

Refuting Replacement Theology

God's Covenant with Abraham

Since so much of bible prophecy as I understand it from scripture hinges on God's unconditional covenant with Abraham, I thought it was important to research that covenant and its implications as taught in scripture. So many people today have embraced "replacement theology," the teaching that the church has replaced Israel; and I really don't see how they can do that in light of scripture. Paul makes a powerful argument in Romans 9-11 that God has only set Israel aside for a time and fully intends to restore her to a position of blessing according to His covenant with Abraham. Old Testament scripture is full of prophecies regarding God's preservation of a remnant of the nation of Israel that will one day enjoy a place of prominence among the nations when God establishes His kingdom on earth. Most important to the child of God today, God is a covenant-keeper; He embodies truth and cannot lie. If He is not faithful to keep His covenant with Israel, why should He be trusted to keep His promises to the church?

I have not done a study on this subject per se except as encountered in my verse by verse study through the scriptures. I will begin with what scripture tells us about God's covenant with Abraham and His commitment to His word, followed up with a look at the Old Testament prophecies and closing with the study in Romans.

We first encounter "Abram" in Genesis 11 as part of a listing of Shem's descendants. We are told that Terah, Abram's father, decides to uproot his family and take them out of Ur of the Chaldees. They got as far as Haran, and stayed there until Terah died. It would seem that Terah was aware of God's proposal to his son according to the following verse.

Genesis 15:7 "And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."

After his father's death, Abram sets out for Canaan with his family.

*Genesis 12:1-5 "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: **And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.** So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."*

I am only going to focus on the narrative as it relates to the God's covenant with Abram. At this point the LORD has promised to make Abram, who was childless, the father of a great nation that would be greatly blessed and would prove to be a blessing to all people on earth. He also promised to bless those that blessed Abram's family and curse those that cursed them. At this point the covenant is conditional; it is based upon

Abram taking His family to Canaan as God had told him to do. The narrative is clear in stating that Abram obeyed God's command.

An Unconditional Everlasting Covenant

In Genesis 15 we have a narrative of God affirming His covenant with Abram.

*Genesis 15:1-6 "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward....And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but **he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.** And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."*

At this point in time Abraham has no children, so he doesn't understand how God can keep His promise. The Lord then instructs Abram to prepare a sacrifice by which God will confirm His promise.

Genesis 15:12-18 "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram....And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years....afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again....And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates...."

I almost left this section of scripture out except that it testifies to some important truths that apply to our study. God is basically building a foundation of faith for Abram. He assures him through an accepted ritual that He is going to keep His word. The ritual was to include both parties passing between the animal pieces. The LORD, however, arranged it so as to walk through the pieces alone, absolving Abram of any responsibility regarding the keeping of this covenant.

The LORD also prophesied to Abram concerning what history identifies as Israel's captivity in Egypt, specifying the timeframe and declaring that they would eventually come out of Egypt with great substance. It is also interesting to note that Abram's land inheritance is to stretch from "the river of Egypt," the most obvious of which would be the Nile (though most commentaries do not agree with that understanding), and the Euphrates River. It's interesting to note that Israel has never possessed that much land to date.

The prophecy concerning the captivity and deliverance from Egypt is important as another affirmation of the LORD as LORD. Only God can prophesy future events hundreds of years in advance. Also significant to note is that the LORD is stating that the promise of a homeland was that of a specific area of land, some of which comprises the nation of Israel today.

I believe God repeats this covenant several times in scripture to strengthen the faith of the patriarchs as they and their descendants waited for its complete fulfillment. The next mention of the covenant comes in chapter 17 when God changes Abram's name to Abraham.

*Genesis 17:3–8 “And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but **thy name shall be Abraham**; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. **And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”*

The most important truth in this restatement of God's covenant is the fact that it is “an everlasting covenant.” In other words, this covenant will endure for perpetuity. This promise is to Abraham and “his seed,” his physical descendants “in their generations.” This brings up another interesting truth that I discovered in my study of Galatians.

Galatians 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

It is obvious from the Genesis passage that reference is being made to Abraham's descendants, but Paul reveals that there is another hidden application. The reference to Abraham's seed included a direct reference to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The LORD is making a promise of a future kingdom to His Son even as He affirms His covenant with Abraham. That revelation just helps this parent understand from the human viewpoint God's tremendous patience and mercy toward His chosen people—His promise was to His Son who was to come from this people.

Isaac Inherits the Covenant

As the narrative continues, the LORD makes clear that it is a child born to Sarah and Abraham that will inherit the covenant promises. At this point in their lives, that seemed to be an impossibility since they were both too old to be able to physically reproduce. God, however, is very clear that it is through Isaac, a child birthed by Sarah, that the covenant would be established.

*Genesis 17:19–21 “And God said, **Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.** And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.”*

Again the covenant is declared to be an everlasting covenant; one that will be inherited by Abraham's descendants through Isaac—not Ishmael.

The next reference to God's promise to bless Abraham comes after he shows his faith in God by intending to sacrifice Isaac according to the LORD's command. As we know, God provided the lamb to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac. I do not believe God ever intended Isaac to be sacrificed. He was providing another faith-building lesson by allowing Abraham (and Isaac) to once again experience His provision when acting in obedience to His commands. He was also establishing a precedent showing that He would provide the sacrificial Lamb necessary to deliver all people who would choose to follow Him in faith and obedience. Once again He spoke to Abraham.

*Genesis 22:16–18 “And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; **and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”***

Again the LORD promises to greatly multiply the seed of Abraham. More significant to this study, the LORD also promises that Abraham's people will take possession of land now controlled by their enemies and will be a source of blessing to all the nations on earth. History shows that the Israelites conquered most of the land of Canaan and established their nation as led by the LORD. The blessing to the nations would come in the person of the Messiah Jesus Christ as the Savior to all who will accept Him. Yet future is the blessing all nations will experience by having Jesus on the throne in Jerusalem as King of kings.

*Isaiah 9:6–7 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”***

*Jeremiah 23:5–6 “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. **In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”***

*Matthew 25:31–34 “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: **And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”***

*Revelation 20:4 “**and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”***

I am emphasizing this truth since it is important to understand that God is going to establish His Son as King over the nations from the throne of David in Jerusalem as stated by Isaiah. I think it is important to note from the prophecy in Jeremiah that Judah

and Israel (the whole nation) will dwell safely during the rule of this King who will rule the whole world. Though designated by John in the book of Revelation as enduring for 1000 years initially, scripture is clear that this kingdom will be eternal and will endure after the final judgment of humanity has been completed. John is also clear in identifying “Christ” as the King.

Jacob Inherits the Covenant Promises

As the narrative continues, we find out that Isaac fathers twin sons, but that God chooses Jacob, the younger son, to inherit the covenant promises. The LORD speaks to Jacob one night in a dream as he is traveling to Haran to take a wife from among his kin. His message—to confirm the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac.

Genesis 28:13–14 “And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Jacob, who was renamed Israel by the LORD, eventually fathered twelve sons whose descendants would form the nation of Israel.

*Exodus 1:1–5 “Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob. **Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.** And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for **Joseph** was in Egypt already.”*

As referenced previously, the LORD delivered the people out of Egypt with miraculous power. He then went on to establish a conditional covenant with them through Moses before allowing them to take possession of Canaan. This covenant was directly connected to their maintaining possession of the land and continuing to experience God’s blessings. Leviticus 26 gives a thorough explanation of the conditions of this covenant. Most of the book of Deuteronomy is an emphasis on the importance of not breaking covenant with Him once they are in the land. Obedience will result in great blessing and disobedience will result in great cursing. The LORD reveals to Moses that He knows the people will break covenant and even declares that He will remove them from the land and scatter them among the nations in judgment.

*Deuteronomy 30:1–6 “And it shall come to pass, **when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: **And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart,*****

and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

Important—God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was unconditional; God’s covenant with the nation of Israel through Moses was conditional but did not negate the covenant with Abraham. Though Israel would incur judgment and eventually be dispersed among the nations because they broke covenant with the LORD, scripture is clear in declaring that the LORD will preserve a remnant and bring them back into the land and a position of blessing before Him in honor of His original covenant with Abraham.

The LORD also declares through scripture that He retains ownership of the land though He has given it to His people to bless them.

