

## GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to see:

1. that the word 'Israel' has different meanings in the Bible
2. that the Church in the New Testament is the continuation on a higher plane and the fulfilment of what God intended Israel to be, namely, God's people
3. that all God's promises and prophecies made in the Old Testament period are being fulfilled in the New Testament period

## I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

## 1. Prayer

*Pray* that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

## 2. Meditation

Worship is to submit to the leadership of the Good Shepherd.

**Theme: God is the Shepherd of his people**

*Read* the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

## Psalm 23:1-6

<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

<sup>3</sup> he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk  
through the valley of the shadow of death  
(Or: the darkest valley),

I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
forever.

- What characterises a shepherd and especially this Shepherd?
- What does God mean when he says: "You shall not be in want"?
- How do you think does God 'restore your soul'?
- What are the paths of righteousness along which God guides you?
- Why don't we have to fear anymore?
- What does it mean that God makes your cup overflow?
- What is 'goodness' and 'love' that will follow you all the days of your life?

## 3. Worship

*Let* everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as his Shepherd.

## II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

**The theme for this meeting is: Israel**

*Read or explain in your own words.*

## 1. The word 'Israel'

The word 'Israel' in the Bible is an elastic term just as the word 'church'. It has several different meanings.

(1) 'Israel' is a natural and national nation  
In the Old Testament "Israel" is the name of the patriarch Jacob, the name of the nation that consists of Jacob's descendents, later the name of the northern kingdom consisting of 10 tribes and finally the name of the modern State of Israel in the Middle East.

(2) 'Israel' is the beginning of God's covenant people or God's theocratic nation

The Old Testament period is the dispensation of shadows in which the ultimate realities of the New Testament period has not yet been accomplished (Hebrews 10:1a).

In the Bible 'Israel' is especially the beginning of God's covenant people or God's theocratic nation during the Old Testament period. It is the nation with whom God made a covenant, the nation over which God himself would reign by means of prophets, priests, judges and kings.

During the Old Testament period a clear difference between the national aspect and the spiritual aspect of Israel was not yet made. For example, from a national point of view 'Israel' was much bigger than 'Jews only',

because also non-Jews could join God's covenant people or God's theocratic people (cf. Isaiah 56:6-8). And from a spiritual point of view 'spiritual Israel' during the Old Testament period was much smaller than 'physical Israel', because only a remnant of the people of Israel would be saved (Isaiah 1:9; Jesaja 10:21-23)!

(3) 'Israel' is also the name of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Everything God intended his people Israel to be was fulfilled only in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 49:3)! He brings the elect remnant of God's Old Testament people (Israel) back to God (Isaiah 49:6a; cf. Isaiah 10:22). And he is the Light that brings salvation to the Gentiles to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6b; Acts 13:47-48). Compare this with the fact that everything God intends his New Testament people to be is based on, accomplished by and for the glory of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18-20).

(4) 'Israel' is God's spiritual and saved people. The New Testament teaches that 'Israel' as God's spiritual and saved people is not terminated or replaced by the New Testament Church, but is continued on the higher plane of the realities in Jesus Christ instead of the shadows of the Old Testament and it is enlarged (extended) to include all believers from the Gentile nations!

(5) 'Israel' is the beginning of the Church. God's Old Testament people, Israel, and God's New Testament people, the Christian Community are called with the same names:

- 'Church' (Greek LXX: *ekklèsia*) (Psalm 22:22; Psalm 107:32 and (Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- 'Israel' (Galatians 6:14-16)
- 'Jews' (Romans 2:28-29)
- 'The twelve tribes' (James 1:1)
- 'God's elect, strangers, sojourners, exiles in the diaspora or dispersion among the non-Christians in the world (1 Peter 1:1)!

(6) 'The Church' in the New Testament is called 'the Israel of God' (spiritual Israel) in contrast to 'the Israel according to the flesh' (natural Israel) (Galatians 6:14-16 and 1 Corinthians 10:18). The Israel of God consists of believers that boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the sinful world was crucified to them and they to the world (cf. Romans 2:28-29)! 'Israel' in this sense is definitely limited to believers coming from the Jews and the Gentiles in both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

## 2. The prophetic books in the Old Testament

(1) The first part of God's Old Testament revelation is from Adam to Jacob. God's Old Testament revelation does not begin with Israel (the Jews), but with the Gentile nations (the non-Jews)! God's history of salvation begins with Adam and Eve, who were non-Jews, and is continued until Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were 'wandering (nomadic) Arameans' (Genesis 1:1 – 12:3; Deuteronomy 26:5). Jacob is the first to be called 'Israel' (Genesis 32:29). Genesis chapter 1 to 26 forms the first part of God's Old Testament revelation.

(2) The second part of God's Old Testament revelation is from Jacob to Jesus. God's history of salvation that began with the believers in the Gentile nations (cf. Enoch, Noah and Abraham) is *continued* with the believers in Israel, where it was best preserved. Genesis 27 to Malachi 4 is the second part of God's Old Testament revelation and is concentrated in Israel.

What God said to the nation of Israel and did in the nation of Israel during the Old Testament is thus a part of the beginning of God's revelation (cf. Hebrews 1:1).

(3) The New Testament revelation is indispensable for Old Testament Israel.

The New Testament revelation teaches that all the believers that lived during the Old Testament revelation died in their faith without receiving the things God promised. With the eyes of faith they saw what was promised, namely, "the city without foundations", "the heavenly country", "the New Jerusalem" (Hebrews 11:10,16; Revelation 21:2) and welcomed it from a distance (Hebrews 11:13). They were commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us (the believers of the New Testament period), so that only together with us (the believers of the New Testament period) would they (the believers of the Old Testament period) be made perfect (Hebrews 11:39-40)! 'The New Jerusalem' is a symbol of the fullness of God's people in history (Romans 11:25-26; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:12,14) and is also called the Church or the Kingdom of God in its final perfect phase.

It is therefore very clear that the Old Testament revelation is not terminated or replaced, but is *continued* on a higher plane (namely, the realities instead of the shadows), is *enlarged (extended)* to include the believers from the Gentile nations during the New Testament period and is thus *completed (fulfilled)* by the New Testament revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 8:6-13)!

