

KINGDOM.

LESSON 38

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God's kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] ISAIAH 55, 58, 59 and 61
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Isaiah 55, 58, 59 and 61).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [GOD'S RESOURCES] (2) PSALM 119:105
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Review two by two.

(2) God's Word: Psalm 119:105. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS] ROMANS 11:1-36
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study **Romans 11:1-36** together.

Romans 9 teaches that it never was God's purpose to save every individual in the natural nation of Israel (Romans 9:6; cf. Deuteronomy 7:6-10). It has always been God's purpose to save all those whom he in his sovereignty elected, that is, those who come to faith in him (Romans 9:11; cf. Acts 13:48; 2 Timothy 1:9-10).

Romans 10 explains why Israel as a nation failed. The Jews as a whole tried to be saved by their works of the law, instead of by faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation.

Romans 11 teaches that God's eternal purpose with (elected) Israel and with the (elected) Gentiles will certainly be fully accomplished. "The fullness of Israel" as well as "the fullness of the Gentiles" will certainly be saved!

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
LET US READ Romans 11:1-36 together.	
Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?	
<i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.	
<i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

11:1-24

Discovery 1. In God's plan of salvation there is a wonderful interaction between the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations.

(1) Romans 11:1-10 describes the election of a remnant of Israel (verse 5) and the hardening of the rest (verse 7)

The incomplete picture of the nation of Israel. The picture of the nation of Israel in the time of Paul is that it is a disobedient and stubborn nation. From this certain people concluded that God had *once for all* rejected (Greek: *apótheó*) (aorist) (verse 1) the nation of Israel and that the Gentile nations had *replaced* the nation of Israel. Paul shows that this picture is only partly true.

God has not rejected his people. Paul says that God has never rejected his own people. The expression “his own people” does not refer to the natural people of Israel, but to the natural people of Israel that have believed in the LORD and his Messiah. Proof that God had not rejected his people is:

- Paul himself was an Israelite
- Always in the past history of Israel God had reserved for himself “a remnant” that had not bowed down to idols (Romans 11:1-4; cf. Isaiah 1:9; Zachariah 13:7-9; Hebrews 3:11-12,18-19).
- Also in the first century A.D. there was “a remnant chosen by grace” (Romans 11:5) (cf. the thousands of Jews that came to faith in Christ in the Book of Acts)

All these “remnants” in every age of the past history together form “all Israel” that would be saved (Romans 11:26). Also in the future history God will continue to save Jews. In every period he causes “a remnant chosen by grace” to come into existence. Together these remnants form “the fullness of Israel” (Romans 11:12).

Already during the first century during the New Testament period a great number of Jews came to faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41,47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31,35,42; 14:1; 17:12) (cf. Romans 1:16; 3:30; 4:12; 5:18-19; 7:4; 9:6,24,27,29; 10:1,11-13,16).

In every age there is “a remnant” from the natural Jewish nation that will be saved. There is equal hope for Jews to be saved as for non-Jews! However, the whole natural nation of Israel will not be saved. “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved” (Romans 9:27)! Only at the end of the history of the world will the picture of God’s salvation plan be complete.

God has not chosen every Jew to be a part of his people. It is however also true that throughout the history of the nation of Israel, many Jews had hardened themselves against the God of the Bible. Consequently, God had hardened them (Romans 11:7-10)! That already happened:

- in the time of the prophet Moses (1527-1407 B.C.) (Deuteronomy 29:2-4)
- in the days of the prophet Elijah (845 B.C.) (1 Kings 18:18-21)
- in the days of the prophet Hosea (754 – 714 B.C.) (Hosea 1:6,9)
- in the days of the prophet Isaiah (740-680 B.C.) (Isaiah 1:9; 6:9-10; 8:14; 10:22)
- in the days of the prophet Jeremiah (627 – 550 B.C.) (Jeremiah 5:19,30-31)
- in the days of the prophet Zechariah (520 – 518 B.C.) (Zechariah 13:7-9)
- in the days of Jesus Christ (1st century A.D.) (John 1:11; 5:39-40)
- in the days of Stephen (Acts 7:51-53)
- and is still happening “to this very day” (Romans 11:8b).

In every age there are Jews who reject Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

Romans 11:9-10 emphasises the deserved punishment of people who harden themselves against God and his message.

The hardening of such people is not easy to understand.

On the one hand “hardening” means:

- that God in a sovereign manner withholds his electing grace from particular people (Romans 9:18)
- that people “fall away from God’s grace” (Galatians 5:4)
- that people “miss the grace of God” (Hebrews 12:15-16).

On the other hand “hardening” means:

- that God in a sovereign manner punishes the hardening of their hearts (their unbelief and disobedience) (cf. Romans 1:18,25,28; Hebrews 4:2,6).

Many Jews had hardened their hearts, not only against the prophets during the Old Testament period (Romans 10:21; Hebrews 3:7-11; Matthew 21:34-36), but also against Jesus Christ, his message and his fellow workers during the New Testament period (Matthew 12:2,7,10,14,24; 13:11-15; 21:43-45; Acts 7:51). These Jews tried to acquire (earn) righteousness (salvation) by their works of the law and therefore rejected to be justified by God’s grace and by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 9:30-33; Ephesians 2:8-9). So God chose to show his wrath and make his power known by hardening them (Romans 9:22,18)!

(2) Romans 11:11-15 describes the present interaction between the people of Israel and the non-Jewish nations.

Paul does not write about “the temporary hardening”, but about “the partial hardening” (Romans 11:26). The Jews did not stumble (Greek: ptaió) (aorist) so as to “fall” (from the state of grace beyond recovery) (Greek: piptó) (aorist, subjunctive), but because of the “transgression” (Greek: paraptóma) (unbelief) of the Jews salvation has come to the Gentiles. The conversion of non-Jews made Israel envious (Romans 11:11).

Paul speaks:

- not about the *definite* (permanent) hardening (or termination) of Israel as a Jewish nation (Romans 11:11)
- not about the *temporary* (interim) hardening of Israel as a Jewish nation (Romans 11:25)

- but about the *partial* hardening (Greek: *pórosis apo merous*) of Israel as a Jewish nation.

The expression does not mean that that God has permanently cast off (Greek: *apótheó*) (Romans 11:1) Israel and that Israel has no more future¹.

The expression also does not mean that God has temporarily hardened the Jewish nation and that in the future (in the period of “the Great Tribulation” shortly before the second coming) Israel (as a Jewish nation) would again be established².

The fall (from the state of grace) of Israel (as the Jewish nation) is not “permanent” and also not “temporary”, but “partial”! The believing remnant or rest of Israel (as people of God) (Romans 9:6b) has never been cast off by God!

