel is in a state of unbelief. It does not seem that God's promises to Israel have been kept. If God's promises to Israel have not been kept, how can we really believe that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God, since it seems that Israel has been separated from the love of God?" Paul must deal with the question of God's righteousness in His relationship with Israel.

For this reason, these three chapters should not be ignored as some commentators have chosen to do. Nor should these chapters be viewed merely as parenthetical -- not related to his argument. They should be considered pivotal, in that they justify or vindicate God's righteousness in His relationship with Israel.

#### b. The Three Questions

In his development of Israelology in chapters 9-11 of the Book of Romans, Paul answers three questions.

The first question is: Why are there so few Jews being saved when the Gospel is to the Jew first? In Romans 1:16 Paul wrote that the Gospel is to the Jew first, and if that is true, why are so few Jews being saved? To summarize Paul's answer, he confesses that he has a deep love and sorrow for Israel (9:1-5). Paul then teaches that their rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus was not a failure of God's promises (9:6-13), nor was their rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus an injustice on the part of God (9:14-29). The problem is their own rejection of the righteousness of God (9:30-10:21). However, consolation is to be found in the salvation of the remnant in our day, according to the election of grace (11:1-10). Consolation should also be seen in the present acceptance of the Gentiles (11:11-22). Consolation should also be seen in that in the future all Israel will believe, and there will be a future restoration of Israel (11:23-32). Finally, all of these are evidence of the wisdom and the glory of God (11:33-36).

The second question is: How do the Gentiles know they can trust God when His promises to Israel have not been fulfilled? That is a logical question in light of what Paul said at the end of chapter 8. To summarize his answer to this question, Paul says three things. First, Israel's failure is related to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency, and the fault does not lie with God. Second, Israel's rejection is not complete nor total, because there are Jewish people who did not reject the Messiahship of Jesus. Third, Israel's rejection is not final; in fact, the nation as a nation will receive the Messiah sometime in the future.

The third question that Paul answers in these chapters is: Has the Gospel nullified God's promises to Israel? He will answer with a very firm "No."

### c. The Exposition of Romans 3:1

The last thing by way of introduction to these three chapters is to point out that in Romans 9-11 Paul expounded further upon a statement he made in Romans 3:1: *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what is the profit of circumcision? Much every way . . .* Just how much in every way is what Paul deals with in these chapters.

## 2. The Theology of Israel's Rejection - 9:1-29

### a. Paul's Sorrow and Israel's Privileges - 9:1-5

In these verses Paul introduces his theme on the theology of Israel by pointing to his own sorrow. He describes his own emotions (vv. 1-3) over Israel's rejection. There was the witness of Paul's conscience (v. 1) to the fact and it bore witness with the Holy Spirit. Paul, having that strong Jewish and Pharisaic background, realized that the truth had to be affirmed at the mouth of two or three witnesses, so here he presents two witnesses that he really is deeply sorrowed over the issue of Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus: his conscience, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and Paul's conscience are bearing witness of something; that he is saying the truth about something. What that "something" is, is the fact that Paul has great sorrow (v. 2). The Greek word means "grief," "to be in a state of mind that is projecting grief." He also has unceasing pain. This is the physical expression of that mental anguish. Paul can truly testify by his conscience and through the Holy Spirit that he has great mental anguish over Israel, and this mental anguish resulted in physical pain. Paul is that concerned over his own people.

Paul then expressed his desire (v. 3): *I could wish*. In the Greek, this is an imperfect tense; it emphasizes continuous action in time past, which remains unfinished. What he is wishing is that he could be *anathema*, that he could be set apart for



destruction if it would mean Israel's immediate salvation. In other words, he was willing to go to Hell and to the Lake of Fire if it would bring about Israel's salvation. This wish was not for the lost in general, but specifically on behalf of the Jewish people who were Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. These were not his spiritual brethren, these were his physical brethren, the Jewish people. But he realized that this was not the way it was going to happen; he was simply expressing a personal desire.

Paul next outlined Israel's privileges and Israel's prerogatives (vv. 4-5). The purpose of listing these privileges and prerogatives was to show that Israel really should have received the Messiah, but did not. This was their fault and not the fault of God. Furthermore, if they did not believe, these privileges and prerogatives did not guarantee their salvation. Altogether Paul listed eight things. First, *the adoption*. This is speaking of Israel's national adoption (Exod. 4:22) by which Israel became the national son of God. Just as believers are individually children of God by adoption, Israel as a nation is the national son of God. Israel was never disinherited from that position (Isa. 63:16; Jer. 3:17-19; 31:9, 20). Second, *the glory*. Specifically, this is the Shechinah Glory, the visible manifestation of God's presence, and it was with Israel (Exod. 13:20-21; 16:10, 40). Third, *the covenants*. These covenants are the four unconditional eternal covenants that God made with Israel: the Abrahamic Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. Fourth, *law-giving*. Specifically, this is the one conditional and temporary covenant God made with Israel: the Mosaic Covenant, which contained the Mosaic Law (Exod. 19:16-20:1). Fifth, *the service of God*, something reaffirmed in Hebrews 9:1-10. The service of God included the priesthood, the entire Levitical institution, and all the various offerings. Sixth, *the promises*. Specifically, these are the Messianic promises, the promises of the first coming, of the second coming, of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom through which He will rule the world righteously -- the world in general and Israel in particular. Seventh, *the fathers*. These are the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 10:14-15; Heb. 11:1-12:2). It is through them that the Jewish nation came into being and was established. The biblical definition of a Jew is one who is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The eighth and last thing he mentions that belongs to Israel is the Messiah Himself. Concerning the Messiah, he states three things. First, concerning the flesh, Jesus was born a Jew; so in His humanity, He was a Jew and had a physical relationship to Israel. Second, He was *over all*, emphasizing His sovereignty. Third, He is *God-blessed forever*; He is God Who is blessed forever, and that emphasizes His deity. Paul's claim that the Messiah is Israel's is something that Jesus Himself affirmed, for He said, "I have not come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

#### b. The Rejection in Light of Biblical History - 9:6-13

Paul starts this next unit with the word *but* to show he is about to do some explaining. The problem is not that the Word of God has come to naught, that the Word of God or God's promises have failed. The Word of God and His promises have not failed. Paul then uses biblical history to show that Jews are not heirs of blessing just because they are the natural seed of Abraham. While certain blessings come because of

the natural seed, there are other blessings of God which are conditional upon other matters. Spiritual blessings that deal with the issue of salvation are not conditioned purely upon being a natural seed of Abraham. Physical descent by itself was not enough. Physical descent did put one within the scope of the Abrahamic Covenant, but that was not enough for salvation; something else was required.