### 3. The Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled from the first coming of Christ until the second coming of Christ

The histories of the creation of the universe and earth, the exodus from slavery and the return from exile were humanly speaking impossible. Nevertheless, God made them happen! The creation, exodus and exile in the Old Testament were ‘types’ (illustrations) of the New Testament recreation, salvation and restoration!

God’s promises and prophecies in the Old Testament have a higher and more far-reaching significance than what merely happens in the history of Israel, because right from the beginning God had set his sight on all the nations of the world (Genesis 3:15; 12:3)!

All God’s promises and prophecies are ultimately fulfilled in the New Testament revelation. The fulfilment already began at the first coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and will reach its complete and perfect fulfilment at the second coming of Christ.

That is why the church father, Augustine, said: “In the Old Testament the New Testament lies hidden. And in the New Testament the Old Testament stands revealed.”

### III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

*Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.*

#### Theme: Israel according to the Bible

Day 1	Exodus 19:3-6 Israel is God’s precious Old Testament people <sup>1</sup>
Day 2	Deuteronomy 7:1-13a Israel must keep God’s covenant
Day 3 <sup>BS</sup>	Romans 11:1-36 Israel according to the New Testament
Day 4	Ezekiel 34:1-31 The Good Shepherd will replace the bad shepherds of Israel
Day 5	Ezekiel 36:16-28 The Lord himself will take action to remove the impurity from Israel
Day 6	Ezekiel 37:1-28 The return from exile will be followed by a spiritual resurrection <sup>2</sup>
Day 7	Isaiah 43:1-7 The believers in Israel (the redeemed) have been created for God’s glory
Day 8	Isaiah 49:1-10 The Messiah is called ‘Israel’ <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But under condition that Israel keeps God’s covenant.

<sup>2</sup> This spiritual resurrection (Ezekiel 37:1-14) will take place under the reign of the Messiah (Ezekiel 37:15-28).

Day 9	Isaiah 56:1-8 Salvation for all nations (cf. Isaiah 54:1-12)
Day 10	Isaiah 60:1-22 The rebuilding of Jerusalem is figurative <sup>4</sup>

### IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.  
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

#### 1. Discussing the study

*Discuss* the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

##### Theme: Israel according to the Bible

- Which meanings do the word ‘Israel’ have?
- How did the Old Testament prophets view future events as:
  - The return of Israel to the land?
  - The rebuilding of the land of Israel and the temple?
  - The coming of the Messiah to Israel?
  - The outpouring of the Holy Spirit over Israel?
  - The judgement of the Gentile nations?
- What does it mean that Israel is God’s theocratic nation?
- What does it mean that Israel is God’s covenant people?
- What does the Bible say about God’s covenant people in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

#### 2. Commitment

*Let the group members* consider the following questions and record their answer:

- “In what respect must you modify your view of Israel?”
- “Have you committed yourself to remain grafted onto the root (Jesus Christ) of the olive tree (God’s people)?”
- “How should you (Christians) live in order to arouse Israel (natural Jews) to envy?”

#### 3. Personal sharing

*Discuss* personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

<sup>3</sup> In Isaiah 49:8-9 the LORD says: “I will make you (the Messiah) to be a covenant for the people.”

<sup>4</sup> The rebuilding of Jerusalem is *figurative for the ideal* of the Church in the present time and *figurative for the reality* of the Church on the new earth (cf. Revelation 21:1 – 22:5).

## V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

### 1. Review previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

### 2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

#### ISRAEL Romans 10:12

For there is no difference  
between Jew and Gentile –  
the same Lord is Lord of all  
and richly blesses all who call on him.

Romans 10:12 (NIV)

### 3. Review of the Bible books

*The 5 books of the Law:*

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

*The 12 historical books:*

Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings,  
1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

*The 5 poetical books:*

Job, Psalms, proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs

*The 5 major prophets:*

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

*The 12 minor prophets:*

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum,  
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

## VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

### Theme: Israel according to the New Testament

#### 1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step Bible Study method and study:

##### Romans 11:1-36

<sup>1</sup>I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know (Paul especially addresses the Gentile believers in Rome) what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: <sup>3</sup>"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? <sup>4</sup>And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." <sup>5</sup>So too, at the present time (i.e. Paul's generation) there is a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup>And if by grace, then it is no

longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

<sup>7</sup>What then? What Israel (Paul is speaking about Israel as a nation during the Old Testament period) sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect (those who believed in God and his Anointed) did. The others (the other people in Israel) were hardened, <sup>8</sup>as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes so that they could not see  
and ears so that they could not hear,  
to this very day." <sup>9</sup>And David says:

"May their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

<sup>10</sup>May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,  
and their backs be bent forever."

<sup>11</sup>Again I ask: Did they (Paul is speaking about the Jews in the first century A.D.) stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. <sup>12</sup>But if their transgression (means) riches for the world (Greek dictionary: 'the world' of Gentile nations), and their loss (or: defeat) (means) riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches (will) their fullness (i.e. the full number of Jewish believers) (bring) (verse 12 has no verb)! (Thus the original text does not say that all the Jews have repented or would repent in the future).

<sup>13</sup>I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry (literally: I magnify my ministry) <sup>14</sup>in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. <sup>15</sup>For if their rejection (i.e. the rejection of many Israelites, but not all Israelites) (is) the reconciliation of the world (Greek dictionary: 'the world' of Gentile nations, but not all Gentiles), what (will) their acceptance (i.e. the acceptance of many Israelites, but not all Israelites) (be) but life from the dead? (verse 15 has no verb) <sup>16</sup>If the part (of the dough) (these three words are not in the original text) offered as first fruits (is) holy, then the whole batch (is) holy; if the root (is) holy, so (are) the branches (verse 16 has no verb).

<sup>17</sup>If some of the branches (Jewish unbelievers) have been broken off, and you (Gentile believers), though a wild olive shoot (originally a heathen), have been grafted in among the others (Jewish believers) and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root (i.e. Jesus Christ), <sup>18</sup>do not boast over those branches (Jewish unbelievers). If you (Gentile believers) do, consider this: You (i.e. branches) do not support the root, but the root supports you (Consider that you too have been saved by grace).

