

## God and the Jews

### In What Sense Are They The Chosen People Of God? An Exposition of Romans 9-11

#### INTRODUCTION

In chapters 1-8 of Romans, the apostle Paul lays out his main point to the Gentile Christians in Rome, who have not encountered any Jews for eight years since the edict by Emperor Claudius expelled them from the capital city because of their physically assaulting one another over the question of whether or not Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. (The Bible fundamentally defines the Jews as all those people who are direct, physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and the Gentiles are everyone else in the world.) Paul, of course, states categorically that he is, along with the proviso that no one, not even the Jews, can earn God's blessings and the fulfillment of His promises by outwardly obeying the Mosaic Covenant of Exodus 19 through Deuteronomy. Instead, it is people, Jews and Gentiles, whose heart God circumcises by the inner work of His Holy Spirit and who manifest authentic belief in God, especially now belief in Jesus as the Messiah, whose death and resurrection have brought about the appeasement of God's wrath for believing sinners, who obtain eternal life through salvation from God's condemnation.

Paul ends chapter 8 by asking if there is anyone or anything that can separate authentic believers from God's and the Messiah's love, when God has clearly demonstrated His love to them by handing Jesus over to death on the cross and when Jesus has obviously revealed his love for them by willingly suffering death on the cross? The inescapable answer is an emphatic, "No!" And this highlights how it is the Messiah, and not Moses and the Mosaic Covenant, who is the only basis for obtaining the fulfillment of God's promises, which include what all modern Christians recognize as eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

But this emphasis on Jesus, his death, and his resurrection must have led to another thought in Paul's mind and a question that maybe his readers have, "Does the fact that so many Gentiles (like us in Rome) and so few Jews have believed in the *Jewish* Messiah mean that God has failed with His message of Genesis through Malachi to compel the Jews to believe in Him and to remain His chosen people? Indeed, has God perhaps transferred His attention, focus, and promises from the Jews, who are Israel, to the church of the followers of Jesus, who clearly are mostly Gentiles?"

This question is also important for us as 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians, because we have divided ourselves into two camps who answer this question differently, and I would like to explain from Romans 9-11 why I think one camp is correct.

We will use the following titles to refer to the two camps—

- 1) **Replacement Theology**
- 2) **Status Quo Theology**

**Replacement Theology** believes that God has replaced the Old Testament nation of Israel with the New Testament church of believers in Jesus as their Christ and Messiah. In other words, whatever promises that God made to the Jews, who are physical descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, He has transferred to Christians, who are spiritual descendants of Abraham by means of their belief and faith in Jesus as their Messiah.

There are two main reasons for why people believe that **Replacement Theology** is the correct way to understand the Bible. The first is that the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah during his first appearance, resulting in God's rejecting them—something that became obvious when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and killed a vast number of Jews and dispersed most of those still alive throughout the Roman Empire during another Jewish revolt in A.D. 132-135. As a result and in God's eyes, the Jews lost their land and their capital city forever, so that their recent return to the land and Jerusalem over the last 150 years has nothing to do with their former chosen status before God. Their living on the land and in Jerusalem is not God's fulfilling His promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to them. It is their own selfish design to build a nation on the same land, to which they no longer have a biblical claim.

The second reason why people believe that **Replacement Theology** is correct is because the New Testament says nothing about the Jews' remaining God's chosen people and about His fulfilling the Old Testament promises to grant them the land of Israel and to make them a "great [political] nation" according to Genesis 12:1-3. In fact, the New Testament emphasizes that Jews and Gentiles have

become a new Israel and one group of God's chosen people as believers in Jesus as the Christ, so that this new multi-ethnic and international group will acquire God's promise of eternal life in heaven. Obviously then, the New Testament is speaking of a group of people who are clearly distinct from the Jews, who will never obtain a restored earthly and national kingdom on the land of Israel and centered in Jerusalem as stated in Genesis 12:1-3 below,

**Genesis 12:1** And Yahweh said to Abram [Abraham],  
“Go forth from your country,  
And from your relatives  
And from your father's house,  
To the land which I will show you;  
**12:2** And I will make you a great nation,  
And I will bless you,  
And make your name great;  
And in this way be a blessing.  
**12:3** And I will bless those who bless you,  
And the one who curses you I will curse.  
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” [emphasis mine]

**Status Quo Theology** is the belief that God maintains the status quo of the Abrahamic Covenant above, so that He will fulfill the two promises exactly as He stated them. There is the first promise to the physical, ethnic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are the Jews. And there is the second promise to the spiritual, multi-ethnic descendants of Abraham, made up both Jews and Gentiles, who demonstrate authentic belief in God and eventually in Jesus, the Messiah. In other words, according to the first promise, God will one day cause believing, sinful, earthly Jews to become the most powerful nation in history, so that they will rule the whole earth with their king, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the one whom Paul calls in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15 the “icon of God” within the creation. This is to say that, while he is a pure human being, he is also God within the story that He is telling.

