

GOD'S PROMISE TO REGATHER ISRAEL TO THEIR HOMELAND

ISAIAH CHAPTER 43:1-7

God's Word is so rich and so meaningful that it is impossible to glean all that it says in just one or two readings. When we last were in Isaiah 43 we explored why people do not have to be afraid when they go through trials and tribulations. They do not have to fear because of the implications of God's promises to His people of all time. Today we are going to look at chapter 43 from another angle.

Chapter 42 of Isaiah closed with a description of the consequences of Israel's disobedience toward God. Chapter 43 begins by jumping forward 70 years to where Judah's exile was pictured as drawing to a close (40:2), for the Lord was raising up a leader, **Cyrus of Persia**, who would release them (41:2-4, 25). Now if you've just joined us recently you may not have any knowledge of the Babylonian exile. So let us give you just a very brief history of what's going on here. Because of the repeated disobedience of the Jewish people for hundreds of years, God decided they must be punished to realize the seriousness of their sin and that a lack of obedience to God would lead to judgment. In the year 605 B.C., God permitted a small number of Jews to be taken captive by the Babylonians and taken to their capital city of Babylon. Daniel, of the renowned *Daniel and the Lions' Den*, was among them. By the year 586 B. C., God permitted the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and most of the nation was then also taken captive to Babylon. That captivity would last for another 50 years. But from the time the first captives were taken, the entire captivity lasted about 70 years.

In Isaiah 43:1-7, God urged Israel not to fear, for their situation would provide the opportunity for God to show the world that He is truly the only God (43:8-13). He would restore them from Babylon 70 years in the future, bringing them back home in a new "Exodus" (43:14-28) that was reminiscent of their release out of captivity in Egypt almost 1,000 years earlier. Therefore God said that **they were not to fear**. Isaiah is directing his comments in these verses primarily to the time when Israel will return from Babylon around 536 B.C.

But there is also a broader meaning here that all Israel will be re-gathered from the four corners of the earth at Jesus' second coming, when He returns to rule in peace over the whole world. Let's begin our study today by reading Isaiah 43:1-7 NAS:

*I But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "**Do not fear, for I have redeemed you** (which means "I freed you from what could harm you.")¹; I have called you by name; you*

¹ Parentheses added.

are Mine!

2 “When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you**; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

3 “For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; **I have given Egypt as your ransom**, Cush and Seba in your place.

4 “Since **you are precious in My sight**, Since you are honored and **I love you**, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.

5 “**Do not fear, for I am with you**; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west.

6 “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’

Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth,

7 **Everyone who is called by My name**, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

The theme of “*Israel God’s servant*” is continued in Isaiah 43 and 44 with an emphasis on *God the Redeemer of Israel* (Isaiah 43:1–7, 14; 44:6, 22–24.) The word translated “redeem” or “**Redeemer**” is the Hebrew word for “*a kinsman redeemer*,” a near relative who could free family members and their property from bondage by paying their debts for them (Leviticus 25:23–28 and the book of Ruth). God gave Egypt, Ethiopia (Cush), and Seba to **Cyrus** as a ransom payment to redeem Israel from Babylon because Israel was so precious to Him (Isaiah 43:3). Through Isaiah, God made clear that He would treat Israel as members of His own family. And God would later give His own Son as a ransom for lost sinners (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6).

Jacob (also called Israel) need have no fear in her captivity in Babylon because God had created and formed her and had redeemed her from bondage in Egypt. “Redeemed” translates “*to buy out of slavery*”. Reference to this Exodus was fitting in view of what Isaiah wrote in chapter 43:14–28 about a new “*Exodus*” in which God would bring the people back to their homeland from Babylon. To be “*called by name*” points up Israel’s special relationship with the Lord as His covenant people. This is similar to a shepherd calling his sheep by name in his personal care for them. Because of God’s past work in creating, redeeming, and caring for Israel, He would continue to protect her. Therefore in difficult times, pictured as “*floodwaters and fire*,” **Israel should not give up and fear, for God would be with her and protect her.**²