<sup>19</sup>You (Gentile believers) will say then, "Branches (Jewish unbelievers) were broken off so that I (a Gentile believer) could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup>Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup>For if God did not spare the natural branches (Jewish unbelievers), he will not spare you (Gentile unbelievers) either.

<sup>22</sup>Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell (a previous generation of Jewish unbelievers), but kindness to you (the present generation of Gentile believers), provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup>And if they (natural Jews) do not persist in unbelief, they (a new generation of Jewish believers) will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup>After all, if you (natural Gentiles) were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature (a heathen nation), and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree (God's people), how much more readily will these, the natural branches (a new generation of natural Jews that come to faith), be grafted into their own olive tree (because they are still the natural descendants of the patriarchs even though a previous generation of Jews were cut off)!

<sup>25</sup>I do not want you (Gentile Christians) 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 (i.e. Gentile believers) has (once for all) come in. <sup>26</sup>*And so all Israel* (i.e. the full number of Jewish believers) (cf. verse 12) will be saved, as it is written:

“The deliverer will come *from* Zion;  
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

<sup>27</sup>And this (*is*) (this verb is not in the original) my covenant with them when I (once for all, i.e. at first coming of Christ) take away their sins.”

<sup>28</sup>As far as the gospel (i.e. the proclamation of the gospel) is concerned, they (Jews that are now still unbelievers, but will later become believers, i.e. the elect Jews) (*are*) enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they (*are*) loved on account of the patriarchs (verse 28 has no verb), <sup>29</sup>for God's gifts and his call (*are*) irrevocable (verse 29 has no verb). <sup>30</sup>Just as you (Gentile believers, i.e. the elect Gentiles) who were *at one time* disobedient to God have *now* received mercy as a result of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they (the elect Jews) too have *now* become disobedient in order that they too may *now* (this word lacks in some manuscripts) receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. <sup>32</sup>For God has bound (literally in Greek:) *them all* (thus not 'all men' but all the elect Jews and all the elect Gentiles) over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on *them all*.

<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and 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 counsellor?”

<sup>35</sup>“Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay him?”

<sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

## 2. Emphasis

- ‘God's people’ include ‘the fullness’ of believers from the natural nation of Israel and ‘the fullness’ of the believers from the Gentile nations.
- ‘The fullness’ or ‘the full number’ (Greek: *pleroma*) (Romans 11:25) of the believers from the natural Gentile (non-Jewish) nations consists of the total of all ‘the elected parts’ in every generation of the Gentile nations throughout history (Romans 8:29-30,33; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). ‘The fullness’ or ‘the full number’ (Greek: *pleroma*) (Romans 11:12) of the believers from the natural nation of Israel consists of the total of all ‘the elected parts’ in every generation of the people of Israel throughout history (Isaiah 1:9; 4:2; 10:20-22; Romans 9:11; 11:1-2a; 11:2b-4; 11:5; 11:7).
- ‘The fullness out of the Gentile nations’ and ‘the fullness out of the Jews’ will be reached simultaneously at the end of the history of the world at the one and only second coming of Christ. “None of them received what has been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39-40; cf. John 5:28-29; Matthew 24:31; 25:31-34).
- ‘All Israel’ (Greek: ‘*pas Israel*’) (Romans 11:26) is the same as ‘the fullness of Israel’ (Romans 11:12). ‘All Israel’ does not mean ‘every single Jew that lived in history’ or ‘every single Jew that lives in the end-time’, but means ‘everyone belonging to the full number of elected people out of the natural nation of Israel.’
- The same word: ‘all’ (Greek: ‘*pas*’) is found in Romans 11:32: “For God has bound *them all* (not: ‘all men’, but all the elect Gentiles and all the elect Jews) over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on *them all*.”

## 3. Explanation for the group leader

### 11:1-4

- (1) Examples of Jews whom God has not rejected  
(1 Kings 19:18; cf. Romans 11:1-4).

During the Old Testament period God saw to it that there was always a group of people that belonged to him: ‘a remnant chosen by grace’ (11:5).

It is possible that there were literally only 7000 men. But in accordance with the biblical symbolism of numbers, the number 7000 also has a deeper significance. The number 7 represents ‘divine completeness and perfection’, the number 10 represents ‘completeness in

the world' and the number 10x10x10 represents 'absolute completeness'. Therefore, the number 7000 represents 'the full number (the fullness)' of believers from the natural nation of Israel that God had elected and predestined to remain faithful to him in the time of oppression under the godless king Ahab. That number could then have been much more (or less) than the literal number 7000. What is important is not the literal number, but the fact that everyone God has elected was there and not one elected person went lost (cf. John 17:6,12; 10:28-30; Romans 8:37-39; Philippians 1:6 cf. Matthew 24:24)! The fact that someone has been elected (chosen) by God is his assurance that he has been saved and would for ever belong to God!

In the period of the kings God did not regard or treat the whole natural and national nation of Israel as 'his people' (Hosea 1:9; cf. Romans 11:1). Only the 7000 in Israel did not bend their knees before Baal! 'The remnant' of believers during the time of king Ahab was a part of the fullness (full number) of believers from the natural nation of Israel who would belong to God and be his spiritual people at the end of world history.

**(2)** The natural people of Israel are as Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:3-20; Romans 9:29)

Already in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. God called the leaders of Israel 'rulers of Sodom' and he called the people of Israel 'people of Gomorrah' (Isaiah 1:10). Because Israel lived just like the Gentiles, God no longer differentiated between the natural nation of Israel and Sodom and Gomorrah. God also does not differentiate between nominal Christians and the world (1 Corinthians 3:3-4)!

But God did not regard or treat everyone in the natural nation of Israel in this way, because God had left them 'some survivors' (a remnant) (Isaiah 1:9). Only by God's mercy and grace did God not destroy the whole of Israel as he had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He left them 'seed' (Greek: sperma).

**(3)** The spiritual people of Israel are called 'a remnant' (Greek: hupoleimma) (Isaiah 10:20-23; Romans 9:27)

Only a part of the natural nation of Israel is saved. The Bible teaches: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved". "Only a remnant would return to the Mighty God", who according to Isaiah 9:5-6 refers to the Messiah-King, Jesus Christ. With regard to the rest in Israel, "destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous" (Isaiah 10:22).