*Leviticus 25:1&23 "And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai....The land shall not be sold for ever: for **the land is mine**; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."*

*2 Chronicles 7:19–20 "But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots **out of my land which I have given them**; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations."*

*Jeremiah 2:7 "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, **ye defiled my land**, and made mine heritage an abomination."*

*Ezekiel 36:4–5 "Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed **my land** into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey."*

*Joel 3:1–2 "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, **and parted my land**."*

It’s tempting to digress at this point, but I will refrain.

God’s Covenant with David

Before moving on to the prophecies regarding the preservation of a remnant and the future establishment of the kingdom, we need to look at one more covenant—the one God made with King David.

2 Samuel 7:8–16 “Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts....I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime....And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom....And **thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.**”

The most important points in this covenant are that the throne of David is eternal and will always be occupied by a descendant of David. That wording used to puzzle me since there obviously hasn't been a king on the throne in Israel for thousands of years. I remember learning at one time that the validity of the position is not dependent upon whether or not it is occupied. The next king that takes the throne of David in Jerusalem will be a descendant of David. When Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom, He will take the throne of His forefather David. The prophet Jeremiah confirmed the promise made to David.

Jeremiah 33:14–17 “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. **In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.** In those days shall Judah be saved, and **Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.** For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel”

It is also important to note that this promise declares that the time is coming when the people of Israel will dwell in their own land never to experience wickedness at the hands of their enemies again. Jeremiah describes it as a time when Jerusalem shall dwell safely. I don't think that anyone can argue that this must be referencing a time yet future since Israel has never dwelt safely in peace under her own king since the Babylonian captivity.

God's covenant to David is also affirmed by the psalmist.

Psalms 89:3–4 “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.”

Both the covenants with Abraham and David were unconditional. Though the covenant made with the people through Moses was conditional regarding possession of the land and experiencing God's blessings, it does not negate either of the other two. It also provides for restoration of covenant and blessing when the people respond to the LORD in repentance and faith.

The LORD has revealed to us through His prophets that that time is coming.

Hosea 3:4–5 “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: **Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.**”

*Zechariah 12:8-10 "In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. **And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.**"*

The Lord Jesus also affirmed this truth. When talking to the Pharisees, He declared that His return was predicated upon their accepting Him as their Messiah and King.

Luke 13:35 "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The Promise of the Remnant

After having studied each of the covenants individually, it is easy to conclude that the existence of the nation of Israel is necessary to the fulfillment of each. Though the people broke covenant with the LORD and ended up scattered among the nations in judgment (as foretold), God always preserved a remnant through whom those covenants would eventually find fulfillment. The first use I could find of God declaring His preservation of a remnant was related to His sparing of Jerusalem from the invading Assyrian forces. Hezekiah made all the right physical preparations for defense, but He went to the LORD in prayer as His primary defense. This is part of the answer that Isaiah relayed to him.

*2 Kings 19:30–34 "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. **For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts SHALL DO THIS.** Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. **For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.**"*

It is interesting to note that the LORD is determined to save Jerusalem not only according to His own purposes, but also in consideration of His servant David. Though God protected "the remnant" at that time, He would not long thereafter determine that this remnant required a refining fire of judgment.

*2 Kings 21:10–15 "And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols...**I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies;** and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day."*

The prophet Isaiah declared that God would again preserve a remnant and Ezra records his response in thanks to God for allowing that remnant a fresh start in the land of Judah.

*Isaiah 10:20–21 “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. **The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.**”*

*Ezra 9:8–9 “And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us **a remnant to escape**, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.”*

In the very next chapter Isaiah declares the return of a second “remnant” to the land of Israel.

*Isaiah 11:1–12 “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: **and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.** And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. **They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.** And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to **pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people**, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”*

I think it was necessary to include such a large section of scripture to establish the context of the return of this second remnant. This remnant will return from “the four corners of the earth” or from all over the world. This return will be facilitated by One described as descending from Jesse (the father of David) and possessing the fullness of the Holy Spirit. He will rule over the earth in righteousness and supernatural power. During His reign children can safely play with snakes, lions will no longer be carnivores and cows and bears will graze side by side. During His rule the earth will be “full of the knowledge of the LORD.” This is a prophecy regarding the establishment of

God's kingdom on earth in literal fulfillment of His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David.

No one who accepts the scripture as the word of God can dispute that this is describing a time a yet future, for there has never been such a time since Isaiah made this prophecy. I am sure that for hundreds of years people had a hard time believing this prophecy could be literally fulfilled. Since the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, I don't see why anyone should deny that God intends to fulfill this prophecy according to His covenant promises.

The Coming Kingdom and the New Covenant

Isaiah is not the only prophet to foretell of the future reign of Messiah on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

*Daniel 7:13–14 “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, **that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him:** his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”*

*Jeremiah 23:5–8 “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that **I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.”*

*Hosea 3:4–5 “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: **Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.**”*

*Zechariah 14:9–16 “And **the LORD shall be king over all the earth:** in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one....Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited....And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”*

I know I am including lots of scripture, but it is far more important to hear what God says in His word than it is to hear what I say.

Most of the scripture we have utilized in this study so far has been from the Old Testament scriptures. Throughout the Old Testament the focus has been on God's dealings with the nation of Israel. After approximately 400 years of silence, a prophet (John the Baptist) once more emerges on the scene in Israel declaring a message of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. He eventually identifies Jesus as that Messiah.

*John 1:29–31 “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.** This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”*

Jesus made clear that He was sent to once again minister to the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24 “But he [Jesus] answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” [brackets mine]

Before Jesus was born, the angel Gabriel appeared to His mother Mary and affirmed that He would one day assume the throne of David for eternity.

*Luke 1:30–33 “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, **and shalt call his name JESUS.** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and **the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”***

Scripture is clear in revealing that the people of Israel as a whole, led by their spiritual leaders, did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. This eventually led to His death, burial and resurrection.

During His ministry He often made reference to His kingdom. The following verses make it clear that He was promising the twelve disciples positions of leadership in a literal nation of Israel when that kingdom is established.

Luke 22:29–30 “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

The Lord also made clear that He was establishing a New Testament (or Covenant from the Greek) through His death, burial and resurrection.

*Luke 22:19–20 “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.**”*

God’s plan to introduce a new covenant to Israel was also revealed by the Old Testament prophets. Though Ezekiel doesn’t mention the word **covenant**, it is obvious that he is talking about a time that is still in Israel’s future.

*Jeremiah 31:31–33 “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,** and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: **But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel;** After those days,*

saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Ezekiel 36:24–28 "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

The Mystery of the Church

After His resurrection and before returning to heaven to await the time determined for His return, Jesus answered a question from His disciples regarding the establishment of the kingdom.

Acts 1:6–8 "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In other words, they were not to be given this information; the kingdom would be established according to the plan of the Father. Until that time they were to serve as His witnesses in Jerusalem and all over the world. Matthew gives us a more detailed account of that charge.

Matthew 28:18–20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The body of believers that accepted Jesus in faith as the Messiah, their Savior, eventually became known as "the church" (*ekklesia* in the Greek). This name was actually used by Jesus when responding to Peter's insight on His identity and when giving instruction as to how to deal with sinful actions between Christians.

Matthew 16:15–18 "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Matthew 18:15–17 "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every

*word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear **the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."*

The Apostle Paul was the one through whom God revealed the "mystery" of the church. This "mystery" makes reference to something that has been hidden and is now being revealed. I think he explains it best in his letter to the Ephesians.

*Ephesians 3:1–12 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How **that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) **Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel**: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; **And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ**: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."*

A Close Look at Romans 9-11

Having established that God has had a plan for the nation of Israel and for the "church" since the beginning of the world, I think it will be best for us to go through Romans 9-11 verse by verse in understanding the position of each in relationship to one another. I will jump from my journal in Romans making revisions and /or corrections as needed.

Romans 9:1 "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,"

This verse is a statement emphasizing the truth of what Paul is about to say. Truth is according to Christ and the word of God—not the word of Paul or of men.

Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

When we speak the truth, our conscience is clear and we experience no guilt or conviction of the Holy Spirit—unless we are speaking with a wrong attitude.

Romans 9:2 "That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart."

What Paul is about to say is a source of great sadness and continual grief to him. It's not just of general concern or something that bothers him once in a while. This is a very convicting statement to me regarding my "my people and my nation.

Romans 9:3-4 "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;"

Paul is grieving over his people, the Israelites, those to whom he is related physically by blood. He is so concerned that he would rather be accursed from Christ (condemned in judgment without eternal life) himself than for his own people to be spiritually lost. I don't think I could honestly ever make a similar statement.