Verse 6 is the key to this entire unit. The Greek word translated as *come to nought* means "to fall out," or "to fall from." It is a Greek word that is used to speak of withering flowers (James 1:11; I Peter 1:25), and of falling away from a straight course (Acts 27:17, 26, 29). The point is that the Word of God has not fallen off its straight course. the "straight course" is the plan and the purpose of God. The Word of God has not suddenly been frustrated by Israel's rejection. In fact, the rejection by Israel of the Messiahship of Jesus was very much part of the divine program and plan. He then expounds and says, *For . . .*" The little particle *for* is often used as an explanatory particle, as it is here, and the explanation is, . . . *they are not all Israel that are of Israel*. It is important that this verse not be misunderstood. Paul is not distinguishing between Israel and the Church, nor between Jews and Gentiles. Rather, he is distinguishing between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe, or between the remnant and the non-remnant. The first expression, *all Israel*, refers to the believing Jewish remnant, the believing natural seed. The second expression, *of Israel*, refers to the entire nation, the whole natural seed. What Paul is saying is that there are two Israels: Israel the whole, which includes all physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, i.e., all Jews; and, within the nation of Israel, there is the Israel of God, the believing Israel, the true Israel. The contrast is between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. There is one Israel which comprises the entire nation, and within the whole of physical Israel there is a spiritual Israel. The spiritual Israel is never stated by Scripture to be the Church. Spiritual Israel is always those Jews, within the nation as a whole, who believe. In this way, Paul expounds or elaborates upon statements he made in Romans 2:28-29.

After stating that there are two Israels and that there is a distinction between Israel as a whole and Israel as the believing remnant, Paul then gives two illustrations out of the Old Testament. The first illustration (vv. 7-9) is that of Ishmael and Isaac. The purpose of this first illustration is to point out that physical descendants who believe are Abraham's real children, and in back of faith is divine, sovereign calling. Salvation to those of natural descent was limited by divine grace. Both Ishmael and Isaac were physical sons of Abraham, and yet only Isaac was sustained though the Abrahamic Covenant because of divine calling (v. 7). Isaac was a Jew, but Ishmael was not. Not physical descent only, but to that part of physical descent that God promised are these promises received (v. 8). The promise of a son was given to Sarah, not to Hagar (v. 9). Although both Isaac and Ishmael were children of Abraham physically, Isaac was the son of promise. Isaac was the spiritual seed as well as the physical seed.

The second illustration (vv. 10-13) is that of Esau and Jacob. While in the first illustration the two sons had the same father but different mothers, in the second illustration the two sons had the same father and mother (v. 10). In fact, they were twins. Paul again deals with the issue of divine election (vv. 11-12). The different

destinies depended upon divine election and not descent. The whole program worked according to God's plan. Paul quotes Genesis 25:23 to show that, while two persons stood as the heads of two claims, it was already chosen who would have the Abrahamic Covenant sustained while they were still in the womb. To prove that God chose Jacob over Esau (v. 13), he quoted Malachi 1:2-3. This is not a question of loving more and loving less; rather, it literally means that He took Jacob to be His, but Esau He set aside. God made only one of these sons the recipient of Messianic promises and not the other. It is not a question of personal animosity or personal preference. God simply rejected a rival claim.

Through these two illustrations in verses 6-13, Paul says four things. First, God's Word has not failed, although Israel has failed; God's plan is still working its way out, and everything is going according to plan. Second, the spiritual blessings come not through one's physical descent or personal merit. Third, they come by the grace of God, due solely to the will of God. Fourth, not physical descent alone will obtain these promises, but physical descent and its spiritual appropriation. What he is not saying and will not say is that the promises were taken away from physical Israel and given to the Church. What he is saying is that these promises are still going to be given to physical Israel, but to that part of physical Israel that believes. It is not physical descent only, but physical descent and its spiritual appropriation. As in I Peter 2:1-10, it is the remnant of Israel that is attaining the promises.

#### c. Israel's Rejection in Light of Biblical Principles - 9:14-29

In this section, Paul raises two questions and provides an answer to each.

##### (1) First Question: Is There Unrighteousness with God? - 9:14-18

The first question (v. 14) is introduced as: *What shall we say?* Whenever Paul introduces a question with these words, it is a question to be refuted. The question is: *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Is there unrighteousness with God in that He chose Jewish believers in place of the whole nation? Is God unrighteous in that He chose only the portion of Israel that believes and not Israel as a whole? Again, the question anticipates a negative answer, and it comes in three points (vv. 14-15). The first answer (v. 14) is: *God forbid.* The Greek word means, *may it never be; perish the thought.*

In the second answer (v. 15), he quotes Exodus 33:19, which shows that God has absolute right to dispense His mercy as He pleases: *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.* If God's favor was free and unmerited to Moses, how much more so it is to others. Moses was declared to be the most meek of all the men of the earth, yet his meekness did not merit God's mercy. God's mercy was totally apart from any human

merit, and if that were true with Moses, it is certainly true of all. After giving this answer, Paul draws a logical conclusion (v. 16). The words, *So then*, show a logical conclusion based on what has just been said: Mercy does not depend on the one willing or running. In other words, mercy is not dependent upon human works. Mercy depends solely upon God's grace.