This unique relationship between God and Israel is emphasized by the picture of a human ransom (verses 3, 4, 14). Great nations have fallen in the past and will fall again in the

² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

future to make way for Israel.³ Here God promises Israel blessing and restoration because of His love for them. The basis for these promises of companionship and deliverance through suffering and trial was not because of anything the Jews had done to deserve such treatment, but rather it was because of God's grace (undeserved favor) and His commitment to be a Father to His covenant people (Deuteronomy 7:7,8).

As a reward for releasing captive Israel from Babylon, God gave Cyrus of Persia the country of Egypt and a portion of Ethiopia. A remnant, a small number of the scattered Israelites would return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. But there is also a reference here to the end times when all believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, will be re-gathered from every geographical direction back to Israel. The return to Zion (Jerusalem) in verses 6 and 7 refers to the gathering in of all believers into the Church of Jesus Christ.⁴

Does everyone know what the term, "*Church*," stands for? Is it a building where people meet to worship God? "*Church*" identifies the whole body of redeemed people in Christ; all those whom God has given to Christ. A few Christians, Jews and Gentiles alike, associated together in observing the ordinances of the gospel are known as an "*ecclesia*," The term *Gentile*, by the way, applied to all people who weren't Jews. All the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled or gathered together in one place or in several places for religious worship, were an "*ecclesia*." Thus all the disciples in say Antioch, forming several congregations, were part of one Church (Acts 13:1).⁵ We here this morning are an *ecclesia*.

The whole body of professing Christians throughout the world (1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Matthew 16:18) make up the Church of Christ.⁶ God has always had only one Church on earth. We sometimes speak of the Old Testament Church and of the New Testament church, but they are one and the same. The Old Testament church was not to be changed but enlarged. When the Jewish remnant is restored in the end times, they will not enter a new Church, but will be grafted again into "*their own olive tree*."

So as far as I can determine from a careful study of Scripture, God never intended the Church of Jesus Christ to be the Catholic church, or the Lutheran Church, the Methodist church, the Baptist church, or any other denominational church. The Church of Christ was to be a united body of believers attempting to live within the will of God, supporting one another. One could therefore conclude that any church setting itself up as a separate denomination outside the one Church of Christ has decided that they can probably run

³ Carson, D. A. 1994. New Bible commentary : 21st century edition. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) . Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA

⁴ Pfeiffer, C. F. 1962. The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament . Moody Press: Chicago

⁵ Easton, M. 1996, c1897. Easton's Bible dictionary. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

⁶ Ibid.

things better than Christ. But they don't want to hear that because it will interfere with their own little kingdoms. If all churches united without any hierarchy, there would be no need to build so many church buildings, and the unity of believers would be a much more powerful force in the world than we are with so many divisions. We would have far more money to provide for widows, orphans, and the needy. But it would appear that the leaders of these churches are very much like the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus' day. They don't want to lose their authority and status in their own little kingdoms.

I recently wrote to most of the local pastors in Wheaton suggesting we combine our churches to form a 24 hour per day, 7 day a week prayer vigil. In essence praying together as the church in Wheaton. I based my appeal on 2 Chronicles 7:14 NRSV:

14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

This is a simple formula which God has given His people, His people being of course those people that trust completely in Him and all that He says. God gave us this simple formula because He wanted to make it easy for us to live in a country that would be blessed in every possible way. You want to know how these churches responded? First of all I'll tell you that half the churches never responded at all, even after a follow-up letter sent 6 weeks later. The other half said things like this:

- "We're not interested."
- "We have too many things going on in our own church at this time."
- "We don't get involved with things like this."
- "We're currently without a pastor and I know the church council wouldn't go along with something like this."
- "I'm going out of town for a while and can't commit to this."
- "We have our own prayer programs."
- "We do this kind of thing on our own."