It was the nation of Israel that God first chose as His own peculiar people.

*Deuteronomy 14:2 "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and **the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself**, above all the nations that are upon the earth."*

The process of choosing a child as your own is adoption. God's choice placed the people of Israel in a position of glory (dignity, honor) before the other nations of the world.

After He had delivered them from slavery in Egypt, the nation of Israel was privileged to have the "glory" of the Lord dwell with them physically through the cloud that led them in the wilderness and rested over the tabernacle when they were camped. That glory was later manifested in Solomon's temple.

1Kings 8:10-11 "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD."

The nation of Israel was singled out for a covenant relationship with the Lord beginning with Abraham and on to Moses and David. God's final covenant with Israel (Jeremiah 31:33-37) is yet to come. It is important to note that God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional. Once Abraham stepped out in faith to leave his land, God's promise was sure.

Genesis 12:1-3 "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

This unconditional covenant was confirmed to Jacob.

Genesis 28:13-15 "And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places

whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

The Israelites were privileged to receive the revelation of God's law—the oracles of God (as stated by Paul earlier in 3:2). They were singled out for the privilege of *servicing* God; the Greek identifies this service as "worship." This service included the responsibility of presenting God to the Gentiles and demonstrating how submission and obedience to Him would result in blessing.

"the promises" – At first you might think this is a repeat of the Abrahamic covenant and the promises it included. I think it goes on to embrace all the promises in scripture associated with the conditional covenants and promises related to specific acts of love and obedience such as delighting in God's word (Psalm 1). These promises will culminate for Israel with the eventual establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom and the establishment of the nation under the new covenant.

Romans 9:5 "Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

Several of the translations I read for this verse reference the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This makes sense to me. This nation came from specific physical descent as designated by God. He often refers to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Exodus 3:6 "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Exodus 4:5 "That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee."

Matthew 22:32 "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Paul is clear that Christ, Jesus the Messiah, was descended from these same fathers. As he speaks of Christ, he can't help but acknowledge that He is LORD as blessed by God the Father.

"Amen" = What Paul has said is just said is firm, trustworthy and sure.

Children of Flesh vs. Promise

Romans 9:6 "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:"

As Paul looks at the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel at the time of this letter, it would seem that God's word had been proven not true. He makes clear that is not the case. Now he begins to elaborate on the truth he presented in chapter 2. Not everyone who is an Israelite by birth is a true Israelite—a part of that chosen family of God.

The following quote is from Arnold Fruchtenbaum and makes an important point.

“It is important that this verse is not misunderstood. Paul is not distinguishing between Israel and the Church or between Jews and Gentiles. Rather, he is distinguishing between Jews who believe in the Messiahship of Yeshua 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, which is the believing, natural seed of Abraham. The second expression, *of Israel*, refers to the entire nation, the whole natural seed. There is one Israel which comprises the entire nation and, within the whole of physical Israel, there is a spiritual Israel. Spiritual Israel is never stated in Scripture to be the Church. Spiritual Israel is always those Jews, within the nation as a whole, who believe.”

Romans 9:7-8 “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

It would seem that these verses are defining the difference between the spiritual heritage of Israel and the physical heritage of Israel. Abraham was God’s chosen man to father the children of faith. Abraham had other children in the flesh. Isaac, however, was unique in that he was the child of promise that was birthed through the supernatural provision of God.

Isaac represents the father of the physical seed of the people of Israel. You can’t be born by flesh into the family of God; you can only become a child of God through faith. The physical descendants of Israel through Isaac/Jacob represent those who will eventually experience the fullness of the physical “seed” as promised in the verses from Genesis 28 above (comments on verses 3-4). Isaac was the child of promise to Abraham and Sara that was born through faith; therefore, all his descendants who become followers of God through faith are considered the true children of Abraham.

Romans 9:9-12 “For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.”

Isaac was born in due time according to the direct revelation of God to Abraham (Genesis 18). Isaac fathered twins, Jacob and Esau, through Rebekah. It was God’s choice that Jacob would be the son through whom the covenant with Abraham and Isaac would continue. Paul makes it clear that this decision was made before the babies were born—before they had done either good or evil. Jacob wasn’t better than Esau—he was just privileged to be God’s choice.

From the beginning God was clear that salvation was a matter of grace through faith and not works. Salvation is a gift according to the will and plan of God.

Romans 9:13 “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

This whole chapter is difficult and this verse one of the most difficult. I finally feel like I got some understanding when I first really studied the story of Rachel and Leah. We automatically associate the word *hate* with the most horrible of thoughts; the Greek, however, includes the thought of “loving less.” This understanding is supported by the scripture concerning Leah.

Genesis 29:30-31 **And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.**

That really solidified my thinking in this area. I know that according to His word, God is not willing that any should perish. God chose Jacob to a position of privilege and honor, just as Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. It doesn't mean He didn't love Esau at all—just that He loved him less. That is a choice we have no right to question of our Creator. The prophet Jeremiah declared this truth.

Jeremiah 18:6 **“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”**

God is Sovereign

As we continue to focus our thoughts on the declaration of God's choice of Jacob over Esau...

Romans 9:14-15 **“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”**

Paul is trying to anticipate the questions of those who would be receive this letter. He assures them that God's choice of Jacob was not an act of unrighteousness. God is Sovereign. He has the authority to make choices as it pleases Him. These choices don't involve right or wrong; EVERY choice God makes is right. God was very clear with His people regarding His sovereignty from the very beginning, and Paul quotes from the Torah to establish that truth.

Exodus 33:19 **“And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”**

Romans 9:16 **“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”**

I liked the Complete Jewish Bible translation of this verse: *“Thus it doesn't depend on human desires or efforts, but on God, who has mercy.”*

The obvious question, “Who are the people to whom God shows mercy?”

Psalms 25:10 **“All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.”**

*Psalm 86:5 "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy **unto all them that call upon thee.**"*

The Psalmist declares that those who obey the word of God and those who come to God seeking forgiveness always receive His mercy. As he continues to develop his thoughts, Paul will eventually emphasize that last point. Any unbeliever who comes to God in faith will receive His mercy.

Romans 11:32 "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

Romans 9:17 "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. "

"the scripture saith" – The scripture is the word of God as inspired to the writers through the Holy Spirit.

2Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (inspiration = divinely breathed in)

The scripture being referenced is found in Exodus.

*Exodus 9:13-16 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. **And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.**"*

God knew Pharaoh's heart before He ever created him. Knowing his heart, God raised him up specifically to a position of power in order to accomplish His purposes in magnifying His name as He performed mighty miracles that finally caused Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt. Even without modern technology, the news spread quickly of God's miracles on behalf of Israel. When Rahab hid the spies in Jericho, she gave evidence to this truth.

*Joshua 2:9-11 "And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. **For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt;** and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."*

Romans 9:18 "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth."

It is God's sovereign choice to be longsuffering in mercy and allow the door of opportunity to remain open for one to respond to Him in faith. It is God's sovereign choice as to when to close the door of opportunity for any individual to respond to Him in faith and repentance. It is God's sovereign choice to "harden" a person's heart so that he/she will stubbornly reject any opportunity to turn to Him in faith. The opportunity for faith and repentance is available for all for a period of time. This has to be true for God's word to be true.

Ezekiel 33:11 "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live:"

2Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Some have their hearts "hardened" by God according to His divine plan, and others harden their own hearts.

Psalms 95:8 "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:"

Again, I firmly believe that election is based on God's foreknowledge as stated in chapter 8:29 ("For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..."), and I strongly believe that His choice to "harden" one's heart is based on that same knowledge. (But I'm just a simple believer and not a great theologian.)

God's Sovereignty and Our Choices

Continuing our thoughts regarding God choosing to harden the hearts of some...

Romans 9:19 "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? "

Again, Paul is anticipating the questions of the readers of this letter. The question--If God hardens someone's heart, how can He condemn that person for something over which he had no control?

Romans 9:20-21 **Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?**

Paul is firm in his reply that we have no right to question the authority of God. God Himself answered this thought through the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 18:3-6 "Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."

And the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 29:16 "... for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?" (Note: This is a rhetorical question with an obvious answer—NO.)

God creates every person according to His own purposes. That purpose includes the ability to choose whether or not to follow God in faith and obedience. Each person has an inner understanding of God's declaration of Himself through creation.