Plus, according to the second promise, God will cause all former and current believing Jews and Gentiles to participate in both the “great nation” of Israel on their land as described in the Old Testament prophets and Revelation 20. Then, afterwards, these same believing Jews and Gentiles will enjoy the eternal Kingdom of God on the new earth as described in Revelation 21-22. This means that the Jews' rejection of Jesus during his first appearance did not result in God's completely rejecting them as His earthly, ethnic chosen people so as to transfer their promises to the New Testament church. Even so, it has resulted in their experiencing God's discipline and encouragement to believe in Him during the long period of time between Jesus' first and second appearances. And we are certainly still waiting for the latter.

This also means that, while the New Testament is perhaps not as clear as the Old Testament in its description of God's fulfilling both promises of Genesis 12:1-3 exactly as He stated them, it nevertheless indicates that He will remain faithful to them in the midst of many more Gentiles than Jews believing in Jesus the Messiah during the first century. Quite frankly, we do not know the statistics of Jewish believers vs. Gentile believers in Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, and the rest of the Roman Empire when, over the course of many decades, the apostles were carrying out their responsibility to proclaim the message of Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah. But, during the ensuing centuries, there probably have been more Gentiles than Jews who have become *bona fide* Christians.

It is also the case that the emphasis in the New Testament appears to be eternal life “in heaven” (so to speak) and not a restored Kingdom of David on the land of Israel. In other words, the New Testament emphasis is on God's second promise to Abraham and not on His first promise. This might lead us to think that God is concerned with only one thing—the salvation from God's eternal judgment which Jesus brings through his death and resurrection and that is strictly heavenly and eternal for all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, God has left behind His first promise to produce an earthly and temporary kingdom and nation for the Jews, or at least He has replaced Israel with the church and transferred the status of being a “great nation” from the former to the latter, whereby the church's greatness will be in their acquiring eternal life. As such, it would seem that belief in Jesus is all about only eternal life for believers of all ethnic groups—both Jews and Gentiles.

I will state here at the outset that I believe that **Status Quo Theology** is correct and that Romans 9-11 affirms this understanding of the whole Bible. However, during my analysis of these three chapters, I will attempt to point out how certain statements by Paul could lead us to come to the conclusion that the Bible is teaching **Replacement Theology** and not **Status Quo Theology**. Nevertheless, while I admit that **Status Quo Theology** is more complicated than the other (why not just conclude that Jesus has saved us all to go to heaven, and be done with it!?), as I consider the data in Romans 9-11, it seems to me that it is true in the light of all the passages in the Old Testament that support it. Plus, Paul quotes or paraphrases the Old Testament thirty-three times, and I think he is doing so in order to affirm **Status Quo Theology**.

Here, by the way, are two helpful passages from the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who wrote around 600 B.C. at the time of the destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem, and its temple by the Babylonians—

**Jeremiah 23:5** “Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh,  
“When I will raise up for **David a righteous Branch**;  
and He will reign as **king** and act wisely  
and do justice and righteousness **in the land**.

**23:6** In his days **Judah** will be **saved**,  
and **Israel** will **dwell securely**;  
and this is his name by which he will be called,  
‘Yahweh our righteousness.’”

**23:7** “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when they will no longer say, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’

**23:8** but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up and **led back the descendants of the house of Israel** from the north land and **from all the countries where I had driven them**.’ Then they will live **on their own ground**.” [emphasis mine]

**Ezekiel 37:21** “Say to them, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I will take the **sons of Israel from among the nations** where they have gone,  
and I will gather them from every side and **bring them into their own land**;

**37:22** and I will make them one nation **in the land**, on the **mountains of Israel**;  
and **one king** will be king for all of them; and they will no longer  
be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

**37:23** They will no longer defile themselves with their idols,  
or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions;  
but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned,  
and will cleanse them. And **they will be My people**, and I will be their God.

**37:24** My servant **David will be king** over them, and they will all have one shepherd;  
and they will walk in My ordinances and **keep My statutes** and observe them.