I'm sorry to have to say this, but I must. The churches in Wheaton do not understand the will and purposes of God, or they would have jumped at such an opportunity. And I'm also willing to say that if they did understand the will of God, they may well choose not to obey it if it interfered with what they wanted personally. No wonder this country is on a greased slope to punishment. The churches in this country are a carbon copy of the Sanhedrin that called for Jesus' execution. If He came back today and started making waves on the nightly news about the desperate condition of the Church, these individual denominations might call for His crucifixion as well. I know this is a harsh indictment. But I assure you I do not make it lightly, but only after seeing first hand how many of these churches function.

But the time is coming, and it could well be that it's getting very close, that Jesus will return to gather His people, and to punish for eternity those who refused to accept Him. So God's message to us today is not any different than the one He gave the Israelites as

they were to go into captivity in Babylon.

You see, since Christ's resurrection and ascension, all believers, **Jews and Gentiles alike**, form **the one Church of Christ**. There is unity among believers in the eyes of Christ. The blueprint was perfect, but unfortunately after a couple of hundred years, men saw the opportunity to seize more power in government and the Church by using the Church to support their own greedy desires. They made up doctrine and ritual giving false interpretations to the will of God so that they could use God's name to make themselves wealthy and powerful. It began with Constantine in the early 300's A.D. and continues to this day. But when Christ comes the second time, He will take control and His original plan will be implemented with perfection.

Now there are many people who are confused by this concept. Some believe that God will once again turn the world over to the nation of Israel to govern through the Millennium. Some believe the Church has replaced Israel as the chosen people of God. Others believe any number of other theories. But I think this would be a good time in our study of Isaiah to understand what the relationships actually are. Let's turn to Ephesians 2:11-22 NLT, where we find Paul addressing a group of **Gentile believers**:

*11 **Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders by birth. You were called "the uncircumcised ones" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.***

*12 **In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from God's people, Israel, and you did not know the promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope.***

*13 **But now you belong to Christ Jesus. Though you once were far away from God, now you have been brought near to him because of the blood of Christ.***

14 For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all ONE people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us.

15 By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new person from the two groups.

16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

17 He has brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and to us Jews who were near.

*18 **Now all of us**, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.*

*19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. **You are citizens along with all of God's holy people.** You are members of God's family.*

20 We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

*21 **We who believe are carefully joined together**, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.*

22 Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

The theme of Ephesians is the Church as a living organism, **the actual body of the living Christ.**⁷ Christ being the head and believers the eyes, ears, arms, legs, etc.

The apostles did not set up a new organization. Under their ministry disciples just continued what was already in place, **a gathering together of people who trusted in God, and now also in Christ**, and new believers were “added” to the “Church” that was already in existence. The Church, the Body of Christ, began at Pentecost, just fifty days after the death of Christ.

In Galatians 3:29, Christians are called Abraham’s offspring or descendants. “*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.*” Did you get that? If you belong to Christ, you are a descendant of Abraham and entitled to all the promises God made to him. What an honor! How glorious! If you can’t sleep at night, just count these blessings that are yours.

In Romans 11:17-24, the **Gentiles are grafted into Israel, the true olive tree.** The olive tree was a symbol of fertility (Psalm 128:3), beauty (Jeremiah 11:16; Hosea 14:6), divine blessing (Deuteronomy 7:13), peace and bountifulness (Genesis 8:11), and it was closely associated with Jesus [**the Mount of Olives** (Mark 14:26; John 8:1)].⁸ Let’s take a little closer look at Romans 11 before we continue.

Romans 11:11-24 NLT:

*11 Did God’s people (the Jews)⁹ stumble and fall beyond recovery? **Of course not!** God’s purpose was to make his salvation available to the Gentiles, and then the Jews would be jealous and want it for themselves.*

12 Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the Jews turned down God’s offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when the Jews finally accept it.