Romans 1:19–20 "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

Romans 9:22-23 "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,"

These verses just build on the thoughts presented above in my opinion. It is important to note that the word "what" is not in the original; sometimes the translators make understanding more difficult by the words they add. In fact, it sounds like Paul is saying that God "endured with much longsuffering" the wickedness of those who chose to reject Him. Those are vessels "fitted to destruction"—condemned for eternity.

John 3:18 "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Why was He so longsuffering? To make use of these wicked vessels to demonstrate His wrath (punishment, vengeance, anger) and His power in order to declare Himself and draw to Himself "the vessels of mercy," those who would turn to Him in faith and repentance.

There has to be a contrast between good and evil for man to recognize his need for a Savior. God purposed through men of faith to demonstrate the contrast of blessing for following Him in faith and obedience and judgment for those who choose to reject Him.

"afore prepared unto glory" – This takes us back to Romans 8:29-30: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."*

Romans 9:24 “Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”

“Even us” = vessels of mercy

Paul is saying that the children of faith, the vessels of honor, would consist of Jews and Gentiles. Through the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul declares this to be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Hosea.

Hosea 2:23 “And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people [the Gentiles], Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” [brackets mine]

Romans 9:26 “And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.”

Another quote from Hosea: *Hosea 1:10* “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”

I tend to think this verse is emphasizing the restoration of the people of Israel to relationship with Jehovah. He had scattered them to the far ends of the earth and this is a promise that they will once again be brought back to the place from which God dispersed them—the land of Israel—as children of the living God, part of the family of faith.

A Remnant Shall Be Saved

Romans 9:27-28 “Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.”

Now Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah. *Isaiah 10:21-22* “The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.”

I included verse 21 to help make the connection between the word *return* in Isaiah and the word *saved* used by Paul. In both cases the context is that of turning to God in faith and repentance, which results in salvation.

Interestingly enough, some of the other translations of Isaiah 10:22 seemed to make a better connection to verse 28 than the KJV.

Darby – “for [he] is bringing the matter to an end, and [cutting [it] short in righteousness; because] a cutting short of the matter will [the] Lord accomplish upon the earth.”

Young – *“for a matter He is finishing, and is cutting short in righteousness, because a matter cut short will the Lord do upon the land.”*

I think there is a direct connection to Matthew 24 with these two verses.

Matthew 24:21-22 “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

In these verses from Romans, Isaiah, and Matthew the context is concerning the remnant of Israel (referenced as the *elect* in Matthew) that will be restored in fellowship to Jehovah at the end of the tribulation period, the 70th week of Daniel (still future and described in great detail in Revelation). In looking at the Greek for “cut it short” I get a picture of the LORD completing Israel’s restoration with one decisive act—His return in victory as King of kings at the end of the 70th week. In other words, upon the completion of the execution of God’s refining judgment of the 70th week, the 7-year tribulation period, He will immediately establish the believing remnant of the nation of Israel in righteous standing before the nations.

“finish the work” – This is referencing the completion of God’s plan. I think Daniel defines it most clearly.

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

Romans 9:29 “And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.”

Isaiah must have been one of Paul’s favorite books (as it is mine). Again, he quotes the prophet.

Isaiah 1:9 “Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”

Scripture tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed by God never to be inhabited again. In fact, we have yet to identify exactly where those cities were located; the general location is at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because evidently Lot was the only righteous man living there. He was delivered before their destruction. Israel has always had a preserving body of righteous men of faith. Paul is emphasizing that this remnant was and is a result of the work of God in His people.

I think point needs to be made that it is God who has preserved “a seed” (a remnant, a group of physical descendants of Israel) according to His covenant promises.

“Lord of Sabaoth” – Seems to be equivalent to the title “Lord of hosts...a military epithet of God.” “Sabaoth” = armies

Salvation for the Gentiles

Romans 9:30 “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.”

Based on all that Paul has just presented, What should we conclude? What is the state of things?

The Gentiles (who make up the “church”) from the wicked pagan nations have been imputed the righteousness of God through faith in the Son of God. The Israelites, who had begun as nation of faith, had resorted to focusing on the keeping of God’s law and had failed (as does everyone who tries to live by the law).

Romans 9:32-33 “Wherefore? Because *they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*”

Why did they fail? Because they were trying to work their way into God’s good graces through ritualistic practices instead of just following Him in faith and obedience as LORD.

Again, Paul quotes from Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:13-14 “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And **he shall be** for a sanctuary; but for **a stone of stumbling** and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 28:16 “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, **Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.**”

In Isaiah 8 the “LORD of hosts” is identified as the stone of stumbling. In Isaiah 28 YHWH states He will lay a “precious corner stone” in Zion. Isaiah 28 is a passage about the Messiah and serves to equate Him to the Lord of hosts.

Psalms 118 is another Messianic passage that is referenced by the Apostle Peter in his great sermon recorded in Acts 4. He identifies this stone as Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Psalms 118:21-22 “I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”

Acts 4:10-11 “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him**

doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

In the book of 1Peter, the Holy Spirit connects all the dots.

*1Peter 2:5-8 "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by **Jesus Christ**. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, **I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious**: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, **the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence**, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."*

The people of Israel were so caught up in their legalistic practices of empty ritual, that they rejected Jesus the Messiah when He came. They (the nation as a whole) refused to accept Him as the promised Messiah in spite of His many miraculous proofs.

Why were they so eager to reject Jesus as the Messiah? It's like they never had read Isaiah 53. They were so eager for Messiah the King to deliver them from the bondage of Rome, that they were blinded to the truth. They just didn't expect the suffering servant. They were so proud of their adherence to the law, that they couldn't understand the message of salvation through faith that Jesus taught.

As I thought about this some more, I thought again about how false expectations impact us. The people of Israel were so focused on a deliverer who would become their king that they rejected the scripture that spoke of Messiah's suffering. They just didn't understand that He had to die and conquer death through the resurrection to atone for sin before He could set up His Kingdom. The suffering servant was to become the king. As a result, they rejected the Messiah. Their response to Him was based on their desire and expectation rather than the truth. God had given them the truth through His prophets, but they chose to accept only part of that truth—not the whole truth.

The "church" today has the same mindset. We want to interpret God's truth according to our desires and expectations. That doesn't change the truth. It just puts us in the dangerous position of missing out on the blessings of God and in many instances in leading people away from true saving faith. I am continually asking the Lord to help me read and hear His word without prejudice and with an open heart to His truth. It is only through knowing His truth as revealed to us by the Spirit through His word that we can develop a growing relationship with the Savior and live a life of victory and obedience over sin. It is dangerous to try to box God in to our expectations of Him from a human mindset. His wisdom is so very far beyond our understanding.

Paul's Burden for the People of Israel

Romans 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

"Brethren" = fellow believers

Paul's desire is that Israel, the Jewish people, would accept Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and turn to Him for their salvation. The Greek for the word *prayer* comes from a root meaning "to beg (as binding oneself)." This gives strength to the word *desire*; it is a deep longing. Paul feels this so intensely because he was once in their position of unbelief.

Romans 10:2 "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

Paul is very aware, through past personal experience, that the Jewish people (and especially their leaders) were zealous/passionate about God. The problem was that their passion was not based on "recognition, full discernment" (from the Greek) concerning Him. The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) words it this way, "*But it is not based on correct understanding.*"

Paul gave a prime example from his own life in the book of Acts as he spoke before Agrippa.

Acts 26:9-15 "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

I believe that has been the truth of "Christians" throughout history as well, e.g. the Crusaders. They have acted with zeal to support/defend a wrong understanding of God and His will/purposes.

Romans 10:3 "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

"ignorant" = not to know (through lack of information or intelligence), to ignore

I've always defined ignorance as lack of knowledge, but never associated the word *ignore* with it; that would include a conscious decision to refuse or reject the facts. When Jesus taught the righteousness of God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), it was a revelation of how differently God looks at things vs. how men look at things. Through the centuries the spiritual leaders of Israel had developed an interpretation of the law that was far from the original intent of the Lawgiver; they had "established their own righteousness." The ministry of Jesus was full of examples of His revealing the error of that system. Matthew 23 contains one of His strongest accusations of the spiritual leaders; verse 23 emphasizes their wrong understanding of God's law. They

were focused on outward acts of obedience with no understanding that it is the character of the inner man that is the key issue.

Matthew 23:23-25 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

They were so caught up in their own "wisdom," that they *ignored* the wisdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ. They refused to accept the facts/proofs that He gave of His position as the Messiah, the Son of God. They did not recognize Him because they revered the teaching of men more than the teaching of God through the scripture. They should have recognized Christ at His coming from the teaching of the prophets.