The previous Bible passage (Romans 11:1-10) deal with “the election of a remnant” (Romans 11:5) (Greek: *leimma, limmatos, cf. limit*). “The rest” (Greek: *loipos*) of Israel (as the Jewish nation) has been hardened (Romans 11:7). Both “the remnant” and “the rest” are a part of the whole! Therefore the issue is not “a temporary hardening”, but “a partial hardening” of Israel (as the Jewish nation)! Also in all the non-Jewish nations only a part is chosen and the other part is not chosen (John 13:18; Romans 8:29-30,33; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:19).

This Bible passage (Romans 11:11-16) does not deal with a total rejection or a total acceptance of the Jewish nation, but deals with *the partial rejection and the partial acceptance of the Jewish nation!* It is not about a permanent or temporary fall, but about a partial fall! Because of “the transgression” (Greek: *paraptóma*) of the Jews “salvation” has come to the non-Jews in order to make the Jews envious (Romans 11:11). If this partial “transgression” (fall) and “defeat” (Greek: *hétéma*) of the Jews means riches for a part of the world of non-Jews, how much more (richness expressed in eternal life from the dead) will “the fullness” (Greek: *to pléróma*) (the full number) of elected Jews be (Romans 11:12)? If the partial “rejection” (Greek: *apobolé*) of the Jews also means “reconciliation” (Greek: *katallagé*) (with God) for a part of the world of Gentiles, how much more will “the acceptance” (Greek: *proslémpsis*) of the full number of elected Jews mean “a resurrection from eternal death to eternal life” (Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:14; Luke 15:24,32 and Ephesians 2:1,5; 5:14)?

The following Bible passage (Romans 11:17-24) deals with “the grafting in of only believing Jews (and believing non-Jews) into the Root (that is: into Jesus Christ) and the natural olive tree (that is, into his people or Church) (compare 1 Corinthians 12:13). The unbelieving Jews remain broken off from the olive tree.

The contrast between the partial rejection and the partial acceptance (Romans 11:12,15). The verse 12 and 15 in the original Greek have no verbs so that we would be able to differentiate between the present and the future tense. People may not assume that it is future! The context refers to the present and not to the future!

The previous context (Romans 11:1-10) and the following context (Romans 11:17-24) show that Paul is not speaking about future events in the end-time, but is speaking about events that take place in the present time, from the first coming of Christ the time of Paul) to the second coming of Christ (the end-time), when the ultimate fullness (or full number) of saved people from the natural nation of Israel (Romans 11:12,26) and from the natural nations of the non-Jews (Gentiles) (Romans 11:25) is reached.

Romans 11:25-26 clearly says that the ultimate full number of saved people from all nations in the world (including Israel) is reached at the same time! According to the Greek Dictionary (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Bauer, Arndt en Gingrich) the Greek words “kai outós” (Romans 11:26) may not be translated with “and thereafter” (an indication of time), but always with the words “and so (in this manner)” (an indication of manner). Just as the 7000 in the time of the prophet Elijah was “a remnant” (Romans 11:4), so (Greek: *outós*) the Deliverer came from Zion (Israel) to take godlessness away from Jacob at his first coming (John 4:22). Only a remnant of (the believers) were saved – the rest were hardened (Romans 11:26). So (Greek: *outós*) there is a remnant in the present time of the apostle Paul (Romans 11:5). So (Greek: *outós*) there is a part of saved Jews in every age until the full number of Jewish believers in Christ has been reached at the same time the full number of Gentile believers in Christ is reached. So (in this manner) (Greek: *outós*) “all Israel” is saved.

The word “all” (Greek: *pas*) does not refer to every Jew that has ever lived, but to all within the Jewish nation who have Jesus Christ as their Representative (cf. Romans 5:15-19) in stead of only Jacob!

¹ The definite or permanent hardening of the Jewish nation is taught by some people. They say that “Israel” (as God’s people) has been *replaced* by the Church (as God’s people). The replacement theory is not biblical! “Israel” (as God’s people) has not been *terminated* and has not been *replaced*, but is *continued* on a higher plane (the realities instead of the shadows, Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 9:8-10) and *extended (enlarged)* to include non-Jews who believe in Jesus Christ! Also the natural Jewish nation will continue until the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:34).

² “The *temporary hardening* of the nation of Israel” is a theory taught by dispensationalism. The so-called 5th dispensation (“the dispensation of the law”) was the period between Moses and Jesus. According to dispensationalism Jews could be justified by keeping the law. The so-called 6th dispensation (“the dispensation of grace or the dispensation of the Church”) is the present period between the first coming of Jesus Christ and the so-called first return of Christ (the parousia or the rapture of the Church)”. Then especially non-Jews are justified through God’s grace by faith in Jesus Christ, but the greatest majority of Jews remain hardened (through unbelief and disobedience). The so-called 7th dispensation (“the dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom”) is the period between the so-called second return of Jesus (the apokalupsis or revelation) to the so-called “judgement before the Great White Throne”. Then all Israel (as Jewish nation) will be saved and rule from Jerusalem over the present earth. Dispensationalism is not biblical!

The faith of Gentiles will make the Jews envious (Romans 11:13-14). Paul is proud of his present ministry as “apostle of the Gentiles”, because he is able to make the Jews envious and so hopes to save Jews (Romans 11:13; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22). Everywhere in the world and throughout history Jews will be saved if they do not continue their unbelief (Romans 11:23). Paul clearly says that Jews from the natural nation of Israel are “NOW” (in the time Paul lives) receiving God’s grace (Romans 11:30-31).

The wonderful salvation plan of God is that non-Jews are not saved without believing Jews and that Jews are not saved without believing non-Jews (Gentiles) (Romans 11:15)! The translation is as follows “If their rejection (is) the reconciliation of the world, what (is) their acceptance but life from the dead?” The partial rejection of the natural nation of Israel led to the “reconciliation” of (also only a part of) the natural nations of the world. Jesus Christ is since his first coming “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). The “world” here does not consist of all the people that have ever lived, but consists of all the elected Jews, all the elected Samaritans (half-Jews) and all the elected Gentiles (non-Jews).

The disobedience of a part of the Jewish nation has time and again led to the proclamation of the gospel by the rest of the Jews (for example, the apostles) to the Gentiles in the world, as Acts 13:44-48, 18:6 and 28:23-28 show. The result was that a part of the Gentiles (non-Jews) (and thus not all the Gentiles) in the world were brought to faith in Jesus Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ they are reconciled to God and by love reconciled to believing Jews in the natural nation of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6).

In the wonderful providence of God, the salvation of non-Jews (Gentiles) will every time provoke the envy of Jews (Romans 11:13-14) and in this way many Jews will also come to faith in Jesus Christ and be saved (Romans 11:31)³. God’s salvation plan is not postponed until the end-time (as dispensationalism teaches), but is already in progress since the first coming of Christ! Romans 11:12 and 15 refer to NOW in the present time and not to THEN in the future! The interaction between the Gentiles who become believers in Christ and Jews who become believers in Christ takes place NOW in the present time, as Romans 11:30-31 also clearly teaches!