You see, when the remnant of Jews finally come to accept Christ, that will be the signal of Christ’s return to rule over the earth during the Millennium. That will truly be a time

⁷ Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. 1987. The teacher's commentary. Includes index. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

⁸ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. 1985. Harper's Bible dictionary. Includes index. (1st ed.) . Harper & Row: San Francisco

⁹ Parentheses added.

of blessing for the whole world.

*13 I am saying all of this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I lay great stress on this,
14 for I want to find a way to make the Jews want what you Gentiles have, and in that way I might save some of them.
15 For since the Jews' rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, how much more wonderful their acceptance will be. It will be life for those who were dead!*

16 And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their children will also be holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

*17 But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now **you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children**, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his special olive tree.*

18 But you must be careful not to brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. Remember, you are just a branch, not the root.

19 "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me."

20 Yes, but remember—those branches, the Jews, were broken off because they didn't believe God, and you are there because you do believe. Don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen.

21 For if God did not spare the branches he put there in the first place, he won't spare you either.

One day, just before Christ returns, the Church will be cut off because of apostasy (deserting the true teachings of the Bible), and the believing remnant of Jews will be grafted back in.

The roots of the tree support the tree; again, this was a symbol of the patriarchs who founded the nation of Israel. God made His covenants, His promises, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He cannot cancel them or change them. Thus, it is God's promise to Abraham that sustains Israel even today. And when Christ returns God will keep His promise to that remnant of the nation of Israel who is willing to receive Christ as their Savior.

Many of the Jewish people did not believe. Paul pictured them as branches broken off the tree. But he saw an amazing thing taking place. Other branches were grafted into the tree to share in the life of the tree. These branches were the Gentiles. In Romans 11:24."

"*Graft*" describes the process of inserting new branches into fruit trees where the old branches have been broken off. By such a process the sap of the good olive tree, by

pervading the branch which is “*grafted in,*” makes the wild olive branch a good branch, bearing good olives. Thus the Gentiles, being a “*wild olive branch*” but now “*grafted in,*” yield fruit, but only through the sap of the tree into which they have been grafted. **The tree of course is Israel** (Jeremiah 11:16–17; Hosea 14:4–6). The origin therefore of what we know as “*the Church*” came from Judaism. I would even venture to say that we could safely conclude that the Church, in one sense, came into being with Abraham. It wasn’t however until Christ came that the term “*Church*” came into existence.

The roots of the tree are the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

You’ll remember in Romans 11:16, Paul wrote: “*And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their children will also be holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.*” The holiness attributed to the part and the whole, the root and the branches, is that of being dedicated, consecrated, and set apart to God. This is a legal holiness for the group by virtue of their being God’s chosen people.¹⁰ The individual Gentile as a wild olive branch is grafted into the natural olive tree, Israel. Thus this branch, the individual Gentile, **participates in the rich root that belongs to the natural olive tree** (Romans 11:17).¹¹ Contrary to standard Jewish teaching, Paul had argued that uncircumcised Gentiles could become part of that people of God through faith in the Jewish Messiah (Romans 4). Now he reminds Gentiles to respect the Jewish people, who had brought them their faith.

The parable of the olive tree must be examined carefully. Paul is talking about the position of Jews and Gentiles as peoples in the program of God. Israel is the olive tree that failed to bear fruit for God. God then broke off some of the branches (the Jews) and grafted in the Gentiles, wild branches from a wild olive tree, into the good tree. God grafted the weak Gentiles into the good stock of Israel’s religious privileges. This act shows both the goodness and the severity of God. His goodness in saving the Gentiles, His severity in cutting off rebellious Israel. But the Gentiles dare not boast because they now have Israel’s place of spiritual privilege, for God can cut them off too. And He will do just that at the end of this age, when the Gentile nations join together in a world coalition that refuses to believe the Word of God and in the Son of God. We’re speaking here of the one-world church that will come into existence during the seven year Tribulation. Then God will rapture the true church (all believers), judge the Gentile nations, purge Israel, and set up His promised kingdom for Israel.