**37:25** They will live **on the land that I gave to My servant, to Jacob**,  
in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they,  
and their sons and their sons’ sons, **into perpetuity**;  
and **David My servant** will be **their prince into perpetuity**.

**37:26** I will make a **covenant of shalom** with them;  
it will be a **perpetual covenant** with them.  
And I will place them and multiply them,  
and **will set My holy place in their midst into perpetuity**.

**37:27** My dwelling place also will be with them;  
and I will be their God, and **they will be My people**.

**37:28** And the nations will know that I am Yahweh **who sets Israel apart**,  
when **My holy place is in their midst into perpetuity**.”” [emphasis mine]

Simply put, I think that Romans 9-11 is affirming the **Status Quo Theology** of these passages that refer to God’s bringing the Jewish people back into their land and placing Jesus the Messiah as king over them during a set length of time in order to fulfill His first promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation,” indeed the most successful, prosperous, biblically moral, and powerful country in human history.

We begin with Romans 9:1-5.

**ROMANS 9:1-5**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:1</b> I am telling the truth in the Messiah. I am not lying, while my understanding bears witness with me by means of the Holy Spirit, <b>9:2</b> that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart, <b>9:3</b> because I wish that I myself were assigned to destruction away from the Messiah on behalf of my brothers, my fellow-countrymen according to the flesh, <b>9:4</b> who are Israelites, to whom belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of Torah, the worship, and the promises, <b>9:5</b> whose are the fathers and from whom is the Messiah (that which is according to the flesh), the one who is over all things. May God be blessed into the ages! Amen!</p>	<p><b>Romans 9:1</b> Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἵ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυρούσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, <b>2</b> ὅτι λύπη μοί ἐστιν μεγάλη καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὀδύνη τῇ καρδίᾳ μου. <b>3</b> ἠύχόμην γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτός ἐγὼ ἵνα ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα, <b>4</b> οἵτινές εἰσιν Ἰσραηλίται, ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι, <b>5</b> ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὧν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.</p>

After emphasizing at the end of chapter 8 that Jesus, by means of his first appearance as the Messiah, is the only basis for obtaining eternal salvation and life, Paul turns his attention to the people who have rejected this idea and are still holding on to Moses and the Mosaic Covenant as their basis for God’s mercy and promises. These people are none other than the Jews. Paul swears that he is “telling the truth in the Messiah.” Now that he has changed his mind and become convinced that the Jesus is more than a leader of the Jews whose job is to form an army and defeat their earthly enemies, while instructing them in the Mosaic law, Paul is using his belief in Jesus as the Messiah to tell the truth about something near and dear to him.

Indeed, his intellectual understanding of his own situation and that he has acquired by means of the inner work of the “Holy Spirit,” has provoked a visceral, internal reaction in him of “great sorrow and unceasing grief.” As he assesses the spiritual condition of his “brothers,” who are his “follow-countrymen” physically speaking, i.e., the Jewish people, he sees most of them “assigned to destruction” because of their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. And his desire is to exchange places with them, so that they may be rescued from God’s condemnation while he gives up his salvation.

Plus, like him, these fellow Jews are “Israelites,” physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (“one who struggles with God”). And, according to Exodus 4:22, God has adopted the nation of Israel as His “son” and “firstborn,” so that they occupy a primary position on earth among all other peoples and ethnic groups. He has also promised to give them “glory,” which is to make them a magnificent people, indeed the most magnificent of all the peoples on the earth. How? Not only by granting them eternal life according to His second promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, but also by shaping them into a “great nation” according to His first Abrahamic promise. Naturally, as we think about both **Replacement Theology** and **Status Quo Theology**, we wonder if God will still fulfill this promise to the ethnic group of Jews or to only the multi-ethnic group of believers in Jesus, the church? Perhaps, the “glory” of being a “great nation” belonged to the Jews *before* Jesus appeared, but then God transferred it to the church *as the consequence of the Jews’ rejecting their Messiah*. However, Paul clearly indicates that it is his fellow Jews who possess the “glory,” and he does not even hint that God has taken it away from them. The “glory” belongs to them, Paul says, and I interpret him as declaring that they possessed it potentially in the past, they possess it potentially in the present, and they will possess it concretely in the future.