When Jews hardened by their sins observe the great transformation in non-Jews when they come to faith in Jesus Christ, these Jews will become envious and also turn in faith to Jesus Christ. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:14), the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 15:24,32) and the apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:1,5; 5:14) call such a great change in the Jews who were formerly hardened by sins, nothing less than “life from the dead” (Romans 11:15)!

Thus, non-Jews (Gentiles) are not saved without believing Jews (among them Paul and the New Testament Scriptures they recorded) (cf. prophecies in Isaiah 49:22 and 66:18-19) and the Jews are not saved without the believing non-Jews (throughout the history of missions) (cf. prophecy in Isaiah 66:20-21 and the reality in Romans 11:31 and Revelation 3:9)!

(3) Romans 11:16-24 describes the grafting in into the Root (the Representative) only by faith.

In this Bible passage Paul especially addresses the non-Jewish Christians (cf. verse 13), so that they would not misunderstand or forget God’s salvation plan for the Jews (the members of his own race) (cf. verse 14).

God had established his covenant with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He said, I will be your God” and “You will be my people forever” The partial hardening of the Jewish nation (the descendants of the patriarchs) did not destroy God’s covenant with the rest of the believers in Israel.

The first fruits as the holy representative of the whole (Romans 11:16). Translation: “If the part of the dough offered as first fruits (Greek: aparché) (is) holy, then the whole batch (is) holy. If the root (Greek: riza) (is) holy, so (are) the branches. Both pictures explain the same truth: namely, the holy representative sanctifies (makes holy) everyone connected to it (cf. Jesus Christ as the Representative in Romans 5:17-19).

The Israelites processed the first fruits of the grain harvest into a dough, from which they made a cake and offered it as an offering from the threshing floor to the LORD (Numbers 15:17-21). Thus they offered their whole grain harvest to the LORD. “Holy” means “set apart from ordinary use in the world in order to be dedicated to the LORD). By doing this they dedicated the whole of their harvest to the LORD and regarded it as a gracious gift received from the LORD’s hand.

The root as the holy representative of the whole (Romans 11:17-21). As Adam is the representative of all his natural descendents, so Jesus Christ is the Representative of all his spiritual descendents, the believers) (Romans 5:15-19). Likewise also the root is the representative of all the branches connected to it. All the branches of a tree share in the life of the tree and its holiness (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30).

The tame olive tree is a highly productive tree and a picture of God’s covenant people, of whom the believing Jews form only the beginning (Jeremiah 11:16-17) and the believing non-Jews form the continuation and extension (Romans 11:24). The wild olive tree is one of the most worthless trees and a picture of the natural Gentile nations. The branches of the tame olive tree represent the individual believers in the God of the Bible within the natural nation of Israel. The branches of the wild olive tree represent the individual believers within the Gentile nations. The root of the olive tree is

³ Thus, it is NOT the so-called “revelation” of Jesus Christ THEN at his second coming that will bring Jews to Christ, (as dispensationalism teaches), but the proclamation of the gospel NOW and in every age will cause the envy of Jews and bring Jews to Jesus Christ (Romans 11:11,13-14)!

a picture of the believing patriarchs with whom God had made a covenant (Romans 11:28) and in the final analysis represents the Lord Jesus Christ himself, “the Root” of the covenant (Revelation 22:16).

- Jesus Christ is the one Shepherd of the one flock of sheep that came from the Jewish sheep pen and from the Gentile sheep pens (John 10:16)
- Jesus Christ is the only Foundation (of the Church) (1 Corinthians 3:10-11; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13)
- Jesus Christ is the Seed (of the covenant) (Galatians 3:16)!
- Jesus Christ is the Peacemaker who broke down the wall that brought division and hostility (the ceremonial law) between Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers and who created the two groups of believers into one new man or one Body (the Church) (Ephesians 2:11-22)
- Jesus Christ is the Guarantee (of the covenant) (Hebrews 7:22).
- Jesus Christ is also the Mediator (of the covenant) (Hebrews 8:6).

This Root supports not only the believing Jews, but also the believing Gentiles.

All branches that are connected to this holy root are genuine believers. They have been set apart from the world and their lives are dedicated to God (1 Peter 2:9-10), regardless whether they originally came from the tame olive tree or the wild olive tree. Individual non-Jews who believe in Jesus Christ are once for all “grafted in among” the individual Jews who believe in Jesus Christ⁴. By faith “they share in the nourishing sap from the olive root” (Romans 11:17)⁵. By faith they are grafted into the Body of Jesus Christ, the Head, and they are on complete equal footing a part of God’s covenant people. But individual Jews and non-Jews that do not believe in Jesus Christ are broken off and thrown outside God’s covenant people (cf. Matthew 8:11-12; 21:42-44; cf. John 15:6).

The Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Jesus Christ are on complete equal footing united in the Root, Jesus Christ “There is no difference between Jew and Gentile” (Romans 10:12-13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-18; 3:2-6; Colossians 3:11-12). Believing Jews and believing non-Jews are baptised by one Spirit into the Body of Christ (the Church) (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:13; 2:11-22; 3:2-6).

During the Old Testament period God’s covenant people initially consisted of believers from the natural nation of Israel together with some non-Jewish believers (Isaiah 56:3-8). During the New Testament period God’s covenant people consisted of believers from all the nations in the world, including Jews (Romans 1:16; Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Peter 2:9-10). In the New Testament, God’s covenant people is also known as “the kingdom of God” or “the Body of Christ” (that is, the one universal Church).

De sternness of God and the kindness of God (Romans 11:22-24). All Jews that belong to the natural nation of Israel, but do not keep God’s requirement for the covenant, namely, faith in Jesus Christ, will not be saved, not now and also not in the future (the end-time)! This is the sternness of God. And all Jews who do not persist in their unbelief will be saved for ever. This is the kindness of God. This sternness and kindness of God towards the natural nation of Israel (cf. Jeremiah 18:5-12) is exactly the same as God’s sternness and kindness towards all the natural non-Jewish nations in the world (John 3:16-18,36).

The believers in the Gentile nations must not forget that God’s covenant people began with the believers in the natural nation of Israel (Romans 1:16; cf. Matthew 10:5-6). But since the first coming of Christ he has continued and extended his covenant people by including the believers in Jesus Christ from all the nations in the world (cf. Matthew 28:19).

The absolute determining principle by which people are grafted into God’s covenant (kingdom, Church), is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ⁶. Only through faith in Jesus Christ are Jews and non-Jews grafted into God’s covenant people, together with the patriarchs and all the blessings of the covenant (Galatians 3:26-29; Hebrews 11:6).

Therefore, “there is no difference between Jew and Gentile”. ... Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:12-13)!

⁴ Greek: egkentrizó en autois. Not: “in their place” (replacement theory), but “among them”, thus they occupy a place of completely equal value in the olive tree (God’s covenant people) and in the Root (Jesus Christ) (Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6). The Greek-English Lexicon, page 215.

