

Romans 11:26

"all Israel will be saved"

subject of much theological debate and interpretation.
key perspectives to consider, Scripture references

1. National Israel

One interpretation is that "all Israel" refers to the collective nation of Israel, meaning that there will be a future time when the majority of ethnic Jews will come to faith in Christ.

- **Scriptural Support:**

- **Romans 11:25-26:** "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved."
- **Zechariah 12:10:** "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

2. Spiritual Israel

Another interpretation is that "all Israel" refers to the spiritual Israel, which includes both Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Jesus Christ. This view sees "Israel" as the people of God, irrespective of ethnic background.

- **Scriptural Support:**

- **Romans 2:28-29:** "A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code."
- **Galatians 3:28-29:** "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

3. The Remnant View

A third interpretation is that "all Israel" refers to the remnant of Israel that has been chosen by grace. This remnant includes those Jews who have come to faith in Christ throughout history.

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- **Scriptural Support:**

- **Romans 11:5:** "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace."
- **Romans 9:27:** "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.'"

4. Combination View

Some scholars propose a combination of the above views, suggesting that "all Israel" includes both a future mass conversion of ethnic Jews and the inclusion of Gentiles who believe in Christ. This view sees a future fulfillment where a significant number of Jews will turn to Christ, completing the picture of God's people.

- **Scriptural Support:**

- **Romans 11:11-12:** "Again I ask: Did they 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. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!"
- **Ephesians 2:14-16:** "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility."

Conclusion

The phrase "all Israel will be saved" can be understood in various ways, each with its own scriptural backing. Whether it refers to a future national turning of ethnic Israel to Christ, the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles as spiritual Israel, or the remnant of believing Jews, the **overarching theme is God's faithfulness and the fulfillment of His redemptive plan**. Ultimately, this passage **highlights the mystery and depth of God's wisdom and mercy** (Romans 11:33-36).

Romans 11

Complicated Issues

1. The Concept of the Remnant

- **Issue:** Paul speaks of a "remnant chosen by grace" (Romans 11:5). This raises questions about the nature of God's election and the fate of the rest of Israel.
- **Explanation:** The idea of a remnant suggests that **not all of Israel is rejected, but only a portion is chosen by grace**. This highlights God's sovereignty and mercy, emphasizing that salvation is not based on works but on God's gracious choice (Romans 11:6).

2. Israel's Hardening and Gentile Inclusion

- **Issue:** Paul discusses a partial hardening of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in (Romans 11:25). This raises questions about the relationship between Israel and the Gentiles in God's plan.
- **Explanation:** The hardening of Israel is temporary and serves a purpose in God's redemptive plan. It allows for the inclusion of the Gentiles, which in turn is meant to provoke Israel to jealousy and ultimately lead to their salvation (Romans 11:11-12, 25-26).

3. "All Israel Will Be Saved"

- **Issue:** Paul states that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). This phrase is subject to various interpretations and raises questions about its meaning.
- **Explanation:** Some interpret "all Israel" to mean the collective nation of Israel, while others see it as referring to the remnant of believers within Israel. Another view is that it includes both Jews and Gentiles who are part of God's people through faith in Christ. The context suggests a future turning of Israel to faith in Christ (Romans 11:26-27).

4. The Olive Tree Metaphor

- **Issue:** The metaphor of the olive tree, with natural branches (Israel) and wild branches (Gentiles) being grafted in, raises questions about the continuity and discontinuity between Israel and the Church (Romans 11:17-24).
- **Explanation:** The olive tree represents the people of God. Natural branches (unbelieving Israel) were broken off due to unbelief, and wild branches (believing Gentiles) were grafted in. This metaphor illustrates

Romans 11

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the unity of God's people while maintaining the distinct roles of Jews and Gentiles in God's plan.

5. God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

- **Issue:** Romans 11 emphasizes God's sovereignty in election and hardening, which raises questions about human responsibility and free will (Romans 11:7-10, 25-32).
- **Explanation:** Paul balances God's sovereign choice with human responsibility. While God is sovereign in His election and hardening, individuals are still responsible for their response to God's grace. This tension is a mystery that Paul acknowledges but does not fully resolve (Romans 11:33-36).

6. The Role of the Law and Grace

- **Issue:** The chapter contrasts the law and grace, particularly in the context of Israel's pursuit of righteousness (Romans 11:6-10).
- **Explanation:** Paul emphasizes that the remnant is chosen by grace, not by works of the law. This underscores the New Covenant reality that righteousness comes through faith in Christ, not through adherence to the law (Romans 11:6, Galatians 2:16).

7. The Future of Israel

- **Issue:** The chapter raises questions about the future of Israel and its role in God's redemptive plan (Romans 11:11-32).
- **Explanation:** Paul envisions a future where Israel will turn to Christ and be saved. This future restoration is part of God's mysterious and sovereign plan, which includes both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 11:25-27).