The Church today is primarily made up of Gentiles, and the Gentiles benefit from the

¹⁰ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. 1962. The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament . Moody Press: Chicago

¹¹ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. 1962. The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament . Moody Press: Chicago

spiritual heritage of Israel (the rich sap of the olive tree). In a spiritual sense, we are children of Abraham, who is the “*father*” of all who believe (Galatians 3:26–29).¹² The tree, however, is capable of holding both Jew and Gentile believers, or branches in the single tree.

John records Jesus’ statement that “*Salvation is of the Jews*” in John 4:22 NAS:

22 “*You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.*”

Israel was the nation chosen by God to have great privileges (Romans 9:4-5). When Jesus said, “**Salvation is from the Jews,**” He did not mean that all Jews were saved or were especially pious. “**SALVATION IS FROM THE JEWS**” MEANT THAT IT IS AVAILABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, WHO WAS BORN OF THE SEED OF ABRAHAM.¹³

To say that the olive tree, with its natural and grafted branches, is a picture of the church would be a great mistake. **In the church, “*there is no difference*”; believers are “*all one in Christ Jesus*”** (Galatians 3:28). God does not look on the members of Christ’s body and see them as Jews or Gentiles. The olive tree illustrates the relationship between Jew and Gentile as one in the program of God.

Paul warned the Gentiles that they were obligated to Israel, and therefore they dared not boast of their new spiritual position (Romans 11:18–21). The Gentiles entered into God’s plan because of faith, and not because of anything good they had done.

No matter how far Israel may stray from the truth of God, the roots are still good. God is still the “*God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*” (Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:23). He will keep His promises to these patriarchs. **This means that the olive tree will flourish again!**

Please remember that **Paul was a Jew** and **yet his ministry was to convert Gentiles.** Jesus had taught Paul that there would be no difference between Jews and Gentiles and that they would all become one body in the Church. It becomes clear if we study the Bible carefully that originally the Church was a Jewish institution and its roots were the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to whom God gave His promises. We’ll understand this better when we return to Romans 11 in a few minutes.

Isaiah 60:1–5, 10-14 NLT:

1 “*Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all the nations to see! For the glory of the Lord is shining upon you.*”

¹² Wiersbe, W. W. 1997, c1992. Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament . Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

¹³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

2 Darkness as black as night will cover all the nations of the earth, but the glory of the Lord will shine over you.

3 All nations will come to your light. Mighty kings will come to see your radiance.

4 “Look and see, for everyone is coming home! Your sons are coming from distant lands; your little daughters will be carried home.

5 Your eyes will shine, and your hearts will thrill with joy, for merchants from around the world will come to you. They will bring you the wealth of many lands.

*10 “Foreigners will come to rebuild your cities. Kings and rulers will send you aid. For **though I have destroyed you in my anger, I will have mercy on you through my grace.***

11 Your gates will stay open around the clock to receive the wealth of many lands. The kings of the world will be led as captives in a victory procession.

12 For the nations that refuse to be your allies will be destroyed.

13 The glory of Lebanon will be yours—the forests of cypress, fir, and pine—to beautify my sanctuary. My Temple will be glorious!

14 “The children of your tormentors will come and bow before you. Those who despised you will kiss your feet. They will call you the City of the Lord, and Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

There is a future for Israel. Paul calls it “*their fullness*” (Romans 11:12) and their “*receiving*” (Romans 11:15). **Today, Israel is fallen spiritually**, but when Christ returns, the nation will rise again. Today, Israel is cast away from God, but one day those Jews who accept Christ as Savior will receive their salvation. **This does not mean every Jew will be saved**, but only those who finally accept Christ as their Messiah. God will never break His covenant with His people, and He has promised to restore them. The confusion here is that people assume this means everyone with Jewish heritage will be saved when Christ returns. But God has made it clear over and over again that such salvation will only be accepted by a remnant of all Jews. You might want to read Jeremiah 31:35–37, where God links His promises to Israel to the sun, moon, and stars.