⁵ Dispensationalism teaches that the Church is grafted onto the Jewish nation of Israel and that the Jewish nation is the actual people of God. But Romans 11 teaches clearly that the believing Gentiles (non-Jews) that have been grafted in the olive tree share in the nourishing sap of the Root! The olive tree is NOT a picture of the Jewish nation of Israel, but a picture of God’s people that consists of believing Jews and believing non-Jews. And the Root is NOT a picture of the Jewish patriarch Jacob, but a picture of Jesus Christ, the Lord of both the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. The New Testament Church is therefore NOT grafted onto the Jewish nation, but onto the Messiah, Jesus Christ! Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers are both baptised by one Spirit (of Jesus Christ) into the one Body (of Jesus Christ) (1 Corinthians 12:13)! Don’t forget that the TRUE ISRAEL is NOT the Jewish nation, but “the Servant of the LORD”, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 49:3,6)! All who boast in the cross of Jesus Christ and are a new creation, are “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:14-16 in contrast to unbelieving Jews who are called “Israel according to the flesh”) (Greek: Israel kata sarka) (1 Corinthians 10:18).

⁶ Hebrews 11:6-8,21-27. Non-Jews (Noah and Abraham) and Jews (Jacob, Joseph, Moses) are only saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Jews are NOT saved by the so-called revelation of Christ at his second coming! The letter to the Hebrews has precisely been written to Jews who believe in Jesus Christ!

11:25-32

Discovery 2. In God's plan of salvation the full number of elected Gentiles and the full number of elected Jews will be reached at the same time.

Romans 11:25-32 explains the relationship between “the fullness of the Gentiles” and “the fullness of Israel”. The word “mystery” means a truth that was previously hidden during the Old Testament period, but in the mean time has been revealed in the New Testament. The mystery is that the believing Jews and the believing non-Jews are together God's heirs, that the salvation of the Jews and the salvation of the non-Jews are mutually dependent and that the full number of the elected believers from the Gentiles and from the Jews will be reached simultaneously at the second coming.

(1) The mystery is that the believing non-Jews (Gentiles) are equally heirs with the believing Jews.

The mystery about which Paul speaks in verse 25 is the unfolding of plan of God's salvation in the New Testament. In this plan of salvation a complete new relationships between believing Jews and believing Gentiles is explained.

The mystery in Romans 11:25 is related to the mystery in Ephesians 3:2-6. What the Old Testament prophets did not know, was revealed to the New Testament apostles. God revealed to them that his plan of salvation included not only believing Jews, but also believing non-Jews (Gentiles) (cf. Acts 10:24-25). The believing non-Jews (Gentiles) and the believing Jews would together be:

- “the one flock of the one Shepherd”, Jesus Christ (John 10:16)
- “members of one and the same Body” of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)
- “the temple of God” (2 Corinthians 6:16)
- “heirs in God's covenant people” (Galatians 3:27-29)
- “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:14-16)
- created to “one new man” in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14-18)
- “sharers of the promises in the Bible” (Ephesians 3:2-6; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20)
- “the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

See “A comparison between the expressions used for the people of God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament” in DOTA manual 11, lesson 34, Romans 9:4-9, question 1.

(2) The mystery is the mutual dependence on the salvation of non-Jews and the salvation of Jews.

Romans 11:11-15 emphasises the essence of the divine mystery, namely, “the mutual dependence on the salvation of non-Jews and the salvation of Jews.” It refers to the wonderful series of events that resulted in the salvation of Gentile believers and Jewish believers. In Romans 11:26 the “true Israel” consists of believers in Jesus Christ that have not been rejected by God!

(3) The mystery is that the full number of believing non-Jews (Gentiles) and the full number of believing Jews will be reached simultaneously.

In Romans 11:25-26 Paul emphasises that the mystery is that the fullness of the Gentiles and the fullness of Israel will be reached simultaneously at the end of history at the second coming of Christ. “God had planned something better for us (that is, the New Testament believers), so that only together with us would they (the Old Testament believers) be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:40)

“All Israel” (Romans 11:26) or “the fullness of Israel” (Romans 11:12) must wait for “the fullness of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:25), before Israel (as a believing Jewish nation) will again appear as a part of people of God (cf. Revelation 21:3, “they will be his peoples” - plural). Now the picture of Israel (as Jewish nation) is unrecognizable, because Israel (as a Jewish nation) is divided (between believers and unbelievers) and has apparently seems rejected. Paul says that this picture of Israel (as a Jewish people) is both “partial” and “temporary”.

When “the fullness of the Gentiles” (the full number of elect believers among the Gentiles) is reached, “the fullness of Israel” (the full number of elect believers among the Jews) will also be revealed! The mystery is that *the partial hardening* of the natural nation of Israel (the Jewish people) remains to the end-time. Only at the end-time the true Israel as the people of God (the Jewish nation that believes in Jesus Christ) consisting of the full number of elected believers from the natural nation of Israel (Romans 9:6) will be fully revealed. This will happen simultaneously with the fullness of the Gentiles, which consists of the full number of elected believers from the natural Gentile nations.

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 1:1-17 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

11:26

Question 1. What is the meaning of the words “all Israel”?

Notes.

(1) The relationship between Romans 11:25 and Romans 11:26.

“The salvation of all Israel” is not the contents of “the mystery”, but it is the result of “the mystery”. The mystery reveals that the mutual dependence between the partial rejection of the natural people of Israel and the salvation of the fullness of the Gentile believers is the way in which the salvation of “all Israel” (Greek: pas Israel) or “the fullness” (Greek: to plérōma) of Israel” (Romans 11:12) will come into being.

The view that “the mystery” is *the salvation of all (natural) Israel* is wrong.

(2) The expression “all Israel” cannot be extended to include all the people who throughout the ages have belonged to the natural nation of Israel.

This (wrong) view thinks that the word “all” (Greek: pas) always means all people without any exception. They thereby teach *universal salvation of all Jews* that have ever lived. This view does not take into account the fact that the word “pas” in Romans 5:17-19 clearly refers to “all people bound to their representative” and not “all people that have ever lived”! God says about unbelieving Jews, “You are not my people (Hebrew: lo ammi) and I am not your God” (Hosea 1:9)!

In the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament God rejects unbelieving and disobedient Jews (and non-Jews) (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 8:12; Hebrews 4:2,6). A person (a Jew) only becomes (and remains) (perfect tense) a “sharer” (Greek: metochos) of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:14) or of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:4) “if” he holds (Greek: katechó) (subjunctive, aorist tense) the beginning of his conviction (confidence, assurance) (Greek: arché tés hupostaseós) firmly till the end (Hebrews 3:14). From a human point of view, the perseverance of a believer is manifested in his persistent faithfulness. Unbelievers are forever lost (John 3:16). In Romans 9:27 Paul definitely excludes universal salvation: “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.”

The view that “all Israel” refers to *all Jews that have ever lived*, is wrong.

(3) The expression “all Israel” cannot be limited to the people of Israel in the end-time.

