

Romans 11:15-32

11:15

“rejection” refers to “a throwing away” salvation through Jesus or “a loss” of salvation available through Jesus. The Jews did the throwing away. The Jews rejected Jesus, so God rejected the Jews and gave them blind eyes.

“acceptance” is the direct opposite of “rejection”. This appears to be God’s acceptance of the Jews. Which would mean it is God’s “rejection” of the Jews earlier in the verse that is reversed because of the Jew acceptance of Jesus by faith.

Israel’s conversion (acceptance) will be initiate the events of the resurrection.

F.F. Bruce says, “The meaning may be that Israel’s conversion will be the immediate precursor of the resurrection, to coincide with the parousia of Christ.”

11:16

Paul uses two illustrations to show that what God began will be accomplished and accepted.

1. Firstfruits, or batch of dough - see Numbers 15:17-21 where Israelites offered the Lord a cake made from the first ground grain coming off that year’s threshing-floor. Thus, if the first batch of dough is accepted and holy, then the rest of the year’s harvest of grain will be acceptable.
 - a. A similar practice was the waving of the first-fruits from the field when 1 Corinthians 15:23 says that Jesus Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection
 - b. The “first fruits” that Paul is referring to here would likely be the first Jewish believers who accepted Jesus as the Christ and Savior. This would include Peter, Paul and others in that first generation of Jews.
 - c. The first fruit offering is the believing remnant of Paul’s day (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Thes. 2:13)
2. Root of a fig tree and its branches. Since the root of the fig tree is flowing with the life, nutrition or sap of God’s truth, plan and purpose, then the branches that are growing from it and producing fruit are acceptable and holy.

11:17

Olive trees were the most cultivated tree in the Mediterranean world
The wild olive tree was by nature very unproductive.

NOTE on Fig Trees and Cultivation: Even in the 1900’s it was a cultivation practice to graft a shoot, or branch, of a wild olive tree into a cultivated olive tree which was ceasing to bear fruit. The sap of the old cultivated tree empowers the wild branch to bear fruit. The Roman writer Columella, a contemporary of Paul’s, writes that an olive tree that was producing poorly could be reinvigorated by grafting in a slip of a wild olive tree. Cutting away the old cultivated branches would allow air and light to reach the tree. The grafting affects both the old stock of the tree which is itself reinvigorated by the new graft. The wild olive branch that is grafted in begins to bear fruit and oil because of the sap coming from the old stock of the cultivated olive tree.

The tree represents the kingdom of God.

In Paul’s illustration the cultivated olive tree that is to produce the fruit of God’s kingdom was Israel.

But, the cultivated tree of Israel failed to produce fruit and oil. So, the old branches were cut away and fresh branches from the wild olive tree was grafted in.

The old branches of the cultivated olive tree that were cut away represents the unbelieving Jews who had rejected Jesus.

The grafted in branches of the wild olive tree represents the Gentiles who had accepted the message and placed faith in Jesus. Their election is sure, their purpose will be fulfilled and God's promises will be completed. Through Christ the Gentiles have become part of that election, calling and fulfilling.

Jewish branches were broken off because of their unbelief in the promises of God. Likewise, Gentiles who enter the church system (similar to the Jews entering the system of rituals of the Mosaic Law) without faith in Jesus will be cut away.

Do not be arrogant because you are involved with a church system. If you are in unbelief (meaning never saved; never having placed faith in the promise of Jesus) then you will be cut away just like the unbelieving Jews were cut away for their unbelief even though they regularly kept and obeyed the Law of Moses. They never understood it, so they never could believe it.

11:20

Jewish believers became proud of their place in God's plan, but were unproductive. Gentiles also need to fear both their arrogance and their lack of productivity.

"Through faith" is emphatic in the Greek. This means it is the focus of this sentence.

11:21

"Provided you continue" - continuance in the faith is the best test of reality. Failure to continue or slipping into false doctrine or turning to other religions or returning to the ways of the world or continuing in the ways of the flesh are NOT a continuation in the faith.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 Paul tells the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether they are holding to the faith.

A person who has been born again will move towards God and grow closer to the image of Jesus Christ. But, a person who has never been born again will fail in the long run because they cannot continue the facade.

Romans 11:25-32

Paul is going to review salvation history concerning Israel one more time in 11:25-32.

Romans 11:25-32 is the climax of everything Paul is saying in Romans chapters 9-11.