God also gave the Jews certain “covenants,” comprising the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants as articulated in various places in the Old Testament (Genesis 12-50; Exodus-Deuteronomy; 2 Samuel 7, et al.; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 respectively). And He gave them “Torah,” the entirety of the Old Testament teaching and instruction about God and His plans and purposes for their Messiah, for them, and for the Gentiles. In addition, He taught them how to “worship” Him with the rituals, ceremonies, and moral commandments of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. And God provided the Jews with the

“promises” as I have described as two-fold— 1) becoming the most powerful nation in human history, and 2) obtaining eternal life. We notice that, at least so far, Paul does not indicate that God has transferred the promise of being a “great nation” to the church, as **Replacement Theology** believes. Next, the “fathers,” the Jew’s ancestors such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, obviously belong to the nation of Israel, the Jews, through direct physical descendancy.

Finally, the Messiah, which literally means “The Anointed One,” who is the personal, human, eternal king and savior of all sinful beings who demonstrate authentic belief in him and whom we know to be Jesus of Nazareth, is himself an Israelite. He is the unique and final Son of God (since all the Davidic kings held this title), being destined to eternal glory, the one through whom God fulfills His four covenants with the Jews as taught in the Torah of the Old Testament. It is also in the light of him that God directed the Jews to worship Him with their ceremonies and sacrifices, because he is the only basis for God’s fulfilling His promises to them and to all the ethnic groups of the world. As a result, Jesus the Messiah also can claim Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as his forefathers.

In addition, Jesus is “the one who is over all things,” because, according to the Davidic Covenant and his being the “Son of God” from the line of multiple Sons of God, starting with David and continuing through Solomon (cf. 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 2 & 89), he has the right within the creation to exercise the same authority over it as God the Father, who exists outside the creation. And Paul is so impressed with the majesty and magnificence of all the above information, especially that about Jesus as the eternal Messiah, that he proclaims a doxology, “May God be blessed into the ages! Amen!” Thus, I think that Paul is extolling God for not only what He is doing through and with the Messiah but also what He is doing through and with the Jews.

So far in these three chapters of Romans 9-11, Paul has not said anything about God’s transferring the Old Testament promises for the Jews to the New Testament followers of Jesus, the church (**Replacement Theology**). Instead, I suggest, he is maintaining the status quo of the Abrahamic Covenant and upholding the teaching of the Old Testament as it stands when it is explicit that the Messiah comes from Israel, to gather the Jews back into the land that God mentions in Genesis 12:1-3, to free them from their earthly enemies, and to rule over them and the rest of the world in a restored Davidic Kingdom. Therefore, I think that it makes more sense to conclude that Paul is genuinely and truly amazed and awestruck by what God is continuing to do for and with the Jews by means of Jesus as the basis for this (**Status Quo Theology**)—in spite of their rejection of him as their Messiah. But let us see if I am right as we proceed through the rest of Romans 9-11.

Next, Paul anticipates a question that probably even he had at one time, “If God has provided all these gifts to the Jews, why did they all not become followers of Jesus their Messiah?” The next paragraph of Romans 9:6-9 begins answering this question.

**ROMANS 9:6-9**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:6</b> But by no means has the message of God failed, because, all those who are from Israel, these are not Israel. <b>9:7</b> Nor is it that all children are the “seed” of Abraham, but</p> <p>in Isaac will your seed be named &lt;Genesis 21:12&gt;.</p> <p><b>9:8</b> That is, the children of the flesh, these are not children of God. But the children of the promise are considered as “seed.” <b>9:9</b> For this is the message of the promise,</p> <p>At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son &lt;Genesis 18:10,14&gt;.</p>	<p><b>Romans 9:6</b> Οὐχ οἶον δὲ ὅτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ. οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραὴλ· <b>7</b> οὐδ’ ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ πάντες τέκνα, ἀλλ’</p> <p><b>ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα.</b></p> <p><b>8</b> τοῦτ’ ἔστιν, ὅτι οὐ τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας λογίζεται εἰς σπέρμα. <b>9</b> ἐπαγγελίας γὰρ ὁ λόγος οὗτος·</p> <p><b>κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐλεύσομαι καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σάρρα υἱός.</b></p>

Here Paul states definitively that “the message of God” has not “failed” to bring about *its intended result among the Jews*. And the reason in v. 6 is that “all those who are from Israel, these are not Israel.”