Matthew 16:1-3 "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; **but can ye not discern the signs of the times?**"

Luke 12:54-56 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but **how is it that ye do not discern this time?**"

Jesus Christ Fulfils the Law

Romans 10:4 "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

"end" = the point aimed at as the limit, the conclusion

The whole of the sacrificial system pointed to the provision of Christ. Jesus said that He came to fulfil (complete) the law; He was the conclusion.

Matthew 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

He was sent by God to provide righteousness for man. The sacrificial system allowed for the sins of the people to be forgiven on a temporary basis. I found another quote from Arnold Fruchtenbaum's "Israelology" that applies here: "The law was never designed as a permanent administration, but only a temporary one, as is evident in Galatians 3:19, 'Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made....'"

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus allows those sins to be permanently forgiven for every person who will *believe* or have faith in that provision. Paul stated it this way in his letter to the Corinthians. (I like the NIV wording.)

2Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

No longer does man have to be judged according to the law; through Christ one can be declared righteous, not guilty, according to the law. If man chooses to try to earn his salvation by keeping the law and rejecting Jesus, he will be found guilty. To fail in one point of the law is to fail.

James 2:10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Scripture tells us that ALL have sinned; there is not one person that will be able to be declared innocent based on the law alone.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Those who believe, put their faith in Jesus, however, will be declared righteous in Him and, therefore, not guilty. Those who choose to reject Jesus will be condemned."

John 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

2Corinthians 5:20-21 "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Romans 10:5 "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

I like the wording of the CJB for this verse: *"For Moshe writes about the righteousness grounded in the Torah that **the person who does these things will attain life through them.**"*

The word *doeth* references observing these laws continually. Scripture was referenced above that states the truth that not one person is capable of such obedience. If that were possible, Christ would never have had to come to sacrifice Himself to redeem us.

Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord

Romans 10:6-9 "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

After reading through several translations and looking at a few commentaries, I think the key truth being presented is that faith doesn't depend on the presence of the Messiah to impute His righteousness; it is a matter of confessing with the mouth and believing in the heart—a matter of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

That is why Paul references the words from Deuteronomy; the application of the truth is the same.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? **But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.**"

Verse 9 ties it all together. Salvation is provided to the one who will confess publicly that Jesus is Lord. The word *Lord* is defined as "supreme in authority." Every Jew would recognize that as an admission that Jesus was who He claimed to be—the Messiah, the Son of God, God in flesh. The Apostle John affirms this truth.

1John 4:15 "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

Jesus declared that to confess Him as Lord implies a willingness to do what He says—to obey Him.

Luke 6:46 "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Along with the confession of Jesus as Lord, one must believe that God raised up Jesus from the dead. The resurrection was divine proof of the YHWH's acceptance and approval of His Son's sacrifice for man's sin.

Romans 1:4 "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"

Romans 10:10 "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

I thought the CJB translation was quite thought-provoking: *“For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance.”*

Salvation is a result of true faith and commitment to proclaiming the truth about Jesus. This type of faith will obviously be reflected in how you live. This ties in directly with more words from the Apostle John.

1John 2:19 “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

It was the idea of continuance that jumped out to me from the CJB. I personally believe we are imputed the righteousness of Jesus at salvation, but that sanctification is a continuing process of becoming more righteous and Christ-like in how we live—our demonstration of God’s righteousness in us to others.

Salvation brings about a miracle in the life of the person of faith; he/she becomes a new creation that is sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. It is the power of God that preserves the work He begins in us and carries it to fruition.

Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:”

1Peter 1:3-5 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

What God starts He will finish. Continuance in the faith is a proof of the profession made.

Romans 10:11 “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

My first thought when scripture is referenced is to find where. The closest verse I found was in Isaiah 49.

Isaiah 49:23 “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

The word *wait* is a reference to expectation and patience in waiting. Obviously, those who are waiting on the Lord with expectation would describe those who believe Him and are looking to Him for deliverance.

I also found some beautiful verses in Joel that apply here.

*Joel 2:26-27 "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and **my people shall never be ashamed**. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and **my people shall never be ashamed**."*

"My people" is obviously referencing those that have faith in God, those who have accepted Him as LORD and are trusting Him for their salvation.

Many of the commentators reference Isaiah 28:16 I think because the wording is a little bit closer and because Paul quoted it at the end of the last chapter, but I don't think the meaning is as clear in association with this verse.

Isaiah 28:16 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

The Hebrew for *haste* references "hurry, to be eager with excitement or enjoyment, ready." The key seems to be in reference to the precious corner stone, Jesus, that allows us to cease from our efforts, our *busy-ness* to work out our own salvation. In Him we can find rest and peace because He has done the work necessary by laying down His life for our sin. All we have to do is accept what He has done.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Jew and Gentile are on Level Ground at the Foot of the Cross

Romans 10:12 "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

At this point Paul is emphasizing the truth that in the matter of faith for salvation, there is no difference in Jew and Greek. He has been making this case throughout the whole first portion of this letter to the Romans. All people are on level ground at the foot of the cross. There is not one Savior for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. Jesus is the only Savior for all; He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

Again, the emphasis is made that all we have to do is call upon Him for salvation. To call upon Him includes recognizing that He is LORD and trusting in His provision—accepting it as a gift. A reminder, verse 9 defines LORD as Jesus. This is the key truth in this letter since the Jews rejected Jesus as LORD.

Those who accept Jesus as LORD will find that He is generous with His provision for them. Most often when we think of wealth, we think of material wealth. I believe the context here is regarding spiritual wealth—eternal life and all the blessings that accompany it. In Christ we become joint-heirs with Him to all of God's power and authority through the Holy Spirit. God does not differentiate between spiritual blessings for believing Israelis and believing Gentiles. There will be some differences in material blessings for the two groups in the Kingdom Age, but there will be no differences in spiritual blessings for the body of believers based on ethnicity.

Romans 10:13 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

This verse brings in the connection to the verses from Joel that I quoted previously pertaining to verse 11.

Joel 2:32 “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered:”

The key word in these verses is “whosoever,” meaning “any person whatever” (cf Webster). The Greek for *call* included “invoke for aid, appeal to.” The Lord will not refuse anyone who comes to Him in faith for salvation.

I just don’t believe the Spirit would have inspired these words if they didn’t mean what they said. God has sovereignly chosen to allow man to choose his own destiny. It is man’s choice to accept His gift of salvation or not. The offer is to all.

Romans 10:14-15 “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Again, Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 52:7 “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

Those of us who know Christ as Savior are responsible for sharing the “good news” with others. The great commission is for all disciples—followers of Jesus.

Matthew 28:19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

We have all been “sent.” These verses explain why. We are to preach, to proclaim the divine truth of the gospel (from the Greek), so that people are encouraged to believe the truth of the gospel and recognize their need to call upon Him as LORD in faith for salvation. What is the gospel? Paul sums it up in a nutshell in 1Corinthians.

1Corinthians 15:1-4 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

Those who accept the gospel will experience peace, a relationship that is “at one” with God again. This is a message that is full of good news about good things, blessings, for the one who chooses to believe.

God Intends for the Church to Make the Jews Jealous of Their Relationship with Him

Romans 10:16 "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"

This time Paul identifies the quote he uses with the prophet Isaiah. These are the opening words to the beautiful chapter 53 that prophesies the truth about the coming Messiah as a sacrificial lamb to heal people from their sins.

Just as Isaiah expressed dismay at the response to God's message to Israel in his day and prophesied that it would be the same response in the days of Messiah, so Paul makes the comparison to the Jews of his day.

Romans 10:17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

In this verse Paul seems to be connecting the response to God's truth to the preaching of that truth. It seems that point is made often in scripture that those who would follow God in faith and be messengers of the truth were few (e.g. Caleb and Joshua, Jeremiah and his fellow prophets, the 120 disciples in the upper room, etc.) in comparison to the people they represented.

Paul is also emphasizing that the message preached is to be the "word of God," not the words of men.

Romans 10:18-19 "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are no people*, and by a foolish nation I will anger you."

Now Paul goes on to explain that Israel, the Jewish people, have no excuse to not understand God's message of truth concerning salvation. Verse 18 seems to indicate that God's dealings with the Jewish people and the revelation of His truth to them were well publicized in the known world of that time. God's deliverance of His people from Egypt made world headlines so to speak. The words Paul uses here seem to be a quote from Psalm 19.

