

**Romans**  
**Future of Israel**  
**January 8, 2012**  
**Romans 11:25-36**

**I. God's Sovereignty**

There has been a debate as to what is intended by Israel in this passage. Even John Calvin, as did all the reformers, stated that he thought it referred to the church, although the church included all the current church, plus Christianized Jews. Clearly, though, this cannot be the case, despite so many years of covenant theology driving a poor interpretation. Luke 21:24 would appear to collaborate that Israel is...well, simply...physical Israel, not something else. The reference to the patriarchs below should leave us with no doubt as to what this passage is referencing. Be careful with exotic explanations that appear to go beyond what Scripture is clearly saying. If it says Israel and is described as physical Israel, then perhaps we should take the passage as referring to physical Israel.

In Systematic Theology, Louis Berkhof, a covenant/amillennial theologian, but one recognized by all as excellent (outside prophetic interpretations) wrote in the early 1930s before Israel was re-established as a nation in 1948:

“Premillennialists have exploited this Scriptural teaching [including Rom. 11:2-29] for their particular purpose. They maintain that there will be a *national* restoration and conversion of Israel, that the Jewish nation will be re-established in the Holy Land, and that this will take place immediately preceding or during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. It is very doubtful, however, whether Scripture warrants the expectation that Israel will finally be re-established as a nation, and will as a nation turn to the Lord. Some Old Testament prophecies seem to predict this but there should be read in the light of the New Testament. Does the New Testament justify the expectation of a future restoration and conversion of Israel as a nation? It is not taught nor even necessarily implied in such passages as Matt. 19:28, and Luke 21:24, which are often quoted in its favor. The Lord spoke very plainly of the opposition of the Jews to the spirit of His Kingdom, and the certainty that they, who could in a sense be called children of the Kingdom, would lose their place in it, Matt. 8:11-12; 21:28-46; 22:1-14; Luke 13:6-9. He informs the wicked Jews that the Kingdom will be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matt 21:43. {skipped information} He [Christ] does not hint at any prospective restoration and conversion of the Jewish people.”

Preterism/Covenant theology has always been wrong with its interpretations as shown in history. For hundreds of years, most believed that Jesus returned in His second coming in Jerusalem in 69-70 AD. With Him having returned, the church would supposedly grow and slowly conquer the entire world; these people are called preterists. Because that interpretation has proven to be extremely improbable, most covenant theologians are partial preterists today...they do not think that Jesus has returned yet, but will inaugurate the church age that will bring about the millennial kingdom. Of course, the restored nation of Israel, as per Berkhof, was abysmal to this view before the actual fact of a nation of Israel came about. Now, the prevalent view no nation of Israel held by Preterist has been discarded as well.

## II. God's Promise: Rom. 11:25-27

Rom. 11:25-27

**25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:**

**"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. 27 And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."**

NIV

Verse 25 "Mystery" is an interesting NT word that means a truth that has been unrevealed up to this point but is now being made known.

Verse 25 Again, the hardening of Israel is only in part as some have believed. Also, the hardening is temporary. Eventually when God has claimed all the Gentiles that he has appointed, He will save the fuller number of the Jews.

Luke 21:24

**24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

NIV

Verse 26 The OT is full of verses that support God's continuing relationship with the Jews and will bring them to them.

Isa 59:20-21

**20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. 21 "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD.**

NIV

Verse 26 By "all Israel," given the context of Chapter 11, Paul is referring to "all Israel," the believing remnant and the non-believing Jews, probably the majority of the nation of Israel but not necessarily every Jew.

Verse 26 Not wishing to see Israel as an ongoing entity, many have postulated that "all Israel" is "spiritual Israel." Unfortunately, for those who believe this, there is no "spiritual Israel" explicit in the Bible. The closest that we can come is the "Israel of God":

Gal 6:16

**16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.**

NIV

However, this reference to "Israel of God" appears to be true-believing Jews but not Gentile Christians. If so, the simple interpretation of the verse would be that "so all who follow this rule" would include Gentiles, plus the Jews or the "Israel of God."