It is as though Paul is saying, “Look at all that God gave the Jews and promised to them! And look at how most of them have rejected Him down through history, including most recently when they crucified their own Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth! Should we not say that God has failed miserably in doing what He said He was going to do with and for the Jews?!” Instead, Paul is declaring that God’s “message” has not “failed,” in spite of the fact that the most of the Jews did not become believers in Jesus during his first appearance. In line with what Paul wished for himself in v. 3, that he would prefer to be “assigned to destruction away from the Messiah on behalf of” his fellow Jews, he is establishing the point it is God’s own plan and purpose that only some Jews become authentic believers in God (and now in Jesus as the Messiah after he has appeared), while the rest of the Jews are “assigned to destruction away from the Messiah.”

But what does he mean by “the message of God” that has not “failed?” I would suggest that it begins with His statements to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 where He makes two promises to him—1) that his physical descendants will eventually become the most powerful nation in human history and will live on the land of Israel, and 2) that Abraham and all those who emulate his genuine belief in God will be blessed with eternal life. As a result, Paul’s explanation of why the “message” of these promises has not “failed,” even though so few Jews have believed God, is that “all those who are from Israel, these are not Israel?” I think that he is saying that God sovereignly never intended for all the physical descendants of Jacob (whose name God changed to Israel) to receive the fulfillment of the promises that He made to their forefather, Jacob (and, by extrapolation, first to Abraham and then to Isaac).

Paul could have in mind **Replacement Theology**, that the church, comprised of some Jews and some Gentiles who are all believers in Jesus as the Christ, replaces the Jewish people as Israel and thereby becomes the new Israel. Or he could be explaining **Status Quo Theology** and mean, as I just said, that God’s eternal plan was never that all the Jewish people become authentic believers and participate in being the “great nation” which He promised in Genesis 12:1-3. While all Jews are physical descendants of Jacob, not all of them acquire genuine faith in God that will permit them to participate in their own “great nation” on the land God promised them. I think that Paul goes on to argue this latter meaning.

He says in v. 7, “Nor is that all children are the “seed” of Abraham.” Abraham had two children, first Ishmael whose mother was Hagar, his wife’s servant, and Isaac, whose mother was Sarah, his wife. Paul asserts that both of these sons cannot be considered the “seed” of Abraham, which is to say that only one of them was the descendant through whom God would fulfill His two promises. Paul makes clear that it is Isaac when he then quotes Genesis 21:12, “In Isaac will your seed be named.” The “seed” of Abraham was not Ishmael and his descendants, but Isaac and his descendants. Paul then indicates that this means the “children of the flesh...are not children of God.” Instead, it is “the children of the promise” who “are considered as ‘seed.’”

Paul must mean that Ishmael and his descendants are “children of the flesh,” while the “children of the promise” are Isaac and his descendants. The latter rightly acquire the label “seed,” who are the “seed” of Abraham and the “children of God,” to whom He made the promises. And Paul knows this to be true because God said specifically to Abraham in Genesis 18:10 & 14, “At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son.” Paul calls this divine statement “the message of the promise,” because, like God’s two promises to Abraham as I stated above, this additional declaration to Abraham is of the same nature. If God says that Sarah will give birth to a son the following year, then He is promising this to her with the same force of its being guaranteed—just like His promises to make Abraham’s physical descendants a “great nation” and to grant to Abraham and other believers eternal life. There will be no stopping of God in what He has said He is going to do. And I think that Paul is speaking within the context of **Status Quo Theology**, that God will fulfill His Abrahamic promises exactly as He stated them in Genesis 12:1-3.

Therefore, Paul is arguing *from the physical to the spiritual*. God promised a physical son to Abraham, Isaac, so that not all his sons (such as Ishmael) are included in the promise and can be considered “children of God.” In other words, God did not promise Ishmael, Hagar’s son, to Abraham, and the result is that Ishmael is not one of the “children of God” like Isaac. But just as Ishmael as a physical descendant of Abraham is not included in this group, so also some of Jacob’s descendants are not included in the group “Israel.” They are “from Israel,” meaning that they are physical descendants of Jacob, but not all of them are “Israel” as complete spiritual descendants of Abraham. In order for a Jew to be a complete spiritual descendant of Abraham, he must have authentic belief in God and eventually the Messiah—like Paul. He is one who is “from Israel” and is a member of “Israel.” This contains a very important

ramification for how we view the Jews even today, which will become clearer after we consider the next paragraph of Romans 9:10-13.

