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In chapters 9-11 of the Book of Romans, the apostle Paul expresses the great despair he feels towards his fellow Jews: *“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart... for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh... my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”* (9:2, 10:1) Then finally, towards the end of this discourse about the eventual salvation of the Jewish people, Paul comes up with the answer to his *“desire and prayer”*: *“all Israel will be saved.”* (11:26)

All Israel saved? What about those cruel warmongers and morally corrupt individuals who’ve stationed themselves in Israel today? Most of them, if offered salvation, would angrily reject the offer. (The same holds true, by the way, anywhere; in every nation, there will always be those “criminals” - whether legal or illegal - roaming well outside the boundaries and standards of what would be expected of a “people of God”.)

Well, maybe we just need to take a closer look at what Paul is saying. After writing that *“all Israel will be saved”*, Paul backs up this assertion with some Old Testament Scripture:

“The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;
“and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”
(11:26-27)

Here Paul presents an abbreviated version of a mix of Scriptures from [Isaiah 59:20-21](#) and [27:9](#), and [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#). Interestingly, Isaiah 59:20 contains the stipulation that the *“Redeemer [Deliverer] will come... to those in Jacob who turn from transgression”*. So rather than an unqualified *“all Israel will be saved”*, what this saying really means is, *“all Israel [who turn from transgression] will be saved”*.

This qualification was noted already in chapter 9: *“For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.”* (9:6-7) And elsewhere, Paul

teaches clearly the connection between salvation and turning from transgression: *"All who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil."* (2Timothy 2:19, NLT)

Then in the next chapter 10, Paul quotes another *Old Testament* Scripture: *"everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."* (Romans 10:13, Joel 2:32) With these contexts in mind, it seems unlikely that Paul was intending to say that Jewish people are exempt from calling on the Lord Jesus Christ and turning from transgression. That would be imposing a very literal interpretation on his statement that *"all Israel will be saved"* (11:26).

Jesus also made this point clear: *"If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did."* (John 8:39) *"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 8:11-12) As far as Jesus was concerned, there would be no place in the Kingdom for the "criminals" - like the cruel warmongers and morally corrupt (of whom there are plenty in Israel, just as there are in any country of the world today). He made it simple: those who have not been doing the works of Abraham, they are not part of the "Israel" of God.

In chapter 11 Paul makes the observation that *"a partial hardening [blindness, KJV] has come upon Israel"* (11:25). Nothing unusual about this - just an acknowledgement that *"strong delusion"* has set in. This law of the Spirit spells out the fate of those who reject the Savior. It is what befalls anyone, Jew or Gentile, who has *"refused to love the truth and so be saved"*. They end up with *"a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false."* And if they don't snap out of it, they are apt to be *"condemned"* because they *"did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* (2Thessalonians 2:10-12)

The Jewish people who rejected the Savior had their particular delusion - remaining stuck in the Laws of Moses; and the Gentiles who refused the Savior had their own set of pagan delusions to fall back into.

But of course, Paul is rather fixated on his Jewish brethren, so it is easy

to get the impression that there is something different, or extra special, about this *“blindness”*. But there is none. The only thing “special” about it is the fact that the Jewish people have landed on the same level with the Gentiles. And the Jewish person who refuses Christ is no more or less blind than the Gentile who refuses Christ, and vice-versa. Paul is just taking the general rule that applies to everyone and applies it specifically to the Jewish people, nothing more than that.

Paul goes on to say this *“hardening”* will continue *“until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”* (11:25) Regarding the *“fullness of the Gentiles”*, this term refers to the present era that will end with the Return of Christ. (See [Appendix](#) about this.) During this era, non-Jewish nations and people have their opportunity to gain *“access in one Spirit to the Father”* (Ephesians 2:18). They had been *“strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* But because of Christ’s intercession into the affairs of humankind, they *“who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* (Ephesians 2:12-13)

Does the end of the *“times of the Gentiles”* mean that the Jewish people will spring back into the central role of God’s dealings with the human race? One could get that impression from statements like these: *“how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree... God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn”*. (Romans 11:24,29) Yes, God will restore His special relationship with the Jewish people that existed in the days of the Old Testament. And this will happen at the Return of Christ. But how is this any different or any more “special” than the restored relationship that God will have with the entire human race in that Day?