This (wrong) view thinks that “*a temporary hardening*” has come over all Israel as a Jewish nation) since the first coming of Christ till shortly before the second coming of Christ (thus, during the greatest part of the so-called 6th dispensation, the dispensation of the Church). This so-called period of temporary hardening of Israel will be the so-called “gap” or “interim period” between the so-called 69th and 70th week in Daniel 9:24-27. But see the explanation of the Book of Daniel in www.deltacourse.org Delta Plus study 15. Only at the so-called “rapture of the Church” (“the coming”) (Greek: parousia) of Christ before the beginning or in the middle of the so-called Great Tribulation (the so-called 70th week of Daniel) shortly before “the revelation” (Greek: apokalypsis)⁷ of Christ God will resume his delayed programme for the salvation of Israel and begin the so-called “salvation of the whole Jewish nation” (Greek: pas Israel).

This view does not take into account the fact that already during the Old Testament period many Jews believed: besides Abraham, the Hebrew (Genesis 14:13; 15:6), the Amorite (Ezekiel 16:3,45), also the Jewish heroes of faith from the Old Testament period (Hebrews 11:1-40), the Jews who converted during the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:2,6), the 7000 in the time of the prophet Elijah who did not bow down before Baal (1 Kings 19:18) and the remnant in the time of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 1:9; 28:16).

This view also does not take account of the fact that in the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles many Jews believed: for example, the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:15), the 3000 who believed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the 5000 men who believed the message (Acts 4:4), the Jews who “daily were being saved” (Acts 2:47; 6:7), the thousands that believed in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20) and “in this present time (57 A.D. when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans) “a remnant chosen by grace” (Romans 11:5), at Galatia (Galatians 3:28), at Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:13), at Rome (Romans 1:16), at Ephesus (Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6), at Colossae (Colossians 3:11), etc. (Revelation 1:12-13).

The view that “all Israel” refers to *the Jewish nation in the end-time*, is wrong.

(4) The expression “all Israel” does not refer to the natural nation of Israel, that is to say, Paul makes no Jewish nationalistic statement.

Romans 9:6 teaches that “not all who are descended from Israel are (true) Israel”! Throughout chapter 9 the apostle Paul opposes the nationalistic picture of Israel. Natural Jews are not “the true Israel” or “the children of God” because of their birth from natural Jewish parents. Jews (and non-Jews) become “children of God” and “citizens of true Israel” only through rebirth (Romans 2:28-29), through God’s sovereign promise, election, calling, love, and mercy (Romans 9:6-18). Jesus Christ said to the Jews, “Unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God”, “and cannot

⁷ The word “parousia” in Matthew 24:29-31 and the word “apokalypsis” in Luke 17:30-35 show clearly that there will be no two second comings (one for the Church and one with the Church) (separated by 3½ or 7 years), but only one second coming! Both Bible passages teach that Christians will go through the Great Tribulation!

enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3,5). Jews must not be surprised at Christ saying, “You must be born again” (John 3:8)!

The view that “all Israel” refers to *all natural Jews that have ever lived*, is wrong.

(5) The expression “all Israel” refers to “the full number” or “fullness” of the elect believers from among the Jews throughout salvation history.

It does not refer to Jews who in the end-time would “fulfil” (derived from Greek: pléroó) the required righteousness of God in one or another way in contrast to their “transgression” (Greek: paraptóma) (unbelief) and “defeat” (failure) (Greek: héttéma) in the past (Romans 11:11-16).

It is a reference to “the full number” (Greek: to pléróma) of Jews that will be saved. This number is arrived by adding together all the remnants of Jewish believers in every age of world history, for example:

- “the remnant” in the time of Elijah (1 Kings 19:18)
- “the remnant” in the time of Isaiah (Isaiah 1:9; 2:4; Romans 9:27)
- “the little flock” of disciples in the time of Jesus Christ (Luke 12:32)
- that will nevertheless be “many in Israel” (Luke 2:34; cf. Acts 2:41,47; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31)
- “the remnant” in the time of Paul (Romans 11:5)
- and the following “remnants in every age” (Romans 11:23) until the second coming (Matthew 10:23).

Paul is not concerned with the greatness of the number of Jews that will be saved, but rather with the fact that there will always be Jews who will belong to God’s covenant people. Nevertheless, Revelation 7:9 speaks about, “a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language” and this includes many Jews who believe in Jesus Christ.

11:26

Question 2. When will “all Israel” be saved?⁸

Notes.

(1) Romans 11:23 is not a prophetic statement that all (natural) Jews will be saved.

What Paul has in mind in Romans 11:11-12, is not the salvation of the whole natural nation of Israel in the end-time, but the salvation of the full number of elected Jews throughout salvation history until the end-time.

Romans 11:11,14 says that the natural people of Israel must NOW in the present time (that is, from the first coming of Christ) be provoked to envy, so that a remnant of elected Jews may NOW (that is, from the first coming of Jesus onwards) be saved. That was exactly what the apostle Paul was doing in his ministry among the non-Jews (Romans 11:30-31).

Thus, what belongs to “all Israel” at the second coming is brought about throughout the ages by the proclamation of the gospel to non-Jews (Gentiles) and Jews alike. “The gospel is a power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentiles” (Romans 1:16). See the commission of Jesus to the apostles *at the beginning* of his ministry on earth: first to the Jews (Matthew 10:5-6) and then his commission to the apostles *at the end* of his ministry on earth: also to the Gentiles (Matthew 28:19)!

If the “rejection” (Greek: apobolé) of many Jews during the Old Testament period until the first coming of Jesus Christ led to the “reconciliation” (Greek: katallagé) of many non-Jews in the world, then the “acceptance” (Greek: proslémpsis) of many Jews through the proclamation of the gospel until the second coming of Jesus Christ will lead to “a life from the dead” (Greek: zóe ek nekrón) (Romans 11:15). This is a reference to the many Jews in the condition of spiritual death that will receive eternal life. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:14), the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 15:24,32) and the apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:1,5; 5:14) call such a great transformation in the former sin hardened Jews nothing less than “a life from the dead” (Romans 11:15)!

This cannot be a reference to “the conversion of all Jews that ever lived” and also cannot be a reference to “the so-called Millennial Kingdom” on this earth in which Jews would have the leadership, Jewish missionaries would bring an uncountable number of non-Jews to faith in Christ and would bring the greatest possible blessings to earth.”, because according to the adherents of dispensationalism, this event (the fullness of Israel) would only take place after “the fullness of the Gentiles” has taken place and then there would no longer be Gentiles that could or would come to faith!

⁸ The translation of Romans 11:25-26, “a partial hardening (Greek: pórósis apo merous) has come over (Greek: ginomai) (perfect tense) Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles have come in, and so (Greek: kai houtós) all Israel will be saved”, is absolutely correct: the original Greek text, English translations (KJV, NASB, NIV), Dutch translations (SV, BBG, KBS, HSV), South African translation (NAV), Danish and other translations (Greek Lexicon of Bauer, Arndt en Gingrich.)