**ROMANS 9:10-13**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:10</b> And not only this, but Rebekah also, after she had sexual relations with one man, Isaac our father—<b>9:11</b> for even though they were neither born yet nor had done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to choice would continue, <b>9:12</b> not on the basis of actions but on the basis of Him who calls, it was said to her,</p> <p>The older will serve the younger &lt;Genesis 25:23&gt;, <b>9:13</b> just as it has been written,</p> <p>I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau &lt;Malachi 1:2,3&gt;.</p>	<p><b>Romans 9:10</b> Οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ῥεβέκκα ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα, Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν <b>11</b> μήπω γὰρ γεννηθέντων μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον, ἵνα ἡ κατ’ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένη, <b>12</b> οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος, ἐρρέθη ὁ αὐτῇ ὅτι</p> <p><b>ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι.</b></p> <p><b>13</b> Ἰκαθὼς γέγραπται·</p> <p><b>τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἡσαὺ ἐμίσησα.</b></p>

Here is another handy analogy for Paul to use to make his point about Jacob’s physical descendants. In this case, Rebekah, who was Isaac’s wife, had two sons, Jacob and Esau. They had not yet been “born,” and they had not “done anything good or bad” that revealed their spiritual, moral, and inward condition. But God already had a plan for each of them that would be His “purpose according to choice.” The mechanism of God’s making a sovereign and independent choice in regard to each human being, whom He creates, that occurs long before they come into existence and do anything is what Paul is emphasizing here. Before Esau and Jacob became Esau and Jacob in real life in human history, God made a decision about their relationship with one another. In order that “God’s purpose according to choice would continue” to unfold in the lives of Esau and Jacob, and before Rebekah gave birth to them, He “said to her” in Genesis 25:23, “The older will serve the younger.” God meant that Esau’s being born first before his fraternal twin brother Jacob would not result in Esau’s maintaining the position of priority in the family so as to inherit the promises of God through Isaac. Instead, God fully intended to reverse the cultural norm and grant His promises to the second-born, Jacob. Again, Paul’s explanation does not lend itself to supporting **Replacement Theology**—that the Christian church replaces Jacob’s physical descendants as those who will rule over Esau’s physical descendants. It supports **Status Quo Theology** to this effect, when the people of Israel became the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3 and rule the world with their king, Jesus the Messiah.

Paul says in v. 12 that the “basis” for this happening is not the “actions” of Esau and Jacob but God, “who calls” certain people into existence “according to [His!] choice,” so that they may participate as people of authentic belief in His bringing to completion His purposes and obtain His promises. He also quotes Malachi 1:2,3 that pertains to God’s chosen relationship with the two sons, “I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau.” I do not think that God is referring to His actual feelings towards these two men—as if He had a visceral, hatred of Esau while His feelings for Jacob were something like puppy love. Instead, He is saying that He was committed to bringing about the best possible outcome for Jacob and his physical descendants while He was not committed to doing so for Esau and his physical descendants. And we know that the best possible outcome for any sinful human being is to take part in the “great nation” of the people of Israel and to obtain eternal life.

Therefore, Paul is using Esau and Jacob in the same manner as he used Ishmael and Isaac. Jacob is considered “the ‘seed’ of Abraham,” while Esau is not. The status of Jacob and his physical descendants is to be “children of God,” while the status of Esau and his descendants is to be merely “children of the flesh.” Jacob and his descendants are “children of the promise,” but Esau and his descendants (ethnically speaking) are physically outside the promises of God. In this way, Paul once more is arguing *from the physical to the spiritual*. In regard to his original statement in v. 6, “all those who are from Israel, these are

not Israel,” God has purposefully chosen to fulfill the Abrahamic promises to Jacob and his physical descendants, while He has also purposefully chosen to fulfill these same promises to *only* some of Jacob’s physical descendants and not to the rest. This is to say that Jacob’s physical descendants are the ethnic chosen people of God, while *some* of them are the spiritual chosen people of God. In addition, we can say that these whom I am labeling “some of Jacob’s physical descendants” are “Israel,” i.e., *complete spiritual* descendants of Abraham, who both physically descend from Jacob/Israel and spiritually demonstrate the same kind of belief in God as Abraham.

If I am right about how Paul is presenting his explanation, then he is promoting **Status Quo Theology** and not **Replacement Theology**. And the important ramification of verses 6-13 is that we must always think of the Jews in two ways. The first is that they all are the “seed’ of Abraham” and “children of God” as the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The second is that *some* of them are truly “Israel,” the *complete spiritual* descendants of Abraham to whom God will fulfill both His promises in Genesis 12:1-3—1) to become the most powerful nation in human history and 2) to enter into the eternal Kingdom of God. Consequently, God has made the promises to the *entire* nation of Israel who have the *potential* to enjoy their fulfillment. Yet, His “purpose according to choice” spiritually speaking is to bring about their fulfillment for only a sub-group of Jews, who down through history become authentic believers in Him like their patriarch Abraham.