That is why the apostle Paul differentiates between natural Israel (Romans 9:6a) and spiritual Israel (Romans 9:6b)!

### **11:5-10**

**(1)** Those who obtained righteousness

Just as during the Old Testament period so also during the New Testament period God himself saw to it that there was a group of elect believers that belonged to him. By grace God chose a 'remnant' of Jews to be saved. Among them were the disciples of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul and many believers among the Jews. Through their faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, they obtained righteousness (salvation).

**(2)** Those who did not obtain righteousness

The rest of the natural nation of Israel tried to obtain righteousness by keeping the law. They did not obtain righteousness (salvation) (Romans 9:30-33). God chose a remnant to obtain salvation and he hardened the others (Romans 11:7-10).

God finally hardens people who continually harden themselves against God. In the end God gives them over to slavery to their godlessness and wickedness (cf. Romans 1:18-32; Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:10-17).

### **11:11-15**

Something that God's Old Testament covenant people and also God's New Testament covenant people did not know was what the apostle Paul now revealed, namely, that God uses the Jews for the salvation of Gentiles and he uses Gentiles for the salvation of Jews!

**(1)** God used the fall of the natural nation of Israel to bring many Gentiles to faith (11:11-12)

God finally hardens Jews who have continually hardened themselves against God. But God's ultimate goal with this hardening was to bring salvation by grace to Gentiles and Jews! Thus, God even causes good to come out of evil (which man invents and practices)!

Because many Jews rejected the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the believing Jews (the apostles) proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles. In this way many Gentiles came to faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 13:45-48; *Read* Acts 11:19-26) (11:11).

If already so many Gentiles had come to faith by the time Paul wrote his letter to the Romans (57 A.D.) – depicted as "riches for the world (of Gentile nations)" (Romans 11:12), how much more Gentiles would come to faith by the time the full number of Jews have come to faith (i.e. at Christ's second coming)? *The fall of Israel* (at the first

coming of Christ) already led to riches (i.e. a great blessing) for the world of Gentile nations in the first century A.D. *'The fullness of Israel'* (by the second coming of Christ) will lead to much greater riches (i.e. much greater blessing) for the world (of Gentile nations) (by the second coming of Christ) (cf. Genesis 12:3) (11:12)!

**(2)** God uses the Gentile believers to bring many Jews to faith (11:13-15)

The calling of the apostle Paul was to bring Gentiles to repentance (Acts 26:17-18; Galatians 2:9; Romans 1:5). The fact that many Gentiles came to faith in Jesus Christ aroused the envy of many Jews and eventually led to the conversion of many Jews. Paul 'magnified' (in the sense of made greater, enlarged) his ministry among the Gentiles (cf. Acts 26:17-18; Galatians 2:8) in order to also bring as many as possible Jews to repentance (11:13-14).

When many Jews rejected Jesus Christ during the first century, this not only led to God's rejection of many Jews, but also led to God's reconciliation with many Gentiles. This 'reconciliation' is a reference to the many Gentiles that became reconciled to God and consequently became a part of God's (saved) New Testament people (Ephesians 2:11-22; cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10)!

But also many Jews accepted Jesus Christ during the first century (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 21:20) and this led to God's acceptance of many Jews. This 'acceptance' is a reference to the many Jews that God accepted and consequently made a part of God's (saved) New Testament people. This 'acceptance' of the Jews is "but life from death". This expression refers to the radical transformation of Jews that came to faith in Jesus Christ. They became like people that have been resurrected from the dead (cf. Luke 15:24)!

Romans 11:12 and 15 do not contain a verb and therefore one cannot determine whether these events took place in the first century or whether they will only take place in the future. When some Bible translations without warrant assume that these events must refer only to the future, they go beyond what is written in the Bible (1 Corinthians 4:6; cf. Revelation 22:18-19)!

The context of verse 12 and verse 15 is verse 13-14 and verse 31. These three verses clearly show that the Jews are aroused to envy and come to faith in Jesus Christ 'now' during the first century! Thus, from the first coming of Christ also the number of believers from the natural nation of Israel began to grow towards 'the full number' (11:15)!

## 11:16-24

The illustrations about 'the first fruit' of the harvest and 'the root of the olive tree' with its natural and wild olive branches explain how God is carrying out his plan of salvation throughout the whole New Testament period.

**(1)** The first fruit of the harvest (11:16)

The first fruit of the harvest was a cake made of the first part of the grain harvest. This cake was presented to God as a symbol that the whole grain harvest is dedicated to God. The whole grain harvest belongs to God and whatever the Israelites ate from it had to be regarded as a gift from God (Numbers 15:17-21; cf. 1 Timothy 4:4-5).

In the Bible the word 'holy' means 'set apart from' and 'dedicated to'. Thus, if the first cake was holy, then also the whole lump of dough from which the other cakes were made had to be regarded as 'holy' (11:16).

**(2)** The root of the cultivated olive tree (11:16-18)

In this context 'the first fruit' and 'the root' refer to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who through 'the promised Seed' (Jesus Christ) had become the first part of God's saved (or: covenant) people (Compare Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:16; and Romans 11:28 with Galatians 3:9,29). Through this 'Seed' all the families (or: nations) of the earth would be blessed, whether Gentiles or Jews. Therefore, in its deepest sense Jesus Christ himself is 'the First fruit' (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20,23) and 'the Root' (Revelation 5:5; 22:16).

Through the promised Messiah (this Seed, Root or First fruit), Jesus Christ, the patriarchs became 'holy', that is, set apart from other people in the world and 'dedicated to' God in order to constitute the beginning of God's one saved (or: covenant) people on earth (11:16).

**(3)** The cultivated olive tree (11:17-21)

'The cultivated olive tree' is *not* a symbol of the natural nation of Israel, but a symbol of God's covenant people on earth that believe: God's 'spiritual Israel'. Paul says: "Not all, who are descended from Israel (natural Israel), are Israel (spiritual Israel)" (Romans 9:6)! Spiritual Israel is God's saved people that had its beginning with the believers within the natural nation of Israel during the Old Testament period (both Jews and Gentiles) and has been continued and enlarged (extended) to include the believers within all the Gentile nations during the New Testament period (cf. Romans 1:16).