As far as we know, the Return of Christ does mean that Jerusalem will become the central capital region of the world. ([Micah 4:1-2](#); [Isaiah 2:2-4](#), [Jeremiah 3:17](#); [Zechariah 14:8-9](#)) However, that does not mean that the Jewish people will be more exalted than any other. Paul himself already made this clear in chapter 10:

“For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in Him are made right with

God... For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'
(10:4,12-13)

It's a level playing field, in other words - a principle that is suggested again towards the end of the Romans 9-11 passage: ***"For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all."*** (11:32) And in the Book of Galatians: ***"There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."*** (3:28, NLT)

The rulers in that future Age will belong to no particular race or nationality. Their "nationality" will be that of the "meek" who ***"shall inherit the earth."*** (Matthew 5:5) Paul wrote, ***"If we endure, we will also reign with Him."*** (2Timothy 2:12) And in Revelation 20, it is clear that those who are to ***"reign with Christ"*** are those who were faithful unto death. (20:4) That can mean death by martyrdom, or a lifetime of faithfulness. These Scriptures apply to persons of any nationality - no special favoritism towards Jews or Gentiles.

The same "level playing field" is obvious in Revelation 7 about the ***"144,000"*** and the ***"great multitude"***. After John the apostle has described how the 144,000 Jewish heroes of the Great Tribulation are to be protected during that time (7:1-8), he sees ***"a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages."*** Evidently, he wasn't expecting this large group of non-Jewish people to be honored also - ***"standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes."*** (7:9) That particular revelation started with the specific, zoomed-in view of 144,000 Jewish heroes but then zoomed out for the general view of the ***"great multitude"*** of End Time heroes.

John is bewildered, and ***"one of the elders"*** has to come along to inform the apostle that, like the 144,000, these also ***"are the ones coming out of the great tribulation"*** who ***"have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*** (7:13-14) So the 144,000 are not the only heroes of the Great Tribulation, but there will be ***"a great multitude"*** also who will stand as heroes ***"before the throne and before the Lamb"***. (For more information, see [post "Who Are the 144,000 and the "Great](#)

Multitude'?)

In other words, both apostles Paul and John were naturally concerned about their own Jewish brethren, who at that time in history were stubborn and fighting against the spread of the Gospel. So the Lord graciously reassured both of them that salvation and reward would come to their Jewish brethren... eventually.

We sometimes forget that the Bible records God's personal dealings and interaction with the ones who were its authors. Without taking this into consideration, we can misunderstand parts of it by taking some Scriptures too literally.

In his book *The Case for Faith*, Lee Stroebel recounts his interview with renowned Bible scholar Norman L. Geisler - who taught Stroebel that a common misunderstanding in Scripture results from "forgetting that the Bible is a human book with human characteristics." The apostle Paul had his human outlook and particular slant on how he viewed the issue of the Jewish people's salvation. Taking this into account helps us to *"rightly divide the word of truth"* (2Timothy 2:15, KJV). Paul's account in Romans 9-11 is simply an example (as Geisler goes on to say) of how "the Bible, like Christ, is totally human, yet without error".

The Return of Christ will mark a huge turning point in human history. *"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."* (Revelation 1:7) In those days, it will no longer be a question of believing by faith. For *"every eye will see Him."* In the Age to come, everyone, in a sense, will be "saved".

***"And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* (Jeremiah 31:34)**

This statement, part of which Paul quoted in Romans 11:27, follows Jeremiah's prophetic message about the *New Covenant*:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)

Now for Jeremiah, the “*house of Israel... My people*” meant the faithful Jewish people. But the *New Covenant* that he foresaw turned out to be the one brought by Jesus Christ. This *Covenant* the Lord intended, not for the benefit of the Jewish people only; it was meant for all those who would follow Him by faith, those who would follow God because of their love for Him, not merely - as in the days of the Old Testament - because of their fear of God or a desire to obtain His blessings. ([John 14:15; 15:10,14](#))

According to Jesus and several New Testament epistles, the “*house of Israel*” applies to the followers of Christ. There are several passages on this subject: [Matthew 3:9](#), [John 8:39-47](#), [Romans 2:28-29](#), [Galatians 6:15](#), [Colossians 2:11](#).

But Paul, of course, in Romans 11 has in mind those who belong to the nation of Israel. “*All Israel will be saved.*” (11:26) These are not only the 144,000 Jewish followers of Christ during the Great Tribulation. They include all the Jewish people who live on into the Age of Peace known as the Millennium. In that Age, as Jeremiah 31:34 states, “*they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.*” This kind of “salvation” is not the same as the more glorious honor and reward given to the “144,000”, and to the “*great multitude*”. However, for those who make it through the final *Plagues* and *Wrath of God*, who live on into that golden Age known as the Millennium, whether Jews or Gentiles, it will be a form of salvation that they will be glad to possess - overjoyed in fact to have the privilege of living on into the new Age.