Having presented his argument that God has chosen some Jews to be like himself as authentic believers, Paul anticipates an objection which someone might make towards God. Thus, he states and answers the question starting in Romans 9:14-18.

**ROMANS 9:14-18**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:14</b> What, therefore, shall we say? There is no injustice with God, is there? Absolutely not!</p> <p><b>9:15</b> For He says to Moses,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion &lt;Exodus 33:19&gt;.</p> <p><b>9:16</b> Therefore then, it does not belong to the one who wills, nor to the one who exerts himself, but it belongs to God who performs mercy. <b>9:17</b> For the scripture says to Pharaoh,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For this reason I raised you up, so that I could demonstrate My power by means of you and so that My name could be proclaimed in all the earth &lt;Exodus 9:16&gt;.</p> <p><b>9:18</b> Therefore then, He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.</p>	<p><b>Romans 9:14</b> Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἀδικία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ; μὴ γένοιτο. <b>15</b> τῷ Μωϋσεὶ γὰρ λέγει·</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω.</b></p> <p><b>16</b> ἄρα οὖν οὐ τοῦ θέλοντος οὐδὲ τοῦ τρέχοντος ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἔλεῶντος θεοῦ. <b>17</b> λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή τῷ Φαραῶ ὅτι</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξήγειρά σε ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν δύναμίν μου καὶ ὅπως διαγγελῆ τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῆ.</b></p> <p><b>18</b> ἄρα οὖν ὃν θέλει ᾧ ἐλεεῖ, ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει.</p>

Is it not both unjust and unfair for God to choose the entire group of Jews as the chosen people of God but to choose that only some of them be “Israel.” Is it not both unjust and unfair for God to label, on one level, all the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “children of God” (v. 8), while, on another level, He plans to make only some of them authentic believers, who will receive the fulfillment of His two promises to Abraham? Does it seem fair and right that some Jews will miss out on the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, and yet He calls the entire nation of Israel “children of the promise?” Yes, indeed, it does look like this to us! First, we do not label people one thing and then use the label differently in the future. For example, we would not label all those who live in the United States “Americans,” who have the potential to live freely and prosperously, and then say that some of them are not “Americans”? Or would we? Hmm...

Second, we human beings hardly grant to anyone something good without first taking into account their actions, which may or may not deserve the good thing. However, Paul says that this is not the case with Esau and Jacob, and by implication, with the Jews. Indeed, “Absolutely not!” God is not unfair or unjust to grant belief and the fulfillment of His promises to some Jews and not to others. His sovereign choice of which spiritual condition they acquire and its ramifications is not dependent on first evaluating their moral or spiritual behavior. And Paul begins his argument of this fact in v. 15 by quoting from Exodus 33:19 when God “says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’”

We could interpret God as saying that He grants mercy and compassion to those who deserve it because of their good actions. But, in the context of Exodus 33 and Romans 9, God and Paul respectively mean that God chooses the particular sinful human beings “on whom [He has] mercy” and “on whom [He has] compassion” on the basis of His independent sovereign plans and purposes—*without taking into account any sinful human being’s actions*. As Paul said in v. 11, God chooses to extend mercy and compassion by His “purpose according to choice,” by which he means in complete agreement with His intention to choose the individuals who receive His mercy and compassion without their deserving it or even fulfilling the necessary condition of believing in Him.

This is why Paul goes on to say in v. 16 that “it does not belong to the one who wills, nor to the one who exerts himself.” To what is he referring by the word “it”? I think it is God’s having “mercy on whom [He has] mercy,” etc. In other words, God’s decision to be merciful to only certain sinful human beings is not based on people who “will” with their wills or who “exert” themselves with their choice-making mechanisms. Instead, Paul says that “it belongs to God who performs mercy.” The decision for God to extend forgiveness to sinful human beings is God’s possession alone. Human beings do not motivate God to grant them mercy by their choices and actions. Only God motivates God to do so by His autonomous and independent will.

And, in v. 17, Paul provides good evidence for this perspective of the dynamic that exists between God and human beings by quoting His statement to the Egyptian Pharaoh in Exodus 9:16, “For this reason I raised you up, so that I could demonstrate My power by means of you and so that My name could be proclaimed in all the earth.” We might be tempted to interpret God as saying that, while Pharaoh was in the process of making himself king of Egypt, God took the opportunity to use his evil choices to reveal His power, character, and actions—so that Pharaoh’s choices were completely free and undetermined by God, while God’s choices were likewise completely free and undetermined by Pharaoh. Therefore, God sovereignly and independently chose to respond with His justice and power to Pharaoh, who independently chose to engage in doing evil.