*Psalm 19:1-4 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. **Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**"*

In context, the Psalmist is referencing the testimony of creation, specifically the heavens, regarding the Creator. I think the comparison is that just as surely as the heavens declare the Creator, God's workings on behalf of the nation of Israel declare Him as Almighty God, as opposed to the impotent gods of the Gentile nations. If the testimony of the heavens sends a message that can be understood "through all the earth," the Israelites certainly had no excuse since they had God personally interacting with them and delivering them through His miraculous power.

Verse 19 goes on to tell us that God even told the people through Moses that he would provoke them to jealousy and anger through the Gentiles. The reason—their lack of faith. God knows the future. He knew how His people would rebel against Him.

*Deuteronomy 32:18-21 "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, **children in whom is no faith**. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."*

"No people" is a reference to those that were "nothing special" (from the Hebrew) in comparison to the people of Israel, who were God's chosen people. "Foolish nation" is a reference to wicked Gentile nations who had no spiritual understanding.

Romans 10:20 "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me."

This is a quote from Isaiah: *Isaiah 65:1 "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name."*

Isaiah boldly reiterated the truth spoken by Moses so many years previously. The Gentiles would respond to a gospel that was preached to them by faithful believers. They weren't seeking God; men of faith shared the gospel in obedience to the command of Jesus. A good comparison would be the response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah's message of repentance. The people of Nineveh were not seeking God; but when God sent Jonah to declare His message of "repent or be judged," the people responded in repentance and were spared judgment.

Gentile believers who responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ found Him willing to reveal Himself to them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Again, they were able to learn about God because they responded in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ that was brought to them by men of faith—not because they were asking about or desiring to know Him.

Romans 10:21 "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

This is a quote from the next verse in Isaiah 65.

Isaiah 65:2-3 "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;"

"gainsaying" = to dispute, refuse, contradict, deny

In contrast, God was ever trying to get the people of Israel to turn to Him in faith and repentance. "Stretched forth hands" are a picture of open arms waiting to receive a repentant child who has been disobedient and rebellious. How did the people of Israel respond? In Isaiah's day--in rebellion and outright provocation through public rejection of God and worship of man-made idols. In the days of Jesus--through rejection of Him as the Messiah and by placing faith in their works according to a corrupted law. The Gentiles who responded in faith and repentance to the message of the gospel didn't have to be begged or cajoled. Once they heard and understood their need and that Jesus could meet that need, they responded in belief.

A Remnant of Grace

Romans 11:1 "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

This is an emphatic statement by Paul that God has not disowned the nation of Israel. That would be a horrible thing for Paul to contemplate because he is an Israelite descended from Abraham through the tribe of Benjamin.

In Paul's day the Jews were still well aware of their genealogy. When Titus conquered Jerusalem and burned the temple in 70 AD, all the genealogical records were destroyed. Today, no Israeli can *prove* their lineage (unless there has been a personal written record maintained for a given family). This provides another piece of evidence regarding Jesus as the Messiah. It was prophesied that He would be a descendant of David, of the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem. No one coming on the scene these days could establish that proof.

Romans 11:2-4 "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal.*"

When Israel rebelled against God, it wasn't something that caught Him off guard or surprised Him; He knew how they would respond to Him from the moment of creation, from the time He singled out Abraham. *Elias* is the Greek for Elijah. When Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah after he had demonstrated God's power over the prophets of Baal, that mighty man of God became fearful and despairing. (1Kings 18-19) He was discouraged in his ministry and decided that he was fighting a losing battle and was the only one left that was faithful to God, but God assured him that there were 7,000 others who had remained faithful.

The key phrase in this section seems to be "I have reserved to myself." God is ever interacting with man to ensure that His will be done. My simple mind tells me that the sovereign God who chose to give man a will, the power to make choices, through His foreknowledge ensured that these 7,000 men were living at this time to accomplish His purpose. To me that is an awesome demonstration of the power and authority of God.

Romans 11:5 “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”

Paul makes application of that truth to the present. Just as surely as those 7,000 Israeli’s were the remnant of Elijah’s day, God had preserved a remnant during Paul’s day that was following Him through faith in His Son Jesus. God’s provision for His elect is and always has been an act of His grace—divine favor, kindness, mercy.

God has promised that there would always be a remnant preserved in Israel.

Isaiah 10:20-22 “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return....”

Jeremiah 23:2-4 “Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.”

Ezekiel 6:7-8 “And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.”

Micah 2:12 “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

Zechariah 8:12 “For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

Romans 11:6 “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

Grace and works are like oil and water; they don’t mix. Grace is a work of God. If man could provide for himself through works, then God’s grace would be unnecessary. God by grace provides for people of faith in ways that we cannot provide for ourselves through works. As I looked for connections with grace and faith, I was pointed to the following references:

Romans 4:16 “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace....”

Romans 5:2 "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...."

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith...."

God's grace in our lives is directly connected to our faith. Verse 5 above says that the election of the remnant is according to grace. Those who had not bowed the knee to Baal in Elijah's day pictured the remnant of faith, the elect, the chosen. It would seem to me that God's sovereign choice to give man a will in no way contradicts election by faith through grace. *Grace* is His divine influence on the heart; *faith* is man's response to that influence; *elect* is the privileged designation of the person of faith known by God before the foundation of the world.

Israel's Fall Brought Salvation to the Gentiles

Romans 11:7 "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day."

Written where? I think Paul is probably still referencing Isaiah although Jeremiah declares the same truth.

Isaiah 6:8-10 "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

What does the truth stated in verse 7 lead us to conclude? Though God had sent the promised Messiah, His Son Jesus, the nation of Israel as a whole continued seeking God's approval through a legalistic system of works. Only those who accepted salvation through Jesus in faith had attained a position of approval before God. Those who rejected Him were spiritually blind and deaf; it's like they were sleepwalking through a life filled with ritual and actions that were performed without a heart connection to God. God's response--He gave them over to pride in their works.

Romans 11:9 "And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway."

"table" = a table or stool (as being four-legged), usually for food (figuratively, a meal); also a counter for money (figuratively, a broker's office for loans at interest)

These words are from Psalm 69. David is praying for God to intercede for him against his enemies. This particular section of the Psalm appears to have prophetic application as well to the Messiah.

Psalm 69:19-23 "Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I

looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake."

Verse 22 of the Psalm defines the table as "welfare," which Webster defines as "well-doing or well-being in any respect; the enjoyment of health and the common blessings of life; exemption from any evil or calamity; prosperity; happiness." The Psalmist seems to be asking for the appearance of blessing and approval to serve as a deception to his enemies' and the Messiah's enemies' understanding of their true condition. The Psalmist was asking for this to be a permanent condition of the enemies of God. It seems to me that would be a classification known only to God. Paul tells us in Timothy that he obtained mercy because he acted ignorantly in unbelief. I think I would have classified Paul as an enemy of God if I had been a part of the early church.

1Timothy 1:12-13 "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

He was not an enemy of God; he accepted the truth when Christ confronted him. Others rejected Christ knowingly and willingly, such as other Pharisees of Jesus' day who refused to acknowledge the truth He presented to them. They were enemies of God who were more concerned about their pride and reputation before men than before God.

Romans 11:11 "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy."

To stumble implies a misstep, an error, a mistake; fall implies failure, "beyond recovery" (as the NIV puts it). Paul's question then, "Have the Israelites put themselves in a place of total rejection by God?" His answer—an emphatic NO!

The second "fall" in the verse is a different Greek word that references "a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e. (unintentional) error or (wilful) transgression." Because of the choice of the Jews to deviate from the course God had set for them and willfully reject the Son of God, the Gentiles are coming to saving faith in Jesus. The Jews were meant to draw the Gentiles to God through their testimony of the blessings associated with submitting in obedience and faith to God. Because they rejected God by rejecting Jesus, God is revealing Himself through the Gentile body of believers to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy—to make them want the salvation that was first presented to them.

I thought the Greek for "provoke them" was interesting; it stated "through the idea of a baffling wind (backward)." In other words, just opposite of God's original intention. Again, this was not a surprise to YHWH; He knew it before the foundation of the world and provided for that knowledge in His plan of salvation. Webster defines *jealousy* as "earnest concern or solicitude; painful apprehension of rivalry in cases nearly affecting one's happiness; painful suspicion of the faithfulness of husband, wife, or lover." That poses an interesting perspective. The Jews prided themselves on being

God's chosen people; now they would have cause to question whether God had decided to bestow His favor on another group of people. Hopefully, that concern would translate into a response of repentance and faith. The Gentiles were responding with hearts of gratitude for their salvation; they had no reason to be jealous. Israel, on the other hand, would hopefully see that the Gentiles had appeared to replace them in the eyes of God and would desire to have their position restored.