Romans 11:25-36 NLT:

25 I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud and start bragging. Some of the Jews have hard hearts, but this will last only until the complete number of Gentiles comes to Christ.

26 And so all Israel will be saved. Do you remember what the prophets said about this? “A Deliverer will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel from all ungodliness.

27 And then I will keep my covenant with them and take away their sins.”

28 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.

29 For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn.

30 Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the Jews refused his mercy, God was merciful to you instead.

31 And now, in the same way, the Jews are the rebels, and God's mercy has come to you. But someday they, too, will share in God's mercy.

32 For God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

33 Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods!

34 For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor?

35 And who could ever give him so much that he would have to pay it back?

36 For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen.

Paul saved his best witness for the last. He proved that the very character and work of God were involved in the future of Israel. What has happened to Israel is all a part of God's plan, and He knows what He's doing. The blinding [or hardening (Romans 11:7)] of Israel as a nation is neither total nor final: it's partial and temporary. How long will it last? "*Until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in*" (Romans 11:25). There is a "*fullness*" for Israel (Romans 11:12) and for the Gentiles. When Israel rejected Christ as their Savior, the gift of salvation was then offered to people of all nations (the Gentiles). In Ephesians 3, Paul called this new program "*the mystery*," meaning "*the sacred secret*" that was **not revealed** in the Old Testament. Individual Jews are being saved, of course; but this present age is primarily a time when God is visiting the Gentiles and building His Church. When this present age has run its course, and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then God will once more deal with the nation of Israel. Romans 11:25 is one of several "*until*" verses in the Bible, all of which are important. You might want to read Matthew 23:32–39; Luke 21:24; and Psalm 110:1 for other references.

Verses 27 and 28 are also quoted from Isaiah 59; but the emphasis is on the covenant of God with Israel. God chose Israel in His grace and not because of any merit in her (Deuteronomy 7:6–11; 9:1–6). If the nation was not chosen because of its goodness, can it be rejected because of its sin? "*Election*" means grace, not merit.

In verse 29 we read, "*God's gift and His call can never be withdrawn.*" This underscores the unchangeableness of God stated in (Malachi 3:6). "*God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent*" (Numbers 23:19). **God's gifts to Israel, and God's calling of Israel, cannot be taken back or changed, or God would cease to be true to His own perfect nature.** The fact that Israel may not enjoy her gifts,

or live up to her privileges as an elect nation, does not affect this fact one bit. God will be consistent with Himself and true to His Word no matter what men/women may do. God has included “*all in unbelief*”—Jews and Gentiles—so that *all* might have the opportunity to be saved by grace. **“There is no difference.”**

We need to remember that God chose the Jews so that the Gentiles might be saved. “*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,*” was God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3). The tragedy was that Israel became exclusive and failed to share the truth with the Gentiles. They thought that the Gentiles had to become Jews in order to be saved. But God declared both Jews and Gentiles to be lost and condemned. This meant that He could have mercy on all because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Having contemplated God’s great plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, all Paul could do was sing a hymn of praise. Only a God as wise as our God could take the fall of Israel and turn it into salvation for the world! His plans will not be changed. No human being can fully know the mind of the Lord; and the more we study His Word, the more deserving He becomes of our worship and praise. Israel did not allow God to rule, so they were punished. Yet there is a future for Israel. When Israel recovers from her “*fall*” and enters into her “*fullness*,” the world will experience the riches of God’s grace as never before. When Jesus Christ returns and sits on David’s throne to reign over His kingdom, then Israel will be “*reconciled*” and “*received*,” and it will be the dawning of a new day. And all who have been saved in Christ will rule with Him over the earth during the **Millennium**.

It will be a most glorious time!