But the translation “a temporary hardening has come over Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles have come in, and thereafter or then all Israel will be saved, is wrong! This translation is derived from dispensationalism and occurs in some Bible translations following some American translations (the Living Bible and Good News for Modern Man).

Romans 11:23 says, “Also they (that is, Jews) will be grafted in if they do not persist in unbelief, for God is able to graft them in again.” This verse is NOT a prophetic statement that “the whole natural nation of Israel in the end-time “would not persist in their unbelief!

What Paul does say, is that Jews and non-Jews will only be grafted into the Root, Jesus Christ, when they fulfil the condition of a personal faith in Jesus Christ. In this manner non-Jews and Jews are being grafted into the olive tree and form together the one people of God (John 10:16) or one Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The principle, namely that people are only saved through their faith after they have heard the gospel, is true during all the ages in world history. This is clearly taught in Romans 10:14-17 and also in Ephesians 1:13. Paul sees no other way in which Jews are being saved than through the proclamation of the gospel in the present time and through Jews responding to it with a personal faith.

(2) Romans 11:26 means not “a temporary hardening of Israel and thereafter salvation of all Israel”.

In verse 25 and 26 Paul does NOT say “a *temporary* hardening has come over Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles have come in *and thereafter* all Israel will be saved.” Paul does NOT imply that after the period in which the Gentiles have entered the kingdom of God, there would be an *interim period* (for example, “the Great tribulation”) in which the Jewish nation would be saved. Nowhere in the Bible is suggested that there would be an interim period between the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God and the end of the world. Also nowhere in the Bible is it suggested that the whole Jewish nation would come to faith at the second coming of Christ. The final end for both Gentiles and Jews will come simultaneously (Matthew 13:37-43; 24:21-31; 25:31-33; 2 Peter 3:7-13; Revelation 20:11-15)!

(3) Romans 11:26 means “a partial hardening of Israel and so (in this manner) salvation of all Israel”.

The words in the original text of verse 25 can only be translated with “a partial hardening” (Greek: *pórosis apo merous*) “has come over Israel (and still exists)” (Greek: *tó Israel gegonen*) (perfect tense). The perfect tense shows that this partial hardening of the Jews remains until the second coming of Christ!

The words in the original text of verse 26 can only be translated with “and so (in this manner)” (Greek: *kai houtós*) and not with: “and thereafter (then)”. Because Jews had hardened themselves against Christ, Christ went to the non-Jews (the Gentiles) (for example, Acts 13:45-51); and because non-Jews came to faith, Jews were provoked to envy and in this manner also came to faith in Christ).

Israel goes through a period of partial (and therefore not total) hardening in the time when many non-Jews (and therefore not all non-Jews) come to faith and enter the kingdom of God. Thus in this same time there is a part of Jews (the remnant) who have not been hardened and this remnant of the Jewish nation also enter the kingdom of God! Paul does not speak about *the moment* the Jews are being saved, but about *the manner* in which the Jews are being saved. Jews are being saved already NOW (that is, from the first coming of Christ) until the second coming of Christ.

He says that the mutual dependence between the partial hardening of the natural nation of Israel and the salvation of the full number of believers out of the Gentile nations is the manner in which God will also save the full number of Israel! The moment when the full number of Jewish believers is reached, will coincide with the moment the full number of Gentile believers is reached! This will NOT happen before or after that!

The history of salvation between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ is parallel for non-Jews and Jews. The way of salvation is exactly the same for non-Jews and Jews (Romans 10:12-13)! God’s covenant during the Old Testament period already included non-Jews (Gentiles) (Genesis 12:3; cf. Isaiah 56:3-8). But God’s covenant demands faith from Jews and non-Jews (Romans 1:16; 11:23). The Bible teaches clearly that in all the ages Jews and non-Jews who do not believe, will not be saved (Romans 2:9; Matthew 8:11-12; 21:42-44). And the Bible teaches clearly that in all the ages Jews and non-Jews who do believe in Jesus Christ form *one organism*, which is symbolised as follows:

- one flock of Christ (John 10:16)
- one family of God (Galatians 3:26-29)
- one new man, one household of God, one dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11-22)
- one Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 3:6)
- one olive tree (Jeremiah 11:16-17; Romans 11:17-24)
- one chosen and holy people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10).
- one New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9-14, cf. Hebrews 12:22-24 for Jews, Galatians 4:21-31 for non-Jews).

The partial salvation of both non-Jews and Jews will continue throughout the ages in world history until the second coming of Christ. Only at the second coming of Christ the fullness (full number) of elected believers from the Gentiles and the fullness (full number) from elected believers from the Jews will be reached simultaneously.

Also the opportunity for non-Jews and for Jews to be saved will be ended simultaneously before the second coming of Christ. At the second coming of Christ no one can or will come to faith, because at the second coming of Christ the door will be closed and no one thereafter will be able to enter the kingdom (Matthew 25:10-13)!

At the second coming of Christ the natural nation of Israel (the Jewish nation) will NOT be converted, because the prophecy in the Old Testament (Zachariah 12:10) is not being fulfilled at the second coming of Christ, but has according to the New Testament revelation (John 19:18,37) *already been fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus Christ!*

Moreover, Jesus says to Jews that they will not come to faith in another way than non-Jews. “You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again! Whoever does not believe, stands condemned already ... Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:7,18,36)!

11:26-27

Question 3. How must the prophecies in Romans 11:26-27 be viewed?

Notes.

(1) These prophecies in the Old Testament refer to the first coming of Jesus Christ.

The written Old Testament prophecies that are quoted in Romans 11:26-27, refer to the salvation of believers in Israel at the first coming of Christ. The task of the Messiah-Saviour would be to turn godlessness away from Jacob. In Romans 11:26b Paul does not quote one specific Bible verse from the Old Testament, but makes *one summary quotation* of a few Old Testament Bible verses.

During his first coming the Messiah-Saviour would:

- come from Zion (Greek: ek Zion) (that is, from Judah) (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6).
- come to Zion (Hebrew text from Isaiah 59:20; cf. Matthew 10:5-8).
- come for (the sake of) Zion and turn godlessness away from Jacob (Greek text of Isaiah 59:20).
- make a covenant with them. “This is my covenant with them” (Isaiah 59:21).

(2) These prophecies were already fulfilled during the first coming of Christ.

What was prophesied in the Old Testament quotations will NOT be fulfilled in the end-time, because it has ALREADY been fulfilled at the first coming of Christ. The Messiah-Saviour:

- was born in Bethlehem and therefore came from Zion (Israel) (Matthew 2:6; John 4:22).
- was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, but they did not receive (welcome) him (Matthew 15:24; John 1:11).
- came for Israel, “to save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21; 10:6; Luke 19:10; Galatians 4:4-5), but many “turned back and no longer followed him” (John 6:66).
- he made a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:6-13), but the house of Israel did not remain in the covenant, “so he turned away from them” (Hebrew 8:9).