The third answer (v. 17) is a quote from Exodus 9:16. Here Paul introduces another Scripture to prove divine sovereignty -- that God is absolutely free in His dealings with men. *For in Moses we see the goodness of God; in Pharaoh we see the severity of God.* It shows that God raised up Pharaoh at this specific point in history. God put him on the throne to serve as an example of what divine justice is about. God had both an immediate and a distant purpose. The immediate purpose was: *that I may show in thee my power.* The distant purpose was: *that my name might be published abroad in all the earth*, and so it has been. Forty years later, when Joshua entered the land, the Canaanites were still shaking because they had heard what God had done to Egypt and to Pharaoh. Paul then draws another logical conclusion: *So then . . .* (v. 18). He will have mercy on whom He will, and Moses is an example of election in regard to mercy. Whom He wills, He hardens, and Pharaoh is an example of hardening in reference to judgment.

## (2) Second Question: Why Does God Find Fault? - 9:19-29

The second question is in verse 19: *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will?* This question is raised from a human viewpoint; it is from the manward side. The question is: If God hardens hearts, how can He blame them when they are doing what He willed them to do? The word *will* refers to God's counsel or to God's decree. Paul never answers this question directly, but deals with the attitude of the heart that produced the question. The question implies a total forgetfulness of the relationship of the created to the Creator, the relationship of man to God.

As he begins to answer the question, he starts out by giving an illustration of the potter and pottery in verses 20-21. A potter, Paul points out, has complete right to make of the clay, vessels of honor or vessels of dishonor, meaning vessels for simple common use. From the same clay one can make china or common dishes. The point of the illustration is to place man in a proper relationship to the Creator: If God did not elect, none would have been saved, for there is none that seek after God (3:11). Men are not lost because they are hardened; men are hardened because they are already lost. They are already filled with sin; they have fallen short of God's righteous standards, and they are lost because they are sinners and do not seek God.

After the illustration comes the application of that illustration in verses 22-23. Paul first describes the unbelievers as vessels of wrath (v. 22). He uses the Greek middle voice, which means that men fit themselves for destruction. The question here does not have an apothesis, so it must be supplied. It could read something like this:

"But if God, notwithstanding His divine sovereignty, has in His actual dealings with mankind shown such unexpected mercy, what becomes of your complaints of any injustice? Because in reality, God has been longsuffering. He has been merciful, and there can be no real complaints against Him. God has endured with much longsuffering vessels fitted for destruction." Paul then describes the vessels of mercy (v. 23). Here he uses the passive voice, which shows that they were made fit for salvation. While men fit themselves for destruction, God makes men fit for salvation. Those whom he elects, He fits for salvation. To those whom He fits for salvation, He makes known the riches of His glory, prepared beforehand unto glory.

In verse 24, he then spells out the principle: *even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles*. The principle is that, while Paul primarily has been dealing with national election, the principle holds true regarding individual election. Up until now, Paul has been concerned with two different groups of Jews: Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. Now he turns to the calling of the Gentiles to point out that among the Gentiles also, God has fitted some for salvation.

In verses 25-29, he moves to his conclusion of this first section. As he draws his conclusion (vv. 25-26), Paul points out (picking up from verse 24) that vessels of mercy are also to be found among the Gentiles. At this point, he quotes from two segments of the prophet Hosea: 2:23 and 1:10. This was not a fulfillment of Hosea, but this is an application of Hosea because of a similar situation. In his book, Hosea declared that Israel was God's people; but because of their sin, God was going to expel them from the land. For a period of time, they would become *not my people*. Although positionally Israel is always the people of God, experientially they only experience the benefits of being the people of God when they believe. Israel experientially started out as being God's people, but then God said that for a period of time, experientially, they will not be His people. They would no longer receive the benefits of being His people. But then later Israel would repent and become experientially God's people again. That is what Hosea was speaking about -- Israel moving from the position of *not my people* to becoming *my people*. Now a similar situation has happened with these Gentiles who believe. The Gentiles in a state of unbelief were *not my people*, but now that they are made vessels of mercy, and God has fit them for salvation, they have become *my people*. They moved from being *not my people* to *my people*. Because of this point of similarity, Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 are applied to them. This calling of the Gentiles is what Paul deals with here. Hosea had Israel (specifically the ten tribes) in mind, but Paul, because of a similar situation, applies these verses to the Gentiles. While many Gentiles became vessels of mercy, a great portion of Israel became vessels of wrath (vv. 27-29), for only the remnant will come to saving faith. In verses 27-28, Paul quotes from Isaiah 10:22-23. The point of verse 27 is: It is the remnant that will be saved. The point of verse 28 is: God will accomplish His purpose and the remnant will survive. Here, Paul reaffirms the point he made back in verse 6: The Word of God has not failed because Israel as a nation has rejected the Messiah. It was all part of God's plan, so the Word of God is according to plan. In verse 29, he quotes from Isaiah 1:9, pointing out that if God did not intervene with grace, they would have been entirely destroyed. If a remnant had not been preserved by God through His election, none would be left. It is

the remnant through whom God will fulfill His program, not the entire nation. God keeps the nation alive because of the believing remnant; so the believing remnant is responsible for keeping the entire nation alive. The reason all attempts to annihilate the Jews have consistently failed is because there was always a believing remnant among the Jews.

To summarize this first division, Paul shows that Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus did not mean that God's plan and program have come to naught, that it has fallen short, or that it has fallen aside; rather, this was all according to divine plan. God planned it this way. It was in the program of God that Israel would reject the Messiahship of Jesus, and it is because of Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus that mercy was extended to the Gentiles. The mercy shown to the Gentiles was not to the total exclusion of the Jews, however, because even among the Jews there is a remnant coming to saving faith. There are vessels of mercy both among Jews and Gentiles, and there are vessels of wrath among Jews and Gentiles. The reason the Gospel went out freely among the Gentiles is because Israel as a nation had rejected it; and that was very much part of the divine plan. It is something God had already planned back in the Old Testament, because what Paul teaches here is what Isaiah predicted in Isaiah 49:1-13.