## III. Irrevocable Promises: Rom. 11:28-32

Rom 11:28-32

**28 As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, 29 for God's gifts and his call are**

**irrevocable. 30 Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, 31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. 32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.**

**NIV**

- Verse 28 The gospel has been brought to the Gentiles; the Jew today hates the Gentile believer (even though that believer is the number one non-Jewish supporter of Israel today) because of their belief in Christ. Verse 28 can only be interpreted as referring to physical Israel.
- Verse 29 We can apply this great promise of God to any of His many promises, but Paul is using it here concerning the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise for God to save His chosen people.
- Verse 29 While God gives many promises, we should make sure that they apply to us. For example, a non-Christian should not expect the promises that are given to a Christian to be fulfilled for him.
- Verse 30 This describes the state of all before they come to God.
- Verse 32 As such, this description applies to the majority of Jews today. Eventually, they will be saved.

In the past, the Jews were favored by God but less so the Gentiles. Today Gentiles have embraced the Gospel, and we are praying for the salvation of the Jews. Does this reversal of roles seem funny to you? In verses 33-36 Paul responds to just that sentiment leading him to conclude: "...and his [God's] paths beyond tracing out!" That's not really an original thought with Paul; he's really gleaning from Isaiah's prophecy (see below); there, Isaiah prophesies regarding the appeal that will be made by the Messiah to the Gentiles for salvation. The millennium will not be inhabited by only Jewish people, but by all the righteous coming out of the tribulation, Jew or Gentile.

#### **IV. Great Doxology: Rom. 11:33-36**

**Rom. 11:33-36**

<sup>33</sup> **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and<sup>[a]</sup> knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!** <sup>34</sup> **“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”** <sup>35</sup> **“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?”** <sup>36</sup> **For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.**

**NIV**

- Verse 33 Paul ends the section of Chapters 9-11 with one of the greatest doxologies in the Bible. While clearly related to the topic of these three chapters, the doxology holds for broader applications.
- Verse 33 We might not understand why or how God does things, and might never even have the capability to understand. Yet, we know that He is in control. As such, it is extremely important that when we study God's word, we attempt to understand what God is saying not what we think our own theology is dictating.
- Verse 34 This verse quotes:

**Isa 40:13**

**13 Who has understood the mind of the LORD or instructed him as his counselor?**

NIV

We also see the thinking in it from:

**Isa. 55:8-9**

**8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

NIV

Verses 35      What would we have to do so that God would owe us? We would have to do something that He has not enabled us.

**Job 41:11**

**11 Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.**

NIV

Verse 36      Is there anything not covered by this verse?

## **V. Additional Words on Israel**

As we look at the passage of Romans 11:25-32, we can see that this must be a reference to physical Israel. The information provided in this passage includes:

- Israel is called Israel
- Paul addresses the Gentiles directly (Verse 25), while the reference to Israel is in the third person.
- Israel is referenced as Jacob (verse 26). Israel is another name for Jacob; the Israelites are the children of Israel/Jacob.
- Those referenced in the third person hate the gospel (Verse 28)
- But God still loves them because of the Patriarchs, their physical fathers (Verse 28)
- God's irrevocable promises appear to make sense only to Israel (Verse 29) within the context of the message, especially following the reference to Patriarchs to whom God made the promises to Israel.
- Indeed, if the promises made to Israel are revoked given the numerous repetitions of them in the OT but also in the NT, how can any of the promises of God be considered irrevocable?

This list also does not take into account the immediate section of olive-tree grafting where physical Israel is obviously separated from the Gentiles.

It is difficult to understand how covenant theologians have gotten this so wrong and continue in their wrong beliefs. History has shown that Jesus did not return to Jerusalem in 69AD/70AD and that Israel has been reconstituted as a nation. The "church" is not "God on earth" and cannot save this world until God decides to act. Hundreds of Bible passages, including this one in the NT, appear totally clear that God has made promises to Israel and that He intends to keep them.

Of course, there are good people who believe in this sort of thing because they have been taught it. As such, we have to be careful with our beliefs, always making sure that we are relating them back to what the Bible clearly says. Sometimes, it appears to say something that is very difficult to understand or which seems contradictory to us. In those cases, we should study those passages all the more. We might learn more about God and His ways (that are not our ways) by doing so.