These prophecies show that the salvation of Israel would not be a salvation or deliverance from one or another earthly enemy (for example, the Romans in the time of Jesus, or the antichrist or his army in the end-time) (Revelation 19:19), but *a salvation or deliverance from their godlessness and sins!* In these prophecies the Old Testament prophets thought about what Jesus Christ would do at his first coming (1 Peter 1:9-12) and not about what Jesus Christ would do at his second coming!

At his second coming Jesus Christ would “not come from Zion on the earth, but from heaven” (Greek: ap’ ouranou) (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 19:11). And at his second coming salvation from godlessness and forgiveness of sins would no longer be possible! “All the nations of the earth will mourn” because they will no longer be able to convert (Matthew 24:30,39-41,50-51; Matthew 25:10-13,30,41-46; Revelation 6:12-17).

Paul does not deviate from his theme in the letter to the Romans, namely, “the justification by faith only”. In Romans chapter 9-11 he points out that justification by faith was *historical*:

- *During the Old Testament period* Jews were justified by faith only (Romans 4:1-8; 9:25 to 10:8; 10:16-18).
- *During the New Testament period* (the period in which Jesus and Paul lived) Jews were justified by faith only (Mark 1:14-15; John 3:16,18,36; 6:29,40; Romans 10:9-15).
- *Throughout all the subsequent centuries* until the second coming of Christ, Jews will be justified by faith only (Romans 11:23,26-27). Also for Jews there is no other way to be saved! “The gospel is a power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew (Matthew 10:5-6; Acts 17:1-4), then for the Gentiles” (Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:19; Acts 13:46-47).
- *And at the second coming of Christ* Jews (the natural nation of Israel) will NOT convert and be saved. The New Testament revelation teaches clearly that this prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 (520-518 B.C.) (“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 ...”) does NOT refer to the second coming of Christ, but to the first coming of Christ: to his crucifixion (John 19:37), the distress and sorrow of people (Luke 23:48-49; John 20:11; Acts 2:37), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:16-17) and the prayers of Christians (Acts 4:23-31; 12:5,12)!

That is why the gospel must NOW be proclaimed, also to the Jews, so that they will be able to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. “NOW is the time of God’s favour; NOW is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). That is what the

apostles did: they proclaimed the gospel to Jews and called them to repentance (Acts 2:14,38; 3:12,19; 4:8-12; 5:14,20,28; 6:7; 8:4; etc.). And that is what Christians today must also do.

11:28

Question 4. How must the Jews be regarded as “enemies” and as “loved”?

Notes. The people that constitute the full number of elect believers in Israel (“the fullness of Israel”) are on the one hand considered as “enemies” and on the other hand as “loved”. The context (Romans 11:30-31) shows that Paul is not speaking of “the natural nation of Israel” (whom some people regard as “beloved” of God). He is speaking of “all people within the natural nation of Israel that constitutes the true Israel”, that is, about all the Jews who believe in Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 9:6). God continues “to hate” (that is, not choose) Jews (and non-Jews) (Romans 9:13) who do wrong, continue to reject God and love violence (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:13; cf. Psalm 5:6; 11:5).

In Romans 11:28 the “enemies” and the “loved” ones are one and the same group of people. As happens again and again in the history of the world, the people in this group are initially “enemies” of Christ, of the gospel and of Christians. But when God began to show mercy to the non-Jews, these “enemies” also turned to Jesus Christ and became “loved” ones to Christ and to Christians.

The same is true for the non-Jews. When the Gentiles were still “enemies”, they were reconciled with God through the death of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9-11). As chosen, called and justified people, they have now become “loved” ones (Romans 8:30-39). Also the apostle Peter speaks of people who “once were not a people, but now are the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The former “enemies” are called “loved” after their conversion “on account of the patriarchs”, that is, because God fulfilled his promise to the patriarchs, he will also fulfil his promise to the believing descendants of the patriarchs (Genesis 22:17-18; Galatians 3:29). Compare the life of the apostle Paul as “enemy” before his conversion (Acts 26:9-11) with his life as “loved” one after his conversion (Acts 26:19-23).

11:29

Question 5. How must the statement: “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” be understood?

Notes. The words cannot refer to God’s love for the natural nation of Israel. It cannot refer to the explanation of some people who say that God initially throughout the ages tolerated the hardness of the hearts of all the Jews (while at the same time he allowed the hardened non-Jews to perish) in order in the end-time to save all the Jews. This explanation conflict with the statement of Jesus to Jews: “You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again! Whoever does not believe, stands condemned already *and remains condemned* (present continuous tense). ... Whoever rejects the Son, will *certainly* not see life, for God’s wrath remains *continually* on him” (present continuous tense). (John 3:7,18,36).

The Bible teaches that there will not be a second chance to be saved, not for Jews and also not for Gentiles. The Bible teaches that Jesus said to the Jews, “Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom (the descendents of the Jews) will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:11-12). “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you (that is, from the Jews who reject Jesus Christ) and given to a people who will produce its fruit” (that is, to the New Testament people of God that consist of Jews and non-Jew who believe in Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:42-44).

(1) God’s irrevocable calling.

The word “irrevocable” (Greek: ametamelétos) means not only that God will “have no remorse with regard to the people he has chosen and called, but also that God will “not recall” (“not withdraw”) his election, calling, justification or glorification (Romans 8:29-30,33)⁹!

Romans chapter 9 says: God’ election with regard to certain privileges he has given to the natural nation of Israel (Romans 9:4-5) is not the same as God’s election unto salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:9-10)! The calling of God is ALWAYS effective, because God’s calling is based on his election and always leads to justification and glorification of the people he has elected (Romans 8:29-30; 9:11)!

God’s calling does not only refer to the outward proclamation of the gospel by Christians, but also to the inward and always effective calling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of people. This happens through the proclamation of the gospel by Christians (cf. Romans 1:5-7) and always leads to acquiring the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)! God’s calling is thus always “irrevocable” – it will never be revoked (recalled, withdrawn)! Because both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak about a part of the Jews that remain unbelievers and disobedient, God’s calling can only refer to his calling of the elected (chosen) part of the Jews within the natural nation of Israel.

⁹ Greek Lexicon of Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich.

God never withdraws his calling of the elected believing Jews and the elected believing non-Jews. Jesus Christ had promised, “I give them (that is, my sheep) *eternal* life, and they shall *never* perish; *no one* can snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given to me (that is, the sheep), are more excellent than all (the other creatures). And no one can snatch them (the flock) out of my Father’s hand (John 10:28 and the correct translation of verse 29). This is a fourfold assurance of eternal life!

(2) God’s irrevocable gifts.