### 3. The Explanation of Israel's Rejection - 9:30-10:21

In the previous section, Paul dealt with Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus from the standpoint of divine sovereignty. In this section, he deals with the same subject, but from the standpoint of human responsibility. He explains just why Israel did fail.

#### a. The Stumbling of the People - 9:30-33

Paul begins by describing a paradox (vv. 30-31). The Gentiles, who did not have a law to quicken their moral sensibilities like the Jews did, were not, like the Jews, seeking to attain righteousness (v. 30). Yet these Gentiles did attain righteousness by faith and not by works. But Israel, who did pursue after righteousness, did not obtain it (v. 31).

That is the paradox, which is then explained (v. 32a). The reason Israel, who did pursue after righteousness, did not obtain it was because they did not come to it on the basis of faith. Israel did not arrive because they did not trust God, they trusted their own works. Their own works, in the end, only failed to bring them to righteousness. So Israel, who sought it, failed to attain it because she was trying to attain it by works. The Gentiles, who did not seek it, did attain it in the end because they found it by faith.

Paul then deals with the cause (vv. 32b-33): They did not seek it by faith, but by works. Seeking it by works and not by faith, they stumbled. It was Israel's avoidance of faith and insistence upon works that caused the problem. Their avoidance of faith and insistence upon works is due to the guilt of Israel in stumbling at the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the Messiah. Their attitude of trying to attain righteousness by works carried with it the attitude of rejection of the Messiah Himself. Salvation is by grace through faith in the Messiah alone, plus nothing. In that way, Christ became the stone of stumbling, because they must trust Him for salvation. When they failed to trust Him, they stumbled over Him, and as a result they failed to attain righteousness. They sought righteousness by law and they stumbled. Paul then quotes Isaiah 8:14, which confirms the twofold attitude of both stumbling and rejection. Jesus' offer of salvation by pure faith in Him, apart from works, proved to be two things: a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. They stumbled over that doctrine of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing, and then they were offended by it. Paul then quotes Isaiah 28:16, which concerns those who believe. Regarding those who believe, they are not ashamed of this doctrine of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing. The Jewish remnant did not stumble over Jesus. For the Jewish believer, Jesus is not the stone of stumbling or the rock of offence (I Peter 2:1-10).

The picture of the Messiah as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence was first taught by Isaiah and developed by Paul and Peter. All three point out the distinction between the remnant and the non-remnant.

#### b. Ignorance of the Channel of Salvation - 10:1-11

After dealing with the stumbling of the people, Paul then spells out the background behind it, which was their ignorance of the channel of salvation. The facts that Paul stated in 9:30-33 are now explained. Israel failed to attain righteousness because they sought a righteousness that was dependent upon their own works.

As he begins to explain their ignorance of the channel of salvation, in verses 1-2 he again expresses a desire as he did in the beginning of chapter 9. Paul first expresses his own personal desire (v. 1). He addresses his readers as *brethren*, thereby uniting all believers with himself. All believers, then, should share this same desire. The Greek term that is translated *heart's desire* means "that in which the heart would find full satisfaction." The desire Paul expresses here, if it is fulfilled, will find full satisfaction in Paul's heart. He wants every other believer to share this same burden that he has on his heart, a burden that, once it is fulfilled and removed, allows the heart to find full satisfaction. Regarding that burden and desire, Paul said, *My supplication to God is for them*. The thing for which Paul kept praying is that the Jewish people might be saved. That was Paul's desire: to be able to see the salvation of the Jewish people, not only on a national level, but also on an individual level. Paul then bears a witness for the Jewish people (v. 2). He testifies that the Jewish people do have a zeal for God, and this zeal is the cause of their pain. Whereas in chapter 9 Jewish zealousness was to their advantage, in chapter 10 it is also a cause of pain. The problem was that their zeal

is not according to knowledge, because sincerity is not enough. It is this verse that becomes the key to this division, as 9:6 was the key to the first main division. While the Jewish people had a knowledge of God, they did not know God in Christ, and that is crucial for salvation. In the Greek text, Paul wrote that they had *gnosis* -- they had knowledge; but they did not have *epignosis* -- they did not have full knowledge. This is the same point that Hosea made: the reason Israel is lost is because of a lack of knowledge of spiritual truth (Hosea 4:6).

Paul then distinguishes between legal righteousness and faith righteousness. Legal righteousness is described in verses 3-5. Paul once again emphasizes the failure - they failed to attain the righteousness which is of the law (v. 3). The failure lies in the fact that they were ignorant of God's righteousness. The righteousness of God is the sentence of justification which is conferred upon those who believe. But they did not seek God's righteousness, they did not seek to be declared righteous by faith. Rather, they sought their own righteousness. Their own righteousness is the sentence of justification sought by the way the individual kept the law. They sought to establish their own righteousness. They sought to establish their righteousness to their own glory by works. As soon as they tried to establish righteousness by their own works, it meant that they refused to subject themselves to the righteousness of God, because the righteousness of God is attained by grace through faith plus nothing. This turned out to be an act of disobedience. Paul explains the reason for it: that Christ is the end of the law (v. 4). The Greek word translated "end" is *telos*. It is a Greek word that can mean two things. First, it could mean "termination," that Christ is the termination of the law; He brought the end of the law. Second, the word *telos* can also mean "goal," that the goal of the law was the Messiah. The law was not an end in itself, but it was intended to bring one to faith in the Messiah. From other passages, it is clear that both are true. The Messiah was the goal of the law to bring one to faith (Gal. 3:10-4:7). The death of Jesus also brought the law to an end (Heb. 7:11-18; II Cor. 3:1-18). In either case, Israel the whole failed on both counts. Israel failed to realize that the goal of the law was faith in the Messiah and that the law has ended. The law was to be rendered inoperative for the reason that Christ was to be seen as the One through Whom man attains righteousness, and not by the works of the law. To prove his point, Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 to show that Moses himself saw the impossibility of keeping the law (v. 5). In this particular passage the contrast is not between law and faith; the contrast is between righteousness proceeding from the law and righteousness proceeding from faith. No man attains any righteousness that proceeds through the law because he fails to keep the law perfectly. Therefore, the only way man is justified and declared righteous is if he proceeds on the basis of faith. Legal righteousness is trying to attain righteousness by the works of the law, failing to see that salvation can only be attained through the Messiah.