Jesus clearly taught that God's saved people consists of "one flock and one Shepherd" (John 10:16)! The sheep (believers) come from different sheep pens (natural nations) in the world (cf. John 12:32).

Paul clearly taught that God's saved people consists of 'the Body of Christ' with one Head and many members (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Peter clearly taught that God's saved people consist of 'the spiritual house' with one Cornerstone and many living stones (1 Peter 2:4-8; cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10).

Likewise in this context the apostle Paul teaches that God's saved people constitute 'one olive tree' with one Root (Jesus Christ) and many branches (many believers). The believers from the natural nation of Israel are being grafted into God's saved people in accordance with their nature, because they are natural descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the believers from the natural nations of the Gentiles are being grafted into God's saved people against their nature, because they were not the natural descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Romans 11:16-24).

**(4) The branches of the cultivated olive tree (11:19-20)**

These branches are symbolic of the true believers from the natural nation of Israel. Because of their unbelief and disobedience many Jews were cut off from God's saved people during the Old Testament period (Hebrews 4:2,3,6). They did not remain faithful to God's covenant (Hebrews 8:9). But because of their faith in Jesus Christ other Jews were again grafted into God's saved people during the New Testament period.

The illustration does not speak of an individual Jewish believer, who was cut off because of unbelief and later again grafted into the olive tree because of belief. The context speaks of *a particular generation of Jews* who were cut off from being God's people due to their unbelief and disobedience at that time (Isaiah 6:9-10; Psalm 69:22-23; Romans 11:3-4; Matthew 8:12; 21:43a) and it speaks of *another generation of Jews* who are grafted into God's people due to their faith in Jesus Christ (John 6:68-69; Romans 11:5).

**(5) The branches of the wild olive tree (11:17-21)**

These branches are symbolic of the true believers coming from the Gentile nations in the world. Through their faith in Jesus Christ many Gentile believers are being grafted into God's saved people *among* the Jewish believers in Christ. This means that the Gentile Christians are grafted into God's people on a complete equal footing with the Jewish Christians (Matthew 8:11; Matthew 21:43b).

But another generation of Gentile descendents from these Gentile believers will be cut off from God's saved people due to their unbelief and disobedience (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5)!

There is therefore *no difference* between Jew and Gentile anymore (Romans 10:12-13; cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11)! The gospel is a power of God for the salvation of every Jew and every Gentile that puts his faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16)! Jews and Gentiles who previously were unbelievers are being grafted into Jesus Christ through their faith in Jesus Christ and so become part of God's one and only saved people (1 Corinthians 12:13). But Jews and Gentiles who previously were born within God's covenant people as descendents of genuine believers will be cut off from God's one and only saved people due to their unbelief (Acts 13:45-48; Hebrews 4:6-7).

**11:25-27**

**(1)** The mystery is not 'when' God will work out his plan of salvation in history, but 'how' he works it out (11:25)

*The mystery is not 'God's future plan with Israel'.* The theological view of some Bible translations is that God would *first* save the full number of believers coming from the Gentile nations and *thereafter* save 'all Israel'. For them the chronology of God's plan of salvation is very important: they believe that God is at the present time doing little to save the Jews, but in the future he is going to save all the Jews. This theological view cannot be derived from the Bible!

*The mystery is a very encouraging and hopeful message.* What Gentile and Jewish believers in Christ must know is that there has never been a complete hardening of the natural nation of Israel and therefore never has been a complete rejection of the natural nation of Israel! There has been *a partial hardening* of the natural nation of Israel with a very specific purpose: to save believers from the natural Gentile nations in the world!

This partial hardening is the result of the persistent sins of the Israelites. But this partial hardening also means that the other part of the natural nation of Israel has not been hardened. Through the proclamation of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ they are being saved at the present time, that is, since the first coming of Christ (Romans 11:31)! In every generation between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ a part of the natural nation of Israel will come to faith in Jesus Christ and will consequently be saved!

*The mystery is how God is working out his plan of salvation in the history of the world.* God first used the fall of many Jewish unbelievers (Romans 11:11) and the obedience of some Jewish believers (like Joseph and Mary, the disciples of Jesus Christ, etc.) to bring many Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ.

Then God used Gentile believers indirectly by arousing the envy of Jewish unbelievers with respect to their transformation (Acts 4:13; Romans 10:19) and directly by proclaiming the gospel about Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17-18; cf. Isaiah 28:11) to bring many Jews to faith in Jesus Christ.

*The purpose of revealing this mystery* is to show that God is not showing favouritism to either the Gentiles or the Jews in executing his plan of salvation in history (cf. Acts 10:28,34-35). He is using Jewish believers to bring Gentiles to faith and he is using Gentile believers to bring Jews to faith!

(2) Israel was not temporarily hardened, but partially hardened (11:25-26a)

*The translation:* “A temporary hardening has come over Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in and then (thereafter) all Israel will be saved” is NOT correct. This translation (cf. The Living Bible, 1971 and Good News Bible, 1976) is not based on the original Greek text of the New Testament, but on a particular theological view concerning the end-time events and the future of Israel.

During the Old Testament period there never was a time when Israel as a whole turned against God (and his Anointed) (Psalm 2) and consequently were hardened. Also during the New Testament period there never was a time when the Jews as a whole turned against Jesus Christ and consequently were hardened! In every generation there will be “a remnant chosen by grace” (Romans 11:5; Read Romans 9:6-18)!

*The translation:* “A partial hardening has come over Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in and so (in this manner) all Israel will be saved” IS correct. This translation (cf. The King James Version, 1611, The Revised Standard Version, 1946/1965, The New American Standard Bible, 1960, The New International Version, 1986) is based on the original Greek text of the New Testament. The Greek words: ‘apo merous’ mean ‘for a part’ in contrast to the whole (Greek dictionary). And the Greek words: ‘kai houtos’ mean ‘so’, ‘in this way’ (Greek dictionary). Romans chapter 11 points out that during the Old Testament period there were 7000 people who did not harden themselves against God and during the New Testament period there was the apostle Paul and another remnant chosen by grace that did not harden themselves against God. Therefore, a part of the natural nation of Israel was never hardened (Romans 11:1-6), but another part of the natural nation of Israel was hardened (Romans 11:7-10)!