Likewise God’s gifts are “irrevocable” God never takes them away. These gifts can however not refer to the special privileges of the natural nation of Israel (Romans 9:4-5), because these gifts have gone into fulfilment at the first coming of Jesus Christ. After the first coming of Christ, “the Gentile believers have become heirs together with the Jewish believers (of God’s Old Testament people en sharers together of the promise) (Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20).

“The gifts” then refer to God’s special gifts as:

- the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 15:7-11)
- faith (Acts 13:48; Philippians 1:29; 2 Peter 1:1)
- hope, love (Romans 5:5)
- peace that passes all understanding (Galatians 5:22; Philippians 4:6-7)
- eternal life (John 10:28), etc.

These are all gifts which the Holy Spirit does not give to unbelievers and disobedient people (Acts 5:32), but only to his elected believers (Ephesians 1:3).

In Romans 11:30-31 Paul illustrates how these irrevocable gifts and calling turn out in the elected Gentiles and elected Jews throughout history.

11:32

Question 6. How must the statement “God has bound all of them over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them” be understood?

Notes.

Romans 11:32 says, “For God has *once for all* (aorist) imprisoned (closed/locked up together) (Greek: sunkleió) them all (Greek: tous pantas) in disobedience, in order that he may have mercy on them all”. He put them all in a position where they were compelled (by their sinful nature) to be disobedient” or “he has given them all over to disobedience (cf. Romans 1:24,26,28).

The verse begins with the word: “for” and summarises the passage Romans 11:25-32. It deals with “all people” in “the fullness of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:25) and in “all Israel” (Romans 11:26) or in “the fullness of Israel” (Romans 11:12).

Just as the word “all” (Greek: pas) in Romans 5:18 must be explained in terms of its context (Romans 5:17), so the word “all” in Romans 11:32 must be explained in terms of its context (Romans 11:25-32).

Paul does not speak of “all people from the natural Gentile nations” and also not about “all people from the natural Jewish nation of Israel.” He does not speak of “universal salvation” that says that all people that ever lived will ultimately be saved. He speaks of “all elected believers from among the Gentile nations (“the fullness of the Gentiles”) and about “all elected believers from among the Jews” (“all Israel”). All these people were in their natural unregenerate state:

- locked up in the prison of disobedience (Romans 11:32; Ephesians 2:2)
- sinners (Romans 3:23)
- no one by nature righteous (Romans 3:10)
- doomed (Romans 5:18).

Here the word “all” is *universal*!

But through the proclamation of the gospel the righteousness of God has been *given* to:

- all Jews and non-Jews who believe in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17)
- all people have *received* God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness (Romans 3:24; 5:17-18)

Here the word “all” is *limited* to the elect believers, those who through faith are bound to Jesus Christ!

Note the words of Paul: “Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel” (Romans 9:6).

- The first “Israel” is universal: “the Israel according to the flesh” (Greek: Israel kata sarx), natural Israel, the Jewish nation (1 Corinthians 10:18).
 - But the second Israel is limited to “the Israel of God” (Greek: Israel tou theou), the elect believers in Jesus Christ who are a new creation in Christ (Galatians 6:14-16).
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11:33-36

Question 7. What does Paul say in his doxology?

Notes. Romans 11:33-36 is a doxology. By thinking about God's plan of salvation, Paul bursts out in praise over God's unfathomable wisdom and knowledge.

(1) Paul thinks especially of Romans 11:25-26 and Romans 11:30-32.

These verses reveal "the mutual dependence of the salvation of the believing Gentiles and the salvation of the believing Jews. These verses also reveal that God will glorify himself in this combined "fullness" of saved gentiles and saved Jews.

(2) Paul acknowledges that the God of the Bible is the Source of salvation.

From God. God is the Designer of the plan of salvation. He has elected all who believe in Jesus Christ to belong to him (Romans 8:29-30).

Through God. God is the Implementer and Finisher (Author and Perfector) of the plan of salvation. Through his mercy and power he justified the believers so that they actually possessed salvation

And to God. God is the Goal of the plan of salvation. The believers have been created and saved to live for the glory of God (cf. Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16).

By saying "Amen" Paul gives his personal, solemn and enthusiastic approval to God's plan of salvation.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATION

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Romans 11:1-36.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Romans 11:1-36.

- 11:1. Realise that God did not reject his Old Testament plan of salvation. He saves the believers belonging to the natural nation of Israel. Then God adds the believers belonging to the natural Gentile nations to them. Thus, God extends his Old Testament *people* to include believers from every nation in the world!
- 11:4. Believe that even in the greatest persecution in your country, God has his people, who will not bow their knees to idols or any other god besides the God who revealed himself in the Bible!
- 11:5-6. God's grace excludes all the efforts of people to save themselves by keeping the law or by doing religious good works.
- 11:11. Remember that when a particular group of people in your country partially stumbles and falls away from the God who revealed himself in the Bible, God may use that situation to partially save another group of people in your country!
- 11:14. Instead of hating Jews or Muslims or Christians or any other group of people, the followers of Christ should proclaim the good news and live out the good news in a way that will make the enemies envious of their changed and attractive lives and very interested to hear or read about the good news about Jesus Christ.
- 11:18. Gentile believers in Jesus Christ should not rejoice over Jews that are broken off from God's people because of their unbelief. They should remember that God began his covenant people with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- 11:20-23. The only criterion for becoming a part of God's people is faith in Jesus Christ. And the only criterion for being broken off from God's people is unbelief with respect to Jesus Christ.
- 11:24. Remember that often "the people of the Book" (that is, the Jews, the nominal Christians and the Muslims) are closer to believing in Jesus the Messiah and will more readily turn to Jesus the Messiah.
- 11:25. Christians must know God's mystery that he used Jews to bring the gospel to Gentiles and that he uses Gentiles to bring the gospel to the Jews. In the end, an uncountable number of people from every nation in the world will have become followers of Jesus Christ.
- 11:28. Remember that people who are your enemies today may become your beloved brothers and sisters tomorrow! Do not prejudice any person!
- 11:30. Remember that when God has called you to salvation in Jesus Christ he will not revoke his call! When God has given you faith, love and hope, he will not revoke those gifts!
- 11:31-36. Remember that every person who is saved was once disobedient and hopelessly lost! Do not boast, but praise God as the Source, Accomplisher and Goal of your salvation!

2. Examples of personal applications from Romans 11:1-36.

I want to persevere and continue to walk in faith. Then I will not have to fear that I will be broken off from God's people.

I want to thank God again and again that he is the Source, Accomplisher and Goal of my salvation!

STEP 5. PRAY.**RESPONSE**

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Romans 11:1-36. (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5**PRAYER** (8 minutes)

**[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS**

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6**PREPARATION** (2 minutes)

**[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON**

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. **Preach, teach or study** Romans 11:1-36 with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Jeremiah 1, 2, 4, 10** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation. (3) God's strength. Isaiah 41:10.** Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Teaching.** Prepare **the parable of "the unworthy servant"** in Luke 17:7-10. Make use of the six guidelines for interpreting parables.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on preaching God's kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.