In verses 6-11 Paul deals with the issue of faith righteousness. He starts with a description of faith righteousness in verses 6-7. In these verses Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:12-13 where Moses explained the nearness of God's righteousness. He said that one does not need to go up into heaven to bring it down, or to go down into the abyss in order to bring it up. Faith righteousness is near and it is accessible. What Moses said to Israel is here applied to Christ. To obtain this righteousness, one does



not need to go either into heaven or to hell, because it is apart from human merit. Man does not need to initiate the incarnation (to bring Christ down), for this has already been done and Christ has come down. Nor does man need to initiate the resurrection (to bring Christ up), for this has already been done and Christ has been resurrected. Faith righteousness is not initiated by human merit. Then, in verse 8, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:14, which spells out the means: it is in the heart and in the mouth, showing its nearness and accessibility. The *word of faith* is the message, the subject of which is faith; the message or gospel which Paul has been preaching is faith. In verses 9-11, Paul explains. There is one essential to salvation, and that is belief. Belief will naturally flow out in confession (vv. 9-10). With the mouth, one confesses Jesus is Lord. With the heart, he believes that God raised Him from the dead. With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. This chiasmic construction (mouth-heart; heart-mouth) means that believing and confessing occur at the same time. Confession is not some later thing one does as part of gaining salvation. Belief in the heart brings righteousness and justification. The confession is to God and the content of this confession is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Faith has content, and the content is that Jesus is Savior; that is what one confesses the moment he believes. Paul then quotes from Isaiah 28:16 to prove that faith is the only condition for salvation (v. 11). That is the point of his argument, that the universal way of attaining salvation is through faith.

#### c. Ignorance of the Universal Character of Salvation - 10:12-13

Earlier Paul proved that salvation in the Old Testament was to those who believed and not on the basis of human works. Here Paul proves that salvation is universal to all who believe. Because salvation is free, it is necessarily universal. It is free to both Jews and Gentiles alike. Insofar as the way a man is saved, there is no distinction. In 3:22-23 he pointed out that all are sinners, both Jews and Gentiles. Now he points out that all may be saved, both Jews and Gentiles. The Lord of the Jews is the Lord of the Gentiles; He is the same Lord. This Lord is rich in His gracious dealings and graciously responds to all who call upon Him. To prove it, Paul quotes from Joel 2:32 which is the evidence of universality, in that anyone who will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. In verse 12, the emphasis is upon the character of God: He is the Lord of all. In verse 13, the emphasis is on the promise of God: whosoever shall call upon Him shall be saved. That includes both Jews and Gentiles. Paul is not saying that all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles have been erased. The point here is that as far as the way one is saved, there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles since all are saved the same way: by grace through faith. But Israel's ignorance of the universal character of salvation caused them to stumble over the belief in the Messiahship of Jesus. Since the law was given to the Jews and not to the Gentiles, the Jewish people wrongly concluded that God intended to save Jews but not the Gentiles. They wrongly concluded that salvation was not available to Gentiles unless they fully took upon themselves the works of the law, assuming that if they kept the law, they would be saved. However, salvation was never on the basis of the law, but on the basis of grace through faith. This is true for both Jews and Gentiles.

d. Ignorance of the Universal Preaching of the Gospel - 10:14-21

In this section there is another proof that the stumbling of Israel was the fault of Israel and not God's fault. The nature of salvation, which he just explained, necessitated that it be preached without distinction. This very freedom of the offer of salvation to all proved to be a stumbling block to unbelieving Jewish people, but they did not have the excuse of not having heard.

In verses 14-15 he presents the chain of the preaching. Each question is a chain in the argument, and each conclusion is tacitly assumed and forms the ground or basis for the next question. In these questions he points out four things: first, there is no calling upon the name of the Lord without faith; second, there can be no faith without hearing, because faith must have content, and someone must hear the content of faith before he can believe it; third, there is no hearing without preaching; and, fourth, there is no preaching without sending. A universal gospel is a necessary corollary to a universal salvation, and that requires a universal proclamation of the gospel. Israel rejected the preaching, and their ignorance was the cause of rejection. Here Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 to show that the message had been preached, but it was simply not believed. Because of the previous problem, their ignorance of the universal character of salvation, they failed to preach salvation through faith to the Gentiles. Yet there can be no calling without faith, no faith without hearing, no hearing without preaching, and no preaching without sending.

Then, in verses 16-18, Paul shows that the message was heard. Paul points out Israel's failure to obey the gospel (v. 16). The word *obey* means "a voluntary submission." They failed to voluntarily submit to the demands of the gospel. He then quotes Isaiah 53:1 to prove that there was a failure to obey, and this chapter of Isaiah deals with Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. In verse 17, he speaks of the relationship between faith and hearing. The relationship is that one must have a message to believe. But how is he going to believe a message unless he hears it? Belief of a message comes by hearing, and hearing is by the Word of God. In verse 18 he shows that the Jews had the message. The problem was not a lack of hearing, but a lack of obedience. Here he quotes Psalm 19:4 to show that the Jewish people are inexcusable, for the message that came only through nature (or general revelation) should have brought them to faith. But they had more than just the message of nature, they had the gospel preached to them (special revelation). By this time, the gospel had been preached in every Jewish community. This shows that Israel had heard.