Conclusion

Romans 11 is a profound and theologically rich chapter that addresses God's sovereignty, the interplay between Israel and the Gentiles, and the nature of salvation by grace. These complicated issues require careful study and a humble acknowledgment of the mystery of God's ways (Romans 11:33-36).

Section One - Romans 11:1-10

Discussion Questions

1. **God's Faithfulness:** How does Paul affirm that God has not rejected His people, Israel, in verse 1? What evidence does he provide?

- **Personal Evidence**

Romans 11:1 (NASB): "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

- **Paul's Own Identity:**

- **Paul's Heritage:** Paul identifies himself as an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, and from the tribe of Benjamin. By highlighting his own Jewish heritage, Paul serves as a living example that God has not rejected His people. If God had completely rejected Israel, Paul, as an Israelite, would not be an apostle and a recipient of God's grace.
- **Personal Testimony:** Paul's own conversion and calling as an apostle to the Gentiles demonstrate that God is still working through Israelites. His life and ministry are evidence that God has not abandoned His people.

- **Scriptural Evidence**

Romans 11:2-4 (NASB): "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.' But what is the divine response to him? 'I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'"

- **The Example of Elijah:**

- **Elijah's Plea:** Paul references the story of Elijah from 1 Kings 19:10-18. Elijah felt isolated and believed he was the only faithful person left in Israel, thinking that the nation had completely turned away from God.
- **God's Response:** God reassured Elijah that He had preserved a remnant of seven thousand men who had not bowed to Baal. This remnant was chosen by God's grace and served as evidence that God had not rejected His people entirely.

Section One - Romans 11:1-10

Discussion Questions

- **The Concept of the Remnant:**

Romans 11:5 (NASB): "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice."

- **Present-Day Remnant:** Paul draws a parallel between Elijah's time and his own, asserting that just as there was a remnant in Elijah's day, there is also a remnant in Paul's time. This remnant is chosen by grace, not by works, and serves as evidence that God has not rejected His people.

- **Conclusion**

Paul affirms that God has not rejected His people, Israel, by pointing to his own identity as an Israelite and by referencing the scriptural example of Elijah and the remnant. These pieces of evidence demonstrate that God's faithfulness to Israel continues, and His promises remain intact.

2. **The Remnant:** What does the concept of a "remnant chosen by grace" mean? How does this idea appear in the story of Elijah (1 Kings 19:10-18)?

- **Grace, Not Works:**

- **Grace:** The remnant is chosen by God's unmerited favor, emphasizing that their selection is not based on their adherence to the law or their own righteousness.
- **Not by Works:** Paul makes it clear that if the remnant were chosen based on works, it would nullify the concept of grace. Grace, by definition, is a gift that cannot be earned (Ephesians 2:8-9).

- **God's Sovereign Choice:**

- **Divine Election:** The remnant is a result of God's sovereign election. This underscores God's faithfulness to His promises and His ongoing plan for Israel, even when the majority of the nation is in unbelief.

- **Grace in the Story of Elijah- 1 Kings 19:10-18**

- The story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10-18 beautifully illustrates the concept of grace over works.
 - Elijah, feeling overwhelmed and defeated, retreats to Mount Horeb. He believes he is the only faithful prophet left and is ready to give up. However, God meets Elijah not with

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condemnation or demands for more effort, but with grace and gentle encouragement.

- First, God provides for Elijah's physical needs by sending an angel to give him food and water (1 Kings 19:5-8). This act of grace shows that God cares for Elijah's well-being, not just his prophetic duties.
- Then, God reveals Himself to Elijah not in the powerful wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-12). This signifies that God's presence and support are not contingent on dramatic displays or Elijah's works, but on God's grace and intimate relationship with him.
- Finally, God reassures Elijah that he is not alone. He informs him that there are still 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). This revelation is a grace-filled reminder that God's plans and support extend beyond Elijah's efforts and perceptions.

3. **Grace vs. Works:** Why is it significant that the remnant is chosen by grace and not by works (Romans 11:6)? How does this align with the overall message of the New Covenant (Ephesians 2:8-9)?

- **The fundamental nature of God's relationship with humanity under the new covenant.**
 - **God's Sovereignty and Initiative:**
 1. Salvation is entirely initiated by God and maintained by God.
 2. It is not something that can be earned by human effort.
 - **The Nature of Grace:**
 1. Grace, by definition, is unmerited favor. If the remnant were chosen based on works,
 2. it would no longer be grace. Romans 11:6
 - **Freedom from Legalism:**
 1. Paul is liberating believers from the burden of legalism. The law, including the Ten Commandments, was never intended to