In 57 AD Paul is facing two "facts" of the faith that must be resolved if the church is going to have Truth:

1. Israel has rejected the Gospel...a clear fact since the nation of Israel crucified Jesus and Paul is constantly facing threats from the Jews for his preaching.
2. Israel is God's chosen people with not only promises from God, but OT prophecies of the ultimate fulfillment of these promises to Israel.

Paul explains the mystery of God's purpose for Israel.

Although there are OT verses for Paul to use in support of his teaching, this information had been previously concealed and not fully understood.

Paul now makes it known, or at least try to shine some light on the issue from what has recently been revealed with the coming of Christ and God's revelation to Paul.

There are three basic parts:

1. Israel becomes hard
2. Salvation comes to the Gentiles
3. Israel's salvation is fulfilled

Even though in verses 25-32 Paul is reviewing what he has said before in chapter 11 Paul will emphasize a few insights this time through.

1. **Mystery** - the mystery is the restoration of Israel after God's time with the Gentiles. In verse 26 "all Israel will be saved."
2. **Limits** - there are time limits on how long Israel will be hardened towards God's plan of salvation. Verse 25 says, "a PARTIAL hardening has come upon Israel, UNTIL the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."
3. **Timing** - the time of Israel's return to God is identified as after the Gentiles have reached fullness.

11:25 - "Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

"Mystery" is "**mysterion**" and does not mean the unknown.

It refers to God's activity in history concerning man's salvation that **has** been revealed to man.

The use of mystery refers to things that had been hidden in the past.

It is a technical term used in Jewish apocalyptic verses where God reveals his set purpose to mankind through a prophet.

Daniel 2:17-18, 27-30, 47

Matthew 13:11 (Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10)

Romans 16:25

1 Corinthians 2:1, 7

1 Corinthians 4:1

1 Corinthians 15:51

Ephesians 1:9

Ephesians 3:3, 4, 9

Ephesians 6:19

Colossians 1:26, 27

Colossians 2:2

Colossians 4:3

1 Timothy 3:9, 16

Revelation 1:20

Revelation 10:7

Revelation 17:5, 7

Paul's previous use of the word "mystery" allows us to assume Paul is talking about a revelation given to him by God concerning the promises in the OT and how they will be fulfilled. This "revelation" or "understanding" that Paul received could have come through study of the OT with the Holy Spirit providing insight or direct revelation from the Lord to his apostle. If the word "mystery" is to be interpreted consistently with Jewish apocryphal writings available at the time of Paul and other uses of the word in the NT we should understand that there was some divine revelation given to Paul from the Lord.

The mystery concerning Israel is immediately stated by Paul:

- a) Israel is the chosen nations
- b) Israel has experienced a hardening in part until Gentiles have come in
- c) Israel will be saved.

"Conceited" lines up with 11:17-21

Paul is concerned with the Gentile believers overstating their place in God's plan in the history of salvation. Israel has NOT been rejected by God and REPLACED with Gentile believers! Indeed, the church has its place, but it is NOT to replace Israel.

The hardening is:

- a) partial
- b) temporal
- c) And a response to Israel having rejected Jesus in Mt. 12 and other places.

This hardening will serve as discipline and eventually bring Israel to God.

In the OT the Gentiles were in darkness and the Jews had God's revelation.

In the NT the Jews are in darkness and the Gentiles walk in the light.

In the End the Jews will need to turn to God out of darkness just like the Gentiles have in the church age.

"Full number" means also "Complete Number"

The next part of the verse begins with "for" or "that" ('OTI, **hoti**) which ties it into the verses before it concerning the olive tree. It also marks what part of Paul's information is the actual revealed mystery...

◀ Romans 11:25 ▶

Romans 11 Interlinear

3756 [e]	1063 [e]	2309 [e]	4771 [e]	50 [e]	80 [e]	3588 [e]	3466 [e]	3778 [e]	2443 [e]	3361 [e]
Ou	gar	thelō	hymas	agnoein	adelphoi	to	mystērion	touto	hina	mē
25 Οὐ	γὰρ	θέλω	ὑμᾶς	ἀγνοεῖν ,	ἀδελφοί ,	τὸ	μυστήριον	τοῦτο ,	ἵνα	μὴ
not	indeed	I do not want	you	to be ignorant	brothers	-	mystery	of this	that	not
Adv	Conj	V-PIA-1S	PPro-A2P	V-PNA	N-VMP	Art-ANS	N-ANS	DPro-ANS	Conj	Adv