Israel's Restoration will Increase God's Blessing to the Gentiles

Romans 11:12 "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?"

I think the wording of the CJB is very clear for this verse: *"Moreover, if their stumbling is bringing riches to the world — that is, if Isra'el's being placed temporarily in a condition less favored than that of the Gentiles is bringing riches to the latter — how much greater riches will Isra'el in its fullness bring them!"*

Paul is pointing to the good that has come out of something bad. It is not good that the Jewish people rejected God's Son, but something good did come of it. The *church* was born and resulted in a body of believers that were bold in their faith and committed to sharing the gospel message. The church was/is rich in the spiritual provision of God through the Holy Spirit. The inclusion of believing Israel into the body of believers will only serve to make that body stronger and more powerful in its influence on the unsaved world.

Thinking—Israel will not really turn to God in faith until after the "church" has been removed. Though God has provided for our every need through the ministry of the Holy Spirit now, the day is coming when the Messiah, Jesus, will come to rule on His throne personally in His kingdom. That day will not come until the nation of Israel as a whole desires Him to return. So---when Israel turns to God in true faith in His Son, Jesus will return as King of kings and the blessings of the kingdom age will be ushered in! "How much more their fullness" is a reference to the Messianic Kingdom of 1000 years on planet earth.

Romans 11:13-14 "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are my flesh*, and might save some of them."

It is logical to assume that the majority of the body of believers at Rome were Gentiles. Paul loved the Jewish people, but was also aware that his ministry to the Gentiles was a privilege and of great importance in getting out the gospel truth. He is hoping that his ministry to the Gentiles will have an impact on many of his Jewish brethren. He wants them to recognize the mighty work that God is doing on behalf of the Gentile believers, so that they will desire to experience the same. Paul wasn't thinking years and years down the road; he was concerned about the Jews of his day.

Romans 11:15 "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of *them be*, but life from the dead?"

The Jews' rejection of Jesus caused God to set them aside for the time being and empower and bless a people of faith from among the Gentile nations. The message of salvation was taken all over planet earth. When Israel turns back to God through faith in His Son, He will gladly restore them to fellowship and their place of favor among the nations. This pictures resurrection from the dead. A nation that has been dead in trespasses and sin will find new life in Christ.

Romans 11:16-18 "For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee."

"if the firstfruit be holy" – The *firstfruits* are the first crops harvested. In my mind Jesus is the holy firstfruit of all people of faith with distinct relationship to all Jewish people of faith since He is a descendant of Abraham through Jacob through Judah through David. He became the *firstfruit* (singular) when He resurrected to new life in order to provide that new life to the family of believers.

1 Corinthians 15:20 "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

The context of this chapter is regarding Israel's future in relationship to God. The *lump* would most logically refer to the nation of Israel, and that truth is affirmed by the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 2:3 "Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase:"

Through Jesus, God imparts holiness/righteousness to people of faith (past, present and future). After the resurrection of Jesus, there were many Jewish believers who were resurrected as part of the *firstfruits* (plural) giving testimony to this truth.

Matthew 27:52-53 "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

Paul gives a second word picture. The nation of Israel is pictured as growing from a root into a tree with holy branches. Remember that Paul is addressing a Gentile body of believers in Rome. He compares those of the nation of Israel who rebelled against God to serve idols and those who rejected His Son as the Messiah to branches that are broken off (because he is only referencing "some" of the branches). The Gentile believers who accepted Christ as Savior, the church, are pictured as a wild olive tree branches grafted in to the original tree to become part of the whole. Both the original branches of the tree and the branches that were grafted in are sustained by the root (Christ, the source of their holiness) and its oil (from the Greek for "fatness"). Oil often represents the Holy Spirit in Scripture (anointing for special service, used to bring light, comfort, healing, and refreshment).

Paul now warns the Gentiles not to “boast against the branches.” Don’t rejoice or brag as though you have replaced the original branches. You aren’t the one supporting the root of the tree; the root is supporting you. The root is ultimately Christ as representative of the spiritual nation of Israel through Abraham.

Broken Off in Unbelief – Grafted in by Faith

Romans 11:19 “Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.”

In this verse, Paul seems to be anticipating an argument to his conclusion. The Gentile church will reason, “The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.” The key is in verse 17.

Romans 11:17 “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree”

“Some” of the branches were broken off—not all. You were grafted in *among* them to partake of the root and oil *with them* (as companions or co-participants from the Greek).

Romans 11:20-21 “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

The branches that were broken off were broken off because of unbelief. The Gentile believers are accepted as branches of the original tree because of their faith. Israel was set apart as a nation of faith before the nations. The nation as a whole did not fulfill their purpose; but there were many Jewish people of faith throughout their history. This should serve as a notice of warning, not as a reason to boast. The church should not have an attitude of arrogance, but should rather have an attitude of reverential fear. If God discarded some of the original branches because of unbelief, you can be sure that He will do the same to you. (I have to remind myself that every body of believers includes impostors. Paul is obviously not threatening true men of faith, but is exhorting the body of believers to examine themselves as to whether their faith is real. Does their life prove their faith?)

Romans 11:22 “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

God’s severity is demonstrated by cutting off His relationship with people of unbelief. The Greek for *severity* references “decisiveness” and is from a root that means “to cut.”

God’s goodness is shown by His acceptance and provision for people of faith. I thought it was interesting that the Greek for *goodness* reflected “usefulness, employed” as well as graciousness and kindness; in fact, the root word stated “to furnish what is needed.” God is useful to us; He is employed in providing our every need.

Again, continuance/endurance is the key proof of true faith. You may mess up a million times; but as long as you are repentant and ever seeking Him in faith, you will never be cut off.

Romans 11:23 “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.”

God sovereignly determines when to cut a branch off, and also determines when to graft a branch in. Part of the difficulty of this chapter is determining when the reference is to a group (i.e., the nation of Israel or the church) or an individual. This verse is referencing the nation of Israel as a whole (Note the use of the words *they* and *them*). When Israel as a nation turns back to God in faith and repentance, God will restore them to fellowship and their favored position among the nations; He will graft them back in to the tree.

Romans 11:24 “For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?”

I liked the phrasing of the NLT for this verse: *“For if God was willing to take you who were, by nature, branches from a wild olive tree and graft you into his own good tree—a very unusual thing to do—he will be far more eager to graft the Jews back into the tree where they belong.”*

The Gentile believers, the church, gained the favored position as God’s chosen people in an unusual way. Not many horticulturists would choose to graft from a wild plant to a cultured plant. Grafting is usually done to make a plant more desirable, stronger, or to provide variety; it would be done using strong, healthy, desirable plants—not wild ones. Although unusual as well, it would be more natural to graft “natural” branches back in to the tree than to use wild branches.

The Time is Coming When All Israel Shall Be Saved

Romans 11:25 “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

“I would not....be ignorant” – Paul uses this type of terminology in his letters when he is making an important point.

“mystery” = revelation of something previously unknown (It has always been a part of God’s plan, but He hasn’t revealed it to man before now.)

the mystery = “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.”

The blindness is obviously spiritual blindness. “The fullness of the Gentiles” is a reference to the completed body of believers composed mainly of the Gentiles, the church; just as the “fullness” referenced in verse 12 speaks of the whole of the nation of Israel turning back to God in faith.

“in part” – In other words, there are still Jewish people coming to faith in God through Jesus as part of the church, just as there will continue to be Gentile believers coming to faith once God’s focus returns to Israel. Turning to God in faith has always been an option for every man and woman born on planet earth.

“lest ye be wise in your own conceits” – The CJB puts it this way, “so that you won’t imagine you know more than you actually do.”

I found the following quote from Jack Kelley that was enlightening on the phrase “fullness of the Gentiles be come in.”

“The Greek word translated ‘full number’ is a nautical term and refers to the number of crewmen necessary for a ship to set sail. And the phrase ‘come in’ means to arrive at a destination. Once the required complement of soldiers and sailors was aboard, the ship could leave the harbor and set sail for its destination. So it is with the Church. Once the number required to make up its membership is reached the Church will depart for its destination in Heaven, and God will open the eyes and soften the hearts of His people Israel.”