In verses 19-20 Paul quotes Old Testament prophecy, Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1, which anticipated a salvation that would be sent out to every nation, and that Gentiles among these nations would receive it. The message that the Jewish people were rejecting, Gentiles were accepting. Those who believe will constitute a new entity that will provoke Jews to jealousy, a point Paul will detail in 11:11-14. This new group,

however, is not a nation, but it is a "no-nation," for it is composed of believers from all nations.

He then concludes (v. 21) by quoting Isaiah 65:2 to show that, even though Israel rejected Him, God's attitude toward Israel was still one of love. God continuously keeps His hands open, and anytime Israel wants to respond, He will accept them. Israel has rejected the Lord, but the Lord is still waiting to receive Israel.

#### 4. The Consolation of Israel's Rejection - 11:1-26

##### a. The Rejection by Israel is not Total - 11:1-10

The word *then* connects 11:1 with 10:21, showing that the question raised in 11:1 is based on the statement in 10:21, which portrays Israel in unbelief. It also shows that the *people* of 10:21 and 11:1 must be the same: national Israel. In these verses Paul taught that Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus is not complete or total, because even today there are Jewish people coming to a saving knowledge of the Messiahship of Jesus. To prove it, Paul first cites himself as an example (v. 1). He begins with a question: *Did God cast off his people?* The answer comes quickly: *God forbid!* or more strongly in the Greek, "may it never be," "perish the thought." The problem was not that God had cast off His people. The fact that Israel has rejected the Messiahship of Jesus does not mean that God has rejected Israel. Israel is still the chosen people of God. As Paul states, *God did not cast off His people*. If He had, it would mean that no single Jew could ever be saved. The fact that Paul himself was a Jewish believer shows two things: first, that Israel's rejection of the Messiah was not total, because Paul was a Jewish person and he believed; and, second, it showed that God has not rejected or cast off His people. Otherwise, Paul would not have been saved. Although the majority do not believe, still God has not cast off His people, rejected his elect nation. The fact that Paul refers to Israel as "His people" in the present age shows that they are still the chosen people.

Paul then brings out the choice of God (v. 2a). The relationship between God and His people is that of foreknowledge. God had, in His foreknowledge, chosen Israel in spite of His knowledge that Israel would reject the Messiahship of Jesus. The reason God knew this was because of His foreknowledge, and His foreknowledge was based upon His foreordination. The fact that God foreknew His people, then chose His people, shows that God had not cast off His people. The very concept of the foreknowledge of God forbids the concept of the casting off of Israel. Foreknowledge is not merely "to know beforehand." The verb "to foreknow" should be understood in its Old Testament Hebrew sense, "to choose in advance." Since Israel was chosen, God could not cast off Israel.

Then to show that Paul was not alone in his Jewish faith of the Messiahship of Jesus, he next deals with the calling of the remnant (vv. 2b-10). There are many

other Jews who have come to saving faith, both in the past and at the present time. Paul gives the historical example of Elijah (vv. 2b-4). The point is to show that God has always had a remnant. Although the remnant may have been quite small at times, God has always had a remnant. While apostasy was general, it was not universal among Jews. The point Paul is making with the example of Elijah is that what is true today has always been true: it is the remnant that comes to saving faith. The remnant in Elijah's day was only seven thousand strong. What has happened since Christ is nothing new, because throughout Jewish history the majority have always been in the state of unbelief and the remnant are the ones that have come to saving faith. After giving the illustration of Elijah, Paul gave the application of the illustration (v. 5). *Even so* (the comparison), *then* (the inference); what was true then is true now: there is a remnant according to the election of grace. By declaring that it is the election of grace, Paul gave a standard according to which the remnant comes into existence. It is not on the basis of the Law of Moses (10:4), but on the basis of grace. Paul uses the Greek perfect tense, which shows the remnant has existed and still does exist. The present remnant of verse 5 corresponds to the seven thousand of Elijah's day. This remnant is the *Israel of God* of Galatians 6:16. He then gives the explanation (v. 6). He drives the point home that works and grace are mutually exclusive (the same point he made in chapter 10). If it is by grace, it cannot be of works, the reason being that it would make grace no longer grace. No one, not even the Jew, can make any claim on God, but God will save men only by grace through faith, both among the Jews and among the Gentiles. Insofar as salvation is concerned, law and grace, works and faith are mutually exclusive. Paul next draws a logical conclusion (v. 7). *What then?* The inference is: that which Israel the whole sought, that he obtained not. Israel the whole sought righteousness, but as 9:31-33 points out, they sought this righteousness on the basis of their own works and the works of the law and did not obtain it. The elect obtained righteousness, and the rest were hardened. Again, the distinction here is not between the Church and Israel, or between Jews and Gentiles, but between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. That which Israel the whole failed to obtain, Israel the remnant did obtain. The Jewish believers have obtained this righteousness of God. This same point was made in I Peter 2:1-10. While Israel the whole has failed to obtain the righteousness of God, there is a remnant within Israel that has. It is this remnant, the Jewish believers, that is the Israel of God. Again, the distinction is between the remnant (*the election obtained it*) and the non-remnant (*the rest were hardened*). Paul then quotes from the Old Testament to show the present hardening of Israel (vv. 8-10). He quotes Deuteronomy 29:4 (the law), Isaiah 29:10 (the prophets) and Psalm 69:22-23 (the writings) to show that Israel as a whole may have been hardened; nevertheless, there is a remnant.