The Romans 11 passage creates an impression that there is something ultra-special about this “salvation” for the Jewish people. The main reason that Paul’s words sound that way was because for Paul it meant a great deal. We can’t blame him for being a little anxious about his Jewish brethren. It is natural for the citizen of any nation to have a bit of favoritism - or maybe it would be better to say special concern - about their fellow citizens (or family or tribe or language group). But the “salvation” of the Jewish people is no different from the “salvation” that peoples around the entire Earth will experience. For we know that God

does not favor one group over another. *"For God shows no partiality."* (Romans 2:11; see also [Acts 10:34](#))

Paul made this statement about *"no partiality"* near the beginning of the *Book of Romans*, and there is every reason to understand that the same holds true here in chapter 11, where Paul, because of his concern for his Jewish brethren, can't help but sound *"partial"* to them. His words have a bit of *"spin"* and make it sound as if there's something extra special about the Jewish people's *"hardening"* and their being *"saved"*, as if they stand out in some way different to the Gentiles.

But their *"partial hardening"* due to their rejection of Christ is no different from the *"strong delusion"* that can afflict anyone due to rejection of Christ and the truth. And the *"salvation"* of the Jewish people at the Return of Christ has nothing to do with some kind of special privilege offered solely to ethnic Israel. It is the same salvation that everyone receives - everyone who beholds the Return of Christ and makes it into the Millennial Age to come and also, we should probably add, *"turns from transgression"*.

The veil, the barrier against belief in Christ, will have vanished. Indeed, how could there be any disbelief in a world that has seen *"the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"*? (Matthew 24:30) *"Salvation"* then will not hinge on belief in Christ, but it will hinge on whether or not a person *"turns from transgression"*. ([Isaiah 59:20](#); also [Matthew 3:8](#), [7:21](#); [Acts 2:38](#), [3:19](#), [26:20](#) and many others)

And there will be transgression and rebellion in those days - plenty of it. We learn from the *Book of Revelation* that the Return of Christ will cause much fear and disappointment among those who are left behind in the Earth: *"all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."* (1:7)

The Antichrist and False Prophet, under the direction of the Dragon (the Devil), will foster in the Earth their hatred against God and His people. They will even organize the armies of the world to resist Christ and the saints' takeover of Earth in the final Battle of Armageddon. ([Revelation 16:13-16](#), [19:11-21](#)) Whether any of those *"rebels"* will make it into the Age to come, we don't know. But whoever does make it will

experience the “salvation” of living on into a glorious era of peace and blessedness. As for their salvation in the Afterlife, that is another matter.

As for Paul’s illustration about the Gentiles being grafted into the “tree” ([11:16-21](#)) of the Jewish people, the main point, again, is that when the “fullness of the Gentiles” era ends at Christ’s Return, and the “blindness” of the Jewish people is stripped away, then *“all Israel will be saved”*. Or to qualify that statement, *“all Israel [who turn from transgression] will be saved.”* If the tree that bore the Jewish people receives salvation, then it means an across-the-board salvation for the entire world.

“Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God’s offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it... for since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who are dead!... If the root is holy, so are the branches.”
(11:12,15-16)

In other words, the salvation of the Jewish people is the same as what the rest of the world, that has lived through the Return of Christ and the final Plagues, will experience.

So, does the passage of Romans 9-11 show particular favoritism towards the Jewish people? Well, it may sound like it. But that impression only reflects Paul’s predisposition, or “favoritism” if you like, towards the particular nation he belonged to. He is just taking the general rule meant for everyone and applying it specifically to the Jewish people.

But elsewhere in his epistles, and in this final quote below, Paul makes it clear that, as far as God is concerned, Jewish and Gentile peoples exist in a state of complete equality:

“In Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has torn down the dividing wall of hostility... For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow

citizens with the saints and members of God’s household... with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole building is fitted together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” (Ephesians 2:13-14, 18-21)

APPENDIX: “The fullness of the Gentiles”

This term appears in [Romans 11:25](#) and in [Luke 21:24](#). In *Romans* it represents the period of the Jewish people’s “*partial hardening*” to the Good News while it is being spread into nations around the world. And in *Luke* it represents the time span during which Jerusalem will be “*trodden down*”. In both cases, the time of the Gentiles ends with the Return of Christ, which will accomplish two important things:

- 1) Bring enlightenment to the Jewish people (and release them from their hardened hearts) - which, by the way, is exactly what will happen to the rest of the world also.
- 2) Bring to an end Jerusalem’s fate of having to endure one devastation after another. With the dawn of the Age of Peace to come, Jerusalem (along with the rest of the world) will begin to enjoy real and lasting peace, when it will be said of nations, “*neither shall they learn war anymore*”. ([Isaiah 2:4](#), [Micah 4:3](#)) And Jerusalem will have the honor - not by any righteousness of her own, but by God’s choice - of becoming the center of world government during the Millennium.

[\[RETURN\]](#)