1510 [e]	1722 [e]	1438 [e]	5429 [e]	3754 [e]	4457 [e]	575 [e]	3313 [e]	3588 [e]	2474 [e]	1096 [e]
ēte	en	heautois	phronimoi	hoti	pōrōsis	apo	merous	tō	Israēl	gegonen
ἦτε	ἐν	ἑαυτοῖς	φρόνιμοι :	ὅτι	πώρωσις	ἀπὸ	μέρους	τῷ	Ἰσραὴλ	γέγονεν ,
you might be	in	yourselves	wise	that	a hardening	in	part	-	to Israel	has happened
V-PSA-2P	Prep	RefPro-DM3P	Adj-NMP	Conj	N-NFS	Prep	N-GNS	Art-DMS	N-DMS	V-RIA-3S

891 [e]	3739 [e]	3588 [e]	4138 [e]	3588 [e]	1484 [e]	1525 [e]
achri	hou	to	plērōma	tōn	ethnōn	eiselthē
ἄχρι	οὗ	τὸ	πλήρωμα	τῶν	ἐθνῶν	εἰσέλθῃ ;
until	that	the	fullness	of the	Gentiles	might come in
Prep	RelPro-GMS	Art-NNS	N-NNS	Art-GNP	N-GNP	V-ASA-3S

Of the three points that Paul is stringing together (hardening of Israel; Gentiles; All Israel saved), what is the real "mystery" that Paul is revealing to the Romans in 57 AD?

1. It is not Israel's hardening because Paul had clearly taught this fact in 11:7-10.
2. It is not that "all Israel will be saved" since this was believed by the Jews at that time...correctly or incorrectly, they believed this fact.
3. What is new is the timing of Israel's hardness towards God ending and when they repent with faith in Jesus. The time when Israel's hardness will come to an end is revealed in this statement:

“until that the fullness of the Gentiles might come in.”

When the Gentile church age is over, then “all of Israel will be saved.” Then, Israel’s hardening in part will be over.

- a. The OT speaks of Gentiles joining the Jews in worship in the last days, but it was assumed by the Jews that the Gentiles were joining the Jews in correct worship. This is not the case here.
- b. Paul’s new revelation indicates the the eschatological timeline includes the Jews being set aside so that the “fullness of the Gentiles might come in” and only after that could Israel complete their elected purpose and their salvation.
- c. This wording and plan seems to be reflected in Jesus’ teaching in Luke 21:23-24:
“For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”
 - 4. Note the last phrase “might come in” or “has come in”. The word for “coming in” is **εισερχομαι** or “eiserchomai” which is a verb used in the Gospels to indicate entrance into the kingdom of God or it is understood by some writers at the time of the Gentiles eschatological pilgrimage to Jerusalem to join the Jews. I think it refers to:
 - . the church meeting the Lord in the air in Thessalonians
 - a. the angels gathering the elect from the four winds of heaven at the time of the appearing of the Sign of the Son of Man in Matthew
 - b. The great multitude from every tribe, language and nation standing before the throne of Jesus immediately after they had been taken out of the Great Tribulation in Revelation 7
 - 5. “Fullness of the Gentiles” - the word “fullness” is **πληρωμα** or “pleroma” has the meaning of “fulfillment,” “completion,” “fullness.” Combined with “coming in” Paul is referring to something that lines up with the idea of the completeness of the age of the Gentiles with the Gospel message coming into their completed eschatological time. This lines up with the rapture of the church to meet the Lord in the air at the time of Jesus appearing in the sky as the Sign of the Son of Man. Israel will see this. Israel will understand the significance of this. Israel will repent. Israel will be saved.

**11:26 - “ “And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,
 “The Deliverer will come from Zion,
 he will banish ungodliness from Jacob” “**

The interpretation of “And in this way all Israel will be saved” is at the center of the debate for chapters 9-11.