The point of verses 1-10, then, is that while Israel as a nation may have failed to attain righteousness, this rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus is not a total rejection, because there are Jewish people who do believe. These Jewish believers have attained the righteousness. At the present time, there are Jewish believers and there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

b. The Purpose of Israel's Stumbling - 11:11-15

Here again Paul raises a question to be refuted: *I say then*. The question is: *Did they stumble that they might fall?* (v. 11a). Was Israel's stumbling which he spoke of back in 9:30-33 for the purpose of Israel's falling? Was the purpose so that God could reject and cast off His people? (Paul is looking at the majority that did stumble.) The Greek word that Paul used for *fall* refers to "a complete and irrevocable fall." So was the stumbling of Israel for the purpose that Israel would irrevocably fall and never rise again? Paul then gave the answer: *God forbid!* May it never be! In the light of God's faithfulness, this is unthinkable. They have stumbled, but it was not for the purpose of falling irrevocably. God planned for Israel to stumble for the purpose of Gentile salvation; for the purpose of Gentile salvation, Israel stumbled. Gentile salvation is subservient to Jewish salvation.

Having said this, in verses 11b-15 Paul points out that since Israel's stumbling was for the purpose of Gentile salvation, which is *the riches of the world* or *the riches of the Gentiles*, this fact should lead to some key lessons. Paul then spelled out the purpose of Gentile salvation (vv. 11b-14): to provoke Jews to jealousy. This is a reference to Deuteronomy 32:21, already cited back in 10:19. The unbelief of Israel was directed toward the restoration of faith; the fall of Israel was directed toward their reclamation. Gentile salvation is therefore for the purpose of provoking the Jews to jealousy. Why is God saving Gentiles today? To provoke the Jews to jealousy. The Greek word Paul used means "to come alongside someone and to cause him to boil or seeth with jealousy." The reason God saved the Gentiles was so that a believing Gentile would come alongside an unbelieving Jewish person and cause the Jewish person to become jealous because of what that Gentile believer had and become a believer in the Messiah also. Verse 12 presents a contrast between partial and fullness. First, there is a reduction of the nation to a remnant of believers today, but in the future, there will be a national salvation of the nation as a whole and this will be their *fullness*. The main lesson to learn about Israel's stumbling is that Israel did not stumble for an irrevocable fall. The reason for Israel's stumbling was that salvation could now go out to the Gentiles. Now that salvation has gone out to the Gentiles, the purpose of Gentile salvation is to provoke the Jews to jealousy to bring them to salvation (vv. 13-14). The purpose of Israel's stumbling was for Gentile salvation, and the purpose for Gentile salvation is Jewish salvation. That is the methodology by which God has chosen to work. There is a second lesson to be learned (v. 15): all of this would result in blessings for Israel. Paul states that if the stumbling and casting away of Israel meant the reconciliation of the Gentile world (vv. 12-14), then the receiving of Israel would mean life from the dead. This is the statement of Israel's place in God's blessing. The *fullness* here refers to Israel's complete restoration. If by the fall of the Jews the Gentiles received the gospel, how much more will the Gentiles be blessed by Israel's return. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the Gentiles have received this much blessing by virtue of Israel's stumbling, just think how much more blessing the Gentiles will have when Israel is saved. This will lead to the second coming and the establishment of the kingdom. This is why Paul labored so hard among the Gentiles

(vv. 13-14). In this way, even more Jews will be provoked to jealousy and believe, and this, in turn, will mean even more blessings for the Gentiles (v. 15).

The point Paul makes is that it was God's plan for Israel to reject the Messiahship of Jesus so that for awhile the gospel would go out to the Gentiles, during which time they were to provoke Jews to jealousy until eventually all Israel is saved. Paul builds upon Isaiah 49:1-13 where Isaiah taught the same thing: that the Messiah would come to Israel, Israel would reject Him, and the Messiah would then, for awhile, become the light to the Gentiles; but eventually Israel will return to Him and be restored. Paul does not say anything new here; he just points out the way Isaiah 49 is being fulfilled in this day.

#### c. The Olive Tree - 11:16-24

Paul begins by giving the illustration and the principle (v. 16). The connecting *for* or *if* or *now* provides the reason for believing in a future national restoration. The illustration is that of the firstfruit and the root which refer to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Abrahamic Covenant. They are holy because they were separated and consecrated by God for a divine purpose. Israel as a nation is the lump and the branches. The principle, based on Numbers 15:17-21 is that the holiness or consecration of the firstfruits and the root is passed on to the lump and the branches. Just as the firstfruits sanctifies the whole harvest (lump), even some day all Israel will also be sanctified. The Abrahamic Covenant made with the patriarchs is the basis for the expectation of Israel's future national salvation.

The natural branches are the Jews (Israel) and the wild olive branches are the Gentiles (v. 17). Paul spoke of the grafting of a wild olive branch into a good olive tree. Critics of Paul have said that it is obvious that Paul did not understand horticulture, because you never graft a wild olive branch into a good olive tree, for this is unnatural. That is exactly the point Paul was making. It is unnatural for wild olive branches to be grafted into a good olive tree. It is unnatural for Gentiles to be grafted into this place of blessing that comes out of the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul does not say that this is normal, he says that this is abnormal. Normally, such a graft would be unfruitful. The point he is making is that God is doing something that is unnatural: He is bringing Gentiles into the place of blessing based on the Jewish covenants. The Olive Tree in this passage does not represent Israel or the Church, but it represents the place of blessing. The root of this place of blessing is the Abrahamic Covenant. The point that Paul makes here is the same point that he made in Ephesians 2:11-16 and 3:5-6. The Gentiles, by their faith, have now become partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings. This Olive Tree represents the place of blessing, and now Gentiles have been grafted into this place of blessing. Gentiles have been made partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings as contained in the Abrahamic Covenant. The Gentiles are not taker-overs, but partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings.

Then Paul gives a warning (vv. 18-22). The basis of Gentile blessing is faith and not merit. If the Gentiles are to remain in the place of blessing, they must continue in faith. Israel's failure should be a lesson to them. He is not dealing with individuals as such; he is not dealing with individual believers and unbelievers, but with nationalities of Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were in the place of blessing as a nationality, but because of their unbelief they were broken off. Now Gentiles are to be found in the place of blessing; but if they fail in faith, they will also be broken off from the place of blessing. This is not a loss of salvation, but a removal from the place of blessing. The warning is that the basis of Gentile blessing is faith and not merit. He emphasizes their need to continue in faith, for Israel's previous failure should be a lesson to them. Gentiles are warned against boasting over the natural branches, for they are not self-sustained, but are sustained by the root: the Abrahamic Covenant, which is a Jewish covenant.