Romans 11:26-27 “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Instead of being a nation composed both of men of faith and those who have rebelled against God, Israel will become a nation composed only of men of faith.

“as it is written” – Where? This appears to be a quote from Isaiah 59; it was the closest I could find by searching with different word combinations.

Isaiah 59:20 “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.”

In truth the Redeemer/Deliverer (Messiah Jesus) came out of Sion/Jerusalem (where He was crucified, buried and resurrected), and He is the one that will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. In Isaiah, the emphasis is on the Redeemer returning to Zion and to His people (Israel) who have turned to Him in repentance and faith.

The next verse in Isaiah connects with verse 27.

Isaiah 59:21 “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.”

This is the new covenant that God will establish with His people; it is unconditional once they have responded to Him in faith and He returns to Zion as the King. He will give them His Holy Spirit, just as He has believers in the church age. The power of the Spirit at work in their lives individually and the nation as a whole will secure their

position of restoration and deliverance. God promises that from the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom, every descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, every Jewish person will treasure the word of the Lord and the ministry of the Spirit in their midst----forever, time without end.

Romans 11:28 “As concerning the gospel, *they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.*”

The NLT wording is more easily understood. *“Many of the Jews are now enemies of the Good News. But this has been to your benefit, for God has given His gifts to you Gentiles. Yet the Jews are still His chosen people because of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”*

Romans 11:29 “For the gifts and calling of God *are without repentance.*”

In other words God doesn't change His mind regarding the gifts He gives and the invitations He issues. Once you receive a gift from God, it is yours. Once an invitation is accepted, He won't rescind the offer. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob accepted God's call. (Note: Once Abraham responded to God's call, His invitation to follow Him in faith, God's commitment to Abraham was sure.) Their descendants ended up behaving wickedly, but God will not renege on His promise.

Based on the predominant culture today people, at least in America, have a hard time understanding this type of integrity. Our society is full of loopholes to contracts; divorce is a quickie process in many instances; a man's word is certainly not the binding factor it once was. Man's tendency is always to justify his actions and to view himself from the most favorable position possible. I wonder if this is part of the reason why certain sections of the “church” have twisted the scripture to support the idea of “replacement theology”—the belief that the church has replaced Israel, the Jewish people, in God's economy permanently.

We Are Not Meant to Understand God's Ways

Romans 11:30-31 “For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.”

The first thought that crossed my mind as I read these verses was that God is no respecter of persons. He always acts according to His unchanging character. He set a plan in motion for the nation of Israel; along with His plan He provided certain guidelines to ensure their blessings. Disobedience and rebellion would result in their being cursed according to His word. These guidelines were all clearly set before the people by Moses. Since Israel chose to rebel against God and reject Him (as a nation), God chose to set them aside for a while and work through the Gentile nations in an elect group of people of faith known as the “church.” This was an act of mercy by God. This act of mercy would spill over to the people of Israel as they responded to God's provocation (cf v11), their desire to regain favored status before God.

The facts fall out as follows:

- Israel established in favored position with God through faith; the Gentiles are in unbelief.
- Israel rejects God; God in mercy turns to the Gentiles to establish a people of faith to assume the position rejected by Israel.
- Israel is provoked to jealousy by the Gentiles, and returns to God in faith and repentance; they are restored to favored position.
- All dealings of God with both groups are according to His mercy.

Israel's purpose in God's plan was to reveal God to the nations and to be examples that would cause men to turn from their wicked ways and to God in faith. When Israel rejected God, He had to establish another people of faith to continue to fulfill His purpose. In the end God's plan will have been accomplished in spite of the failures of His chosen people—both Israel and the Church. The fact that Israel returns to God in faith and is restored to favored status in no way takes away from the blessings and privileges that He has given the church (cf v29). It is a result of God working to ensure that His covenant with Abraham is fulfilled to the last detail.

Romans 11:32 "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

"concluded" = to shut together, i.e. include or (figuratively) embrace in a common subjection to...

Galatians 3:22 makes it clear how that mercy was shown—through the gift of Jesus—
"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

Based on the earlier chapters in Romans, we know that all men are sinners (cf 3:23). When God looked down at man, he saw His favored creation bound together in sin. His response was to show mercy and provide a way to deliver them from that bondage. That plan had to answer to God's character in every aspect. There had to be a man without blemish or sin willing to sacrifice himself on behalf of his fellowman. The only solution was for God to send His only Son, Jesus, to become a man. He was not of the seed of Adam, so He did not have a sin nature. He became the new Adam. He lived the type of life that God had created Adam to live. He came in willing obedience to His Father. The Father gave proof of His acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. Only those men who acknowledge their need for His sacrifice and willingly accept His provision as a gift of God in faith will benefit from that mercy.

Note that God's plan was for the benefit of ALL men. We are still in context flowing from verses 30&31 in reference to Jew and Gentile.

Romans 11:33 "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Depth has a reference to profundity and extent; Webster defines *profound* as "reaching to the bottom of a matter." *Riches* have reference to wealth and abundance. The two things being referenced—God's wisdom and His knowledge. *Wisdom* is the capacity to make the best use of knowledge with discernment, judgment and skill (from Webster).

Knowledge is a “clear perception of fact, truth or duty.” Paul is saying that God knows all that there is to know and has the capacity to put that knowledge to the greatest use for good.

The Greek for *unsearchable* stated “inscrutable,” which Webster defined as “incapable of being searched into and understood by inquiry or study; impossible or difficult to be explained or accounted for satisfactorily...” The Greek for *judgments* references making decisions—for *ways* references “a road, a mode or means.” In other words, we are not capable of understanding why He makes the decisions He makes and does things the way He does them—unless He so chooses to make us understand. This verse immediately brings to mind a couple of my favorite verses in Isaiah.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 11:34 “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?”

The first half of verse 34 made me think of a verse from my study in 1Corinthians.

1Corinthians 2:11 “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

The second half reminded me of verse in my study of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:13-14 “Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?”

In his letter to the Corinthians the answer is clear that only the Spirit of God knows the mind of God. The rhetorical questions in Isaiah as well as the last half of verse 34 have only one implied answer—No one.

Romans 11:35 “Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”

Another rhetorical question with the same implied answer—No one. God is the Creator of all things. **Everything** man has (including his abilities) is a gift from his Creator. There is nothing we can give to Him that we have not first received from Him.

Romans 11:36 “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

“of” = denotes origin

“through” = denoting the channel of an act, the causal agent

“to” = of place, time or purpose

God is the Creator and the provider of all things according to His purpose. He only is worthy of glory (praise, honor, worship). Amen = the exclamation point of that truth.

Conclusion According to Scripture: Israel is Vital to the Fulfillment of God's Plan

From the establishment of God's covenant with Abraham the nation of Israel as descended through Abraham through Isaac and Jacob have been affirmed to be a part of God's eternal plan for humanity. This covenant assured the people of Israel not only spiritual blessings, but material blessings as well that center around a specific parcel of land in an area now known as the middle east. Though God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional, obtaining and maintaining possession of the land promised to these descendants of Abraham was based upon their obedience to the covenant revealed to the people from God through Moses; in other words, it was conditional. God's subsequent covenant with David was also unconditional and eternal in nature.

The very character of God is at stake in the fulfillment of each of these covenants according to His word. Scripture tells us that God is truth and that every word He speaks will come to pass.

Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

Psalms 33:4 "For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth."

Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Scripture and history are clear in declaring the truth of God's word as foretold by His prophets. Israel's scattering throughout the nations of the world gives evidence to that truth. The reestablishment of Israel as a nation is another fulfillment of prophecy as foretold by the prophets—most specifically by the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 37:3–14 "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD....Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD."

Ezekiel 37:21–23 "And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and

bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God."

It is important to note that this regathering is of the "whole nation" and will happen after such a lapse of time that hope is lost. It's also important to note that the time of regathering will culminate in the people of Israel turning back to God in faith and repentance never to reject Him as Lord again.

The regathering has begun, but the culmination point of an established nation under God in faith and obedience is yet to come. The fulfillment of prophecy concerning Israel is vital to the plan, purpose and person of God. Thankfully, we in the "church" have been blessed to have a part in His plan and purpose; and our promises in Christ are just as sure as His promises to Israel through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

The signs of the times are clear that fulfillment is near-----I can hardly wait!!