*The purpose of this partial hardening of Israel* was to save many people coming from the natural Gentile nations – even the full number of them!

(3) The full number of the elect (11:25)

*The Greek word:* ‘pleroma’ means ‘the fullness’ in the sense of ‘the full number’ (Greek dictionary). Between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ more and more people coming from the natural Gentile nations and from the natural nation of Israel will hear the gospel and come to faith in Jesus Christ. The number of Gentile believers and the number of Jewish believers will continue to grow until ‘the full number’ (Romans 11:25,12) of both has been reached at the second coming of Christ.

*The fullness of the Gentiles (11:25).* The original Greek text does not say: ‘all Gentiles’, a translation which would suggest universal salvation of Gentiles. The text says: ‘the full number of the Gentiles. The words: ‘the full number’ refers to election.

The total of all elected parts from every generation of the Gentile nations throughout history will constitute the full number of believers coming from the natural Gentile nations.

*The fullness of Israel (11:12).* The total of all elected parts from every generation of the natural nation of Israel throughout history will constitute the full number of believers coming from the natural nation of Israel (cf. Romans 11:4-5,11).

(4) All Israel (11:26)

The words: ‘all Israel’ (Greek: ‘pas Israel’) in the Old Testament represented ‘the vast assembly of Israelites’ who believed in the LORD and celebrated the inauguration of the temple (1 Kings 8:65). It represented ‘the whole Israelite army’ that went out to fight with Joab against Edom (1 Kings 11:16). In both passage these words do not refer to all Jews that lived during the time of the kings. Likewise the words: ‘all Israel’ in Romans 11:26 do not refer to all the Jews that ever belonged to the natural nation of Israel throughout history. And they also do not refer to all the Jews living in the end of history.

But they do refer to all the Jews throughout history who are by faith connected to Jesus Christ before and after his first coming of Christ: Abraham (Genesis 15:6; 22:18); the 7000 (1 Kings 19:18); the other Old Testament heroes of faith (Hebrews chapter 11); the twelve apostles of Christ (cf. Romans 11:1); the remnant chosen by grace in the first century A.D. (Romans 11:5) and all the Jews throughout the New Testament period who have been grafted into Christ (Romans 11:23-24,31).

The word: ‘all’ (Greek: pas, pantas) in Romans 11:26 does not have the same *all inclusive meaning* as in Romans 5:18a and in 1 Corinthians 15:22a, which say: all people bound to Adam by natural birth are condemned and die.

But the word ‘all’ in Romans 11:26 does have *the same limited meaning* as in Romans 11:32, which says: all the elect Jews and elect Gentiles will receive mercy. It does have the same limited meaning as in Romans 5:18b and in 1 Corinthians 15:22b which say: all people bound to Christ by spiritual birth are justified and will be made alive.

(5) The Saviour will not come *from heaven* to Zion at Christ’s second coming, but rather has already come *from Zion* at Christ’s first coming (11:26b)

From where would the Messiah come according to the Old Testament revelation?

#### *Several quotations from the Old Testament*

Romans 11:26b-27 quotes the Old Testament. These quotations do not refer to the future from a New Testament perspective, but refer to the future from an Old Testament perspective. From the Old Testament perspective Christ still had to come for the first time!

Paul also does not quote one specific verse in the Old Testament, but gives a summary of several Old Testament verses:

- “The Deliverer will come from (out of) Zion.” At his first coming, the Messiah Deliverer would come *from* (out of) Zion (Micah 5:1) and this was fulfilled (Matthew 2:6; Romans 11:26b). The Deliverer would come *to* Zion (Isaiah 59:20 in Hebrew) and this was fulfilled (Matthew 2:22-23; Luke 2:4; Luke 19:38). The Deliverer would come *on behalf of for the sake of* Zion (Isaiah 59:20 in Greek) and this was fulfilled (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24).
- “He will turn godlessness away from Jacob”. This Deliverer would make atonement for the guilt of many in Jacob and remove their sin (Isaiah 27:9a in Greek).
- “And this is my covenant with them” (Isaiah 59:21 in Greek) and this was fulfilled (Matthew 26:28).
- “When I take away their sins” (Isaiah 27:9b in Greek). And this was fulfilled: “Give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21; 9:2).

#### *The message of these quotations*

What these quotations from the Old Testament predict is not what Christ would do at his second coming, but what Christ already did at his first coming! Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem and therefore came *out of* Israel. (Matthew 2:6; John 4:22). He came *on behalf of* the lost sheep of Israel, but they did not welcome him (Matthew

15:24; John 1:11). He came *for* Israel, to redeem those under law (Matthew 1:21; 10:5-6; Luke 19:10; Galatians 4:4-5). And he came to establish the new covenant with them (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:6-13).

#### *The purpose of these quotations*

The purpose of these quotations was to show that it has always been God’s purpose to redeem (elect) Israel at his first coming – even to save all (elect) Israel!

The main theme of the letter to the Romans is: “The removal of sins” or “Justification by faith” (cf. Romans 4:3,6,25; Romans 5:1,8-9,19; Romans 8:1-3). Romans chapter 9 to 11 shows that this doctrine is historical: it already happened during the Old Testament period and is continued throughout the New Testament period until all people that have been elected by God (i.e. the full number of elect Gentiles and the full number of elect Jews) have entered the kingdom of God. God never rejects his chosen people (Romans 11:1; cf. 2 Timothy 2:19).

#### *When does this happen?*

*When did the deliverer from Zion come to remove the sins of Israel?* He is not going to do this at his second coming, but already did this at his first coming (Romans 11:26b-27).

#### *When will the full number of (elect) Gentiles and (elect)*

*Jews be reached?* Romans 11:26 does not say: “And thereafter (then) all Israel will be saved”, but rather: “And in this way (so) all Israel will be saved.”

The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (including Israel!) and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14; cf. Acts 20:24-25).