◀ Romans 11:26 ▶

Romans 11 Interlinear

2532 [e]	3779 [e]	3956 [e]	2474 [e]	4982 [e]	2531 [e]	1125 [e]	2240 [e]	1537 [e]	4622 [e]	3588 [e]
kai	houtōs	pas	Israēl	sōthēsetai	kathōs	gegraptai	Hēxei	ek	Siōn	ho
26 καὶ	οὕτως	πᾶς	Ἰσραὴλ	σωθήσεται	, καθὼς	γέγραπται	, Ἦξει	ἐκ	Σιών	ὁ
and	so	all	Israel	will be saved	as	it has been written	will come	out of	Zion	the [One]
Conj	Adv	Adj-NMS	N-NMS	V-FIP-3S	Adv	V-RIMP-3S	V-FIA-3S	Prep	N-GFS	Art-NMS

4506 [e]	654 [e]	763 [e]	575 [e]	2384 [e]
Rhymenos	apostrepsei	asebeias	apo	lakōb
ῥυόμενος	, ἀποστρέψει	ἀσεβείας	ἀπὸ	Ἰακώβ .
Delivering	he will remove	ungodliness	from	Jacob
V-PPMP-NMS	V-FIA-3S	N-AFP	Prep	N-GMS

Three things are here to help understand:

1. "in this way" (*houtos*, 'ΟΥΤΟΣ)

- a. *houtos* could be introducing the conclusion of the process or consequence of the events. This use of *houtos* does occur in the Greek and in Paul's writings, but it is rare. It is still not the normal use of *houtos*.
- b. *houtos* could be referring to the OT scriptural reference. This would give the meaning, "Just as it says in the written word, so it will happen" or, "As it is written, so will it be." But, Paul never uses *houtos* to say, "Just as it is written."
- c. The most natural way of understanding *houtos* is to let it indicate how Israel will be saved. And, this information comes in the previous verse. The way Israel will be saved is described in 11:11-24 and summarized in 11:25.
 - i. Israel is faithless to God, so they are hardened by God
 - ii. God's mercy extends to the Gentiles without Israel's help
 - iii. Israel sees the Gentiles with God's blessings and become jealous
 - iv. Israel repents and returns in faith for salvation.

2. "all Israel" (*pas Israel*, ΠΑΣ Ισραηλ)

Who does "Israel" refer to:

all believers of all time? ...no. But, this was believed by the earlier church and after the reformation.

This is NOT a good interpretation because Paul has used "Israel" TEN times in Romans 9-11, every time referring to the natural Jews. This would be the only time in this context for Paul to spiritualize the term "Israel".

1. Plus, if Paul is arguing a point to warn the Gentile church about natural Israel how backward would it be from him to suddenly use the term "Israel" to refer to the church? Ridiculous.
2. Paul, at times, does include the church or believing Gentiles into God's plan by referring to all believers as "Israel", but that is NOT the case here since Paul's point is different (actually, completely opposite) in chapters 9-11 than in the verses listed below:

- a. Galatians 6:16
- b. Philippians 3:3
- c. Romans 4:13-18
- i. the natural nation of Israel? ...possibly.
- ii. the believers within the natural nation of Israel? ...possibly. Romans 9:6 says, "not all who are from Israel (the nation) are Israel (the believers)." But, the meaning of "Israel" in 11:25 (the nation) would have to change by 11:26, "Israel" (believing remnant).

a. What does "all" refer to:

3. When and How "all Israel will be saved"

- c. When will this salvation of Israel occur?
- d. How will Israel be brought back from their rejection

Israel's restoration promised:

Deuteronomy 30:1-5

Jeremiah 23:3

Ezekiel 11:17

Ezekiel 36:24

Micah 2:12

Zechariah 10:8-10

"And So" is "*houtos*" or "in this way"

This can mean:

- a) this is the result, "all Israel will be saved
- b) this is how it happens, or, to explain the manner of how all Israel will be saved just as the prophets said or just as Paul has explained.

"All Israel" "*pas Israel*"

Israel can mean:

- a) the community of believers both Jew and Gentile
- b) the nation of Israel
- c) the believers within Israel

In 9-11 Israel has always meant the nation of Israel.
Notice 9:6, “not all who are from Israel are Israel”
Paul writes “all Israel” not “every Israelite”

“Salvation” is “sothesetai”

11:27 - “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” ”

The quote from Isaiah 59:20, 21 and 27:9 shows to Paul’s readers that even the OT predicted these things:

- a) God will send a deliverer
- b) Israel will be godless
- c) God will take away their sins
- d) God has a covenant with Israel

Isaiah 59:20 says “the redeemer will come for the sake of Zion” but Paul quotes, “the redeemer will come OUT OF Zion”

This is different than the LXX, but also different than any Hebrew text we have.

POINT: Paul is saying that the redeemer will come out of the heavenly Zion, or the sign of the Son of Man.

11:28 - “As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.”

11:29 - “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

11:30 - “For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,”

11:31 - “so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.”

11:32 - “For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.”