Paul then presents the argument for Israel's eventual restoration (vv. 23-24). Paul points out that the only thing preventing Israel's restoration is their unbelief, for God has full ability to graft them in again (v. 23). He then gives the reason why all should expect Israel to be restored (v. 24). Paul stated that it is *their own olive tree*. This Olive Tree, this place of blessing, belongs to Israel. How so? The place of blessing is based upon the four unconditional covenants God made with Israel. These are the Jewish covenants. Rightfully, the place of blessing belongs to the Jews. It is *their* place of blessing. This is part of Israel's "advantage" of 3:1-2. Gentiles are merely partakers and are sharing in *their* covenant blessings. Because of this, one ought to expect Israel to be restored into it. Having spelled out the expectation, Paul, in the next segment, declared that this is exactly what is going to happen someday.

#### d. The National Regeneration of Israel - 11:25-36

This will be a fulfillment of Paul's prophecy of Romans 11:25-32. With the connection and explanatory *for*, Paul made a clear declaration of Israel's final restoration (vv. 25-26a). He pointed out that there were limitations to Israel's hardening in that Israel was hardened only in part and only temporarily. There was a partial hardening, but never a total hardening, and that was also the point of 11:1-10. The fact that there are Jewish people coming to saving faith proves that the hardening was partial, but Israel was hardened for only a temporary period of time. They were hardened in part until the *fulfillment* of the Gentiles has come in. The Greek word translated as *fulfillment* means "a full number" or "a complete number." In other words, God has a set number of Gentiles that He has destined to come into the place of blessing, the Olive Tree of verses 16-24. After the fulfillment of the Gentiles has come in, after that set number is reached, then all Israel will be saved. According to Acts 15:14, one of the purposes of the Church Age is to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. While there is a Jewish remnant coming to faith in this age, another key purpose is to take out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. This calling out from among the Gentiles will continue until the *fulfillment*, that set number of Gentiles, is reached. At that time, the Church will be complete and will be removed at the Rapture. Then God will

deal with Israel as a nation again, rather than just with Jewish individuals. This national dealing will lead to all Israel being saved (v. 26a). When Paul stated *all Israel*, he meant all Jews living at that time, not all Jews of all time. In some circles verse 26a has been misinterpreted to mean that all Jews will eventually be saved and, therefore, Jewish evangelism and Jewish missions are unnecessary. However, that is not what the passage teaches. For example, the Bible speaks of *all Israel*, the whole congregation of Israel coming out of Egypt at the Exodus. Of course, not all Jews who ever lived came out of Egypt, but every Jew who lived at that time did come out of Egypt. This is the same way verse 26 should be interpreted. It means that every Jew living at that time will be saved. The *mystery* of this passage is not that of Israel's national salvation, for that was revealed in the Old Testament. The mystery is that of partial temporary hardening of Israel until a full number of Gentiles is reached. The *Israel* of this verse must refer to national Israel for that has been its meaning the other ten times *Israel* has been used previously since chapter 9 (which even Covenant Theologians admit) and there is no reason to make this verse the one exception, especially since it makes perfect sense and is a contrast to the *Gentiles* in the previous verse.

Paul next gave the evidence of Israel's future salvation out of the Old Testament (vv. 26b-27) by quoting Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9. This truth was then analyzed (v. 28). *As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake.* The alienation of Israel in spite of the covenant promises is God's way of bringing Gentiles to Himself. As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for the Gentiles' sake. *But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake.* The *election* refers to Israel's national election as being the chosen people of God. The *fathers' sake* relates to the covenants God has made with Israel, particularly the Abrahamic Covenant made with the Patriarchs (the fathers). God, being the covenant-keeper, for His sake, will fulfill His covenants; and part of that covenant promise is the national salvation of Israel. For now, Israel has been partially hardened. As a result, the hardened element is an enemy of the gospel. Eventually God must bring the whole nation to Himself because they are beloved for the fathers' sake. He has made covenant promises to them that He must fulfill. The reason He must fulfill them (v. 29) is the unconditional and unchanging nature of God's promises; *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* The *calling* has to do with Israel's national election and the *gifts* are the covenant promises which are the result of the election. Neither are subject to being recalled; they are irrevocable.

In verses 30-32, Paul provided the principle for what is going to happen concerning the calling out of the Gentiles and Israel's national salvation. He pointed out that unbelief has given God a chance to reveal His mercy, not on the deserving, but on the undeserving. Once the Gentiles were disobedient but now have obtained mercy. Now Israel is in disobedience and so the Jews have been put on the level where they are eligible for mercy, for God has shut up all that He might have mercy on all, and that is the summary of the gospel. This is *all* without distinction, not "all" without exception, because within this context he is dealing with the nationalities of Jews and Gentiles and not with all individuals. He will have mercy upon all without distinction, meaning all, both Jews and Gentiles, but not all without exception. Obviously, not all people will be



saved as individuals, but there will be salvation both among Jews and Gentiles as nationalities. If anyone is saved at all it is by God's mercy.

Paul concludes his Israelology with a doxology in 11:33-36. As Paul reflected on God's plan and program in relationship to Israel, how He brought Israel into this state, how He is calling from among the Gentiles today to bring many of them to salvation, how this Gentile calling will come to an end someday, and how God will again deal with Israel and bring them all to salvation, he concludes with this tremendous doxology. This doxology extols the wisdom of God and the riches of God in that wisdom. Indeed, if we fully understand God's dealings with the Jewish people, if we clearly understand God's plan and program for Israel, and if we appreciate it from God's standpoint we, too, will have to say the doxology that Paul said, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!*