The hardening of a part of Israel (and of the Gentiles) and thus the salvation of the other part of Israel (and of the Gentiles) will continue throughout the whole New Testament period until the full number of believers from the natural nations of the Gentiles (Romans 11:25) and the full number of believers from the natural nation of Israel (Romans 11:12, 26a) will be reached simultaneously at the second coming of Christ. It is *in this way* that all Israel (and the fullness of the Gentiles) will be saved.

#### *The end-time events*

The second coming of Jesus Christ, called either ‘the coming’ (Greek: parousia) or ‘the revelation’ (Greek: apokalupsis) is a single historical future event (Compare Matthew 24:39-42 and 2 Thessalonians 1:10 with Luke 17:30-36 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7)!

The following events will take place at the second coming of Christ:

- The second coming of Christ (Matthew 24:29-31).
- The resurrection of all the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous (John 5:28-29; 6:39-40; Acts 24:15; Philippians 3:21; Revelation 20:13).
- The immediate physical transformation of believers that still live on earth (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) and the immediate spiritual transformation of all believers that ever lived when they see Jesus (1 John 3:1-3).
- The rapture (catching up, snatching up) of only all believers in order to welcome Christ in the clouds (Matthew 24:40-41; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10).
- Later on the same last Day the last judgement in the sky (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22,29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15).
- And simultaneously with the last judgement of all people (Revelation 20:11) the renewal of the universe and the earth (Acts 3:21; Romans 8:19-21; 2 Peter 3:4-13).
- The beginning of the kingdom of God in its final phase on the new earth (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 11:15; 21:1-5).

### 11:28-29

(1) The elect Jews were simultaneously enemies and loved ones (11:28)

The Greek text of Romans 11:28 says: “Concerning (man’s proclamation of) the gospel: *they* (are) enemies on your account; concerning (God’s) election: they (are) loved on account of the patriarchs” (there is no verb in verse 28). The question is: “Who are ‘they’?”

○ *In the time of Christ’s disciples the elect Jews were first enemies of Christ, Christians and the gospel*

At the first coming of Christ, God did not reject the natural nation of Israel as if not a single Jew would be able to come to faith (Romans 11:1). The disciples of Christ were part of the elect Jews (John 15:16). Many Jews including priests did not believe when Christ was on the earth, but came to faith after the preaching of the gospel to them (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7). The apostle Paul was first a severe enemy of Christ, Christians and the gospel, but later came to faith (Acts 26:9-20; cf. Romans 11:1-2).

○ *In the time of Paul the elect Jews were first enemies of Christ, Christians and the gospel (11:28a)*

Paul was not referring to the whole natural or national people of Israel. He was referring to the small remnant of elect Jews (11:5) who in Paul’s time had fallen away from God’s covenant people (11:11) and due to their unbelief and disobedience had been cut off from the olive tree

(God’s covenant people) (11:20a). As long as they persisted in their unbelief and disobedience they were enemies of Christ, Christians and the gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

○ *The elect Jews were first enemies on account of the elect Gentiles (11:28b)*

The initial enmity of the elect Jews led to the preaching of the gospel to the Gentile nations so that many Gentiles (the elect Gentiles) came to faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 11:19-26; 13:44-48).

○ *The elect Jews were always loved ones of God (11:28c)*  
Although in the time of Paul these Jews had not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ and consequently were still enemies of Christ, of Christians and of the proclamation of the gospel, they were from eternity loved ones of God, because they had been chosen before the creation of the world to belong to him.

But also the fact that these Jews were loved ones of God was not based on themselves or on the fact that they were born as Jews. They were loved ones of God on account of the patriarchs, that is, on account of the fact that God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 28:14; cf. Galatians 3:16) and they had remained faithful to his word. These elect Jews were thus also children of God’s sovereign promise (cf. Romans 9:8).

The same Jews who were enemies before they became believers had always been loved ones of God because they had been chosen ‘before time’ to come to faith ‘in time’ (Romans 8:29-30; cf. Ephesians 1:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). God loved the elect Jews with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). God loved the ‘world’ of elected people from every nation (John 4:42b; 1 John 4:14; cf. Titus 2:11) since eternity. That is why he came to save them (John 3:16).

(2) The gifts and call of God remain irrevocable (11:29)

○ *God’s gifts and call are irrevocable.*

In Genesis 6:6 and Jeremiah 18:6-10 God grieved and relented and changed his promise, because God took the attitude and reaction of people towards him and his promises and threats into account.

But in Romans 11:29 God’s gifts and call remain irrevocable, because these two things are not dependent on man’s attitude and reaction, but on God’s sovereignty and eternal plan of salvation. God’s election is not subject to man’s attitude or reaction (cf. Romans 9:10-13). God’s election of Jacob is expressed in God’s love for Jacob.

○ *The unchangeable God will never regret his gifts and call.*

No one can resist God's sovereign and effective call, no one can refuse his gift and no one can undo what he does! The gifts of God are for example: faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29), peace, hope and love (Romans 5:1-5) that flow out of the covenant promise God had made with the patriarchs.

○ *God's call (outward and inward) is always effective!*

The call of God is on the one hand *the outward call* by means of proclaiming the gospel and on the other hand *the inward call* by means of the Holy Spirit who irresistibly works faith in the mind and heart of man (cf. Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27).

Every person God calls in this way will certainly come to faith (cf. Romans 8:29-30; 10:11-13)! Paul himself was 'called' to be an apostle (Romans 1:1). The Christians in Rome were 'called' to belong to Christ and 'called' to be saints (Romans 1:6-7a,16). The Christians in Thessalonica are 'called' through the gospel to share in the glory of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

○ *God's gifts and call are not for everyone, but for the elect part*

These gifts and call of God are not for the natural nation of Israel, but for the chosen part of the natural nation of Israel (Romans 11:29)! During the Old Testament period Abraham and many others believed in the coming Messiah (Romans 11:3-4; 1 Kings 19:18; Hebrews chapter 11).

In every generation until the second coming of Christ there will be a remnant of chosen Jews who will first be enemies of Christ, of Christians and of the gospel, but afterwards will come to faith in Jesus Christ, because they are loved (chosen) of God. 'This generation' (in the sense of 'Jews as a natural people') will not pass away until the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:34). And out of every generation (in the sense of Jews living at a particular time) there will be "a remnant chosen by grace" (Romans 11:5). They will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

These gifts and call of God are likewise also not for the natural Gentile nations. They are for the chosen part of the natural Gentile nations (Romans 8:29-30,33)!

### 11:30-32

(1) God uses Jewish believers and Gentile believers for one another's salvation (Romans 11:30-31)

*Note the words: "Just as" (verse 30) ... "so" (verse 31)*

Since the first coming of Christ, God's plan of salvation of the elect Jews follows exactly the same way as his plan of salvation of the elect Gentiles.

Also note the words: "At one time" ... "now". With Gentiles and with Jews there is always first disobedience and only then the possibility of salvation.

○ *God shows his mercy to the elect Gentiles by what happened to the Jews (Romans 11:30)*

By their unbelief and disobedience many Jews had fallen away from being God's covenant people (Hebrews 4:1-6). And by their faith and obedience the elect Jews (e.g. the disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ) went and proclaimed the gospel to the disobedient Gentiles (John 17:20-21; Acts 11:19-26; 13:44-48; Romans 1:16). In this way the elect Gentiles came to faith in Jesus Christ. In this way God showed his mercy and undeserved grace to the elect Gentiles.

This happened 'now' during the first century when Paul lived (Romans 11:30). Thus, from the first coming of Christ until the second coming of Christ God will show his mercy to the elect Gentiles.

○ *God shows his mercy to the elect Jews by what happened to the elect Gentiles (Romans 11:31)*

The Jews saw how God's mercy and grace to the chosen Gentiles transformed the lives of these Gentiles. They heard them proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ. And they became envious of the chosen Gentiles (Romans 10:19). By hearing the word of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17-18), also the elect Jews came to faith in Jesus Christ. In this way God showed his mercy and undeserved grace to the elect Jews.

This happened 'now' during the first century when Paul lived (Romans 11:31). Thus, from the first coming of Christ until the second coming of Christ God will continue to show his mercy to the elect Jews.

(2) God has bound all his chosen people under disobedience so that he may have mercy on all his chosen people (Romans 11:32)

There is a difference in meaning between the words 'all people' in Romans 5:18 and 'them all' in Romans 11:32.

○ Romans 5:18a.

'All people' (Greek: pantes anthropoi) bound to Adam (e.g. all natural born people, the full number of people that has ever lived, except Jesus Christ) are by nature sinful and condemned to eternal death (John 3:18b,36b; Romans 3:10-12,23; Romans 5:17a 18a, 19a; 1 Corinthians 15:22a). They are by nature hostile to God and do not submit to God and his Word and cannot submit to God and his Word (Romans 8:5-8; Galatians 3:22-23). In the beginning the chosen parts of the Gentiles and the Jews belonged to these condemned!

o Romans 5:18b.

'All people' (Greek: *pantes anthropoi*) bound to Christ (e.g. all chosen people, the full number of people that have come to faith in Jesus Christ, whether they were originally Jews or Gentiles) are by God's grace justified and given eternal life (Romans 5:17b,18b, 19b; 1 Corinthians 15:22). They are justified by God, that is, God declares them righteous and regards and treats them as righteous, because they have received the grace of God and the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17b; Ephesians 2:8-9). The chosen parts of the Gentiles and the Jews from 'now' on belong to God's people, that is, to the people who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. From 'now' onwards (i.e. from Christ's first coming onwards) God shows his mercy on them all (i.e. on all his chosen people).

o Roman 11:32.

The text says: "For God has bound *them all* (Greek: *hoi pantes*) under disobedience, so that he may show mercy to *them all* (Greek: *hoi pantes*)". Note that Romans 11:32 does *not* say 'all people' (Greek: *pantes anthropoi*), but 'them all' (Greek: *hoi pantes*).

The NIV translation: "For God has bound *all men* over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" is wrong, because it implies universal salvation. Therefore Romans 11:32 may not be translated wrong and may never be interpreted out of its context!

The conjunction 'for' shows that verse 32 is the conclusion of what is written in verse 30-31. God has first locked all the elect Gentiles and all the elect Jews ("them all") in the prison of disobedience before he showed his mercy and undeserved grace by saving all elect Gentiles and all elect Jews ("them all"). Therefore the Bible does not teach universal salvation! God desires that the elect people understand that they are by nature sinful and lost before they are saved and that they are saved by grace.

### 11:33-36

God's plan of salvation is unfathomable! God's plan of salvation was not comprehended by either the Jews or the Gentiles (Romans 11:33-35). God had to reveal this 'mystery' (Romans 11:25a). No man and no religion could devise a plan in which on the one hand God kept

and fulfilled his covenant and promise to the elect in Israel and on the other hand God saves not only the elect Jews, but also the elect Gentiles (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:11-22)! God himself is the Origin, Executer and Goal of his plan of salvation (Romans 11:36). God himself will realise his plan of salvation until the full number of elect Gentiles and the full number of elect Jews have entered his kingdom.

Until the second coming of Christ God himself will have mercy on the elect Jews and the elect Gentiles and he will give them to Jesus Christ (John 6:44,37; John 17:2,6,9,,24). The fullness of the Gentiles and the fullness of the Jews will be reached simultaneously at Christ's second coming (Romans 11:25-26).

That is why after the first coming of Christ there is no longer any difference between Jew and Gentile (Romans 10:12-13)! That is why the God of the Bible is the God of the Jews and the God of the Gentiles (Romans 3:28-29). That is why God justifies the Jews and the Gentiles in exactly the same way (Galatians 3:26-29)! And that is why after the second coming of Christ there will be no second chance to be saved for either the Jews or the Gentiles (Matthew 25:10; 2 Corinthians 6:2)!

The main theme of the letter to the Romans is 'the removal of sins' or 'the justification of sinners by faith in Christ'. Romans chapter 9 to 11 shows that this teaching is historic: it already happened during the Old Testament period and it will continue to happen throughout the New Testament period until all God's elect have entered his kingdom.

## VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

*Pray* with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

## VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

*Hand out* the preparation for the next gathering.