However, I think that this whole section of Romans 9-11 is teaching that not only were Pharaoh’s choices altogether determined by God, but also were and are and will be all the choices of all human beings throughout history. Likewise, God’s choices are never in any way determined or dependent on the choices of human beings. Ironically, this is all true while we human beings do not at all feel that God is determining our choices as Paul demonstrates in 9:2-3 when he laments that he has great sorrow in his heart and wished that he could trade places with his fellow Jews who are unbelieving and destined for God’s wrath and destruction if they do not change and become authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

Therefore, in v. 18, Paul states the logical conclusion explicitly that God “has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.” Again, it is God’s will and not the human will that, in the end, determines whether sinful human beings receive God’s mercy when He changes their hearts, or they persistently demonstrate hearts that are stubborn and rebellious towards Him. This gives rise to another important question about God and His relationship with created, human beings, so that Paul asks this question and answers it in the next paragraph of Romans 9:19-24.

**ROMANS 9:19-24**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:19</b> You will say to me then, “Why does He still blame people for their evil, for who has ever resisted His will?” <b>9:20</b> On the contrary O man, who you are, the one who is defending himself</p>	<p><b>Romans 9:19</b> Ἐρεῖς μοι σὺν τί ὁ[οὖν] ἔτι μέμφεται; τῷ γὰρ βουλήματι αὐτοῦ τίς ἀνθέστηκεν; <b>20</b> ὁ ἄνθρωπε, μενοῦνγε ἰὸν τίς εἶ ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος τῷ θεῷ;</p>

<p>against God? The thing which is molded will not say to the molder,</p> <p>“Why did you make me like this,” will it &lt;Isaiah 29:16&gt;?</p> <p><b>9:21</b> Does not the potter of the clay have the right to make from the same lump one clay pot for honor and another clay pot for dishonor?</p> <p><b>9:22</b> If God, while desiring to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, has endured with great patience clay pots of wrath which were made for a destiny of destruction, <b>9:23</b> then He has done so in order that He make known the riches of His glory on clay pots of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for a destiny of glory—<b>9:24</b> even us whom He called, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles.</p>	<p><b>μη ἐρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι τί με ἔποίησας οὕτως;</b></p> <p><b>21</b> ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ὁ κεραμεὺς τοῦ πηλοῦ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ φυράματος ποιῆσαι ὃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκευὸς ὃ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν;</p> <p><b>Romans 9:22</b> εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ ὤηνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ ἡ σκευὴ ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν. <b>23</b> καὶ ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς ἰδότητος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σκευῇ ἐλέους ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν; <b>24</b> Οὗς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν,</p>
--	--

We human beings naturally think that our choices are completely free from God, and, as such, we are accountable to God for them. However, Paul’s previous statements that God ultimately causes our choices should mean that we are not accountable to Him for them. Right?! How can God “still blame people for their evil,” when He, from His transcendent position, is creating their choices? (This implies a huge philosophical issue—that it is theologically impossible for anything and everything in the creation, including our human choices, to exist without God’s creating them. And this is exactly what Paul is addressing, albeit very briefly.)

How can God “blame people for their evil, for who has ever resisted His will?” If someone puts a gun in my hand and forces me to pull the trigger so that I kill another human being, certainly I am not the one who actually shoots him. The person who caused me to pull the trigger made me do it. Therefore, he is accountable and to be blamed, not me. This line of reasoning is very logical and commonsensical. In the same way, we would think that, if God puts my choices in my mind and will so that He causes me to choose them, does not the same logic apply? I am not to blame for my choices. He is—it would seem.

But Paul offers a different answer in v. 20, “On the contrary O man, who are you, the one who is defending himself against God?” Depending on how this question is translated from the Greek text, it can sound as though Paul is rebuking anyone simply for asking, “God, how can you hold me accountable for my choices if You are the one who is primarily causing them?” In other words, who has the right to object to what God is doing and how He does it, so that it is evil even to ask the question? However, another way to interpret Paul is to hear him saying that he wants us human beings to consider carefully exactly “who [we] are” as creatures of God in the midst of our “defending” ourselves “against” Him. Paul goes on to claim that each one of us is a “thing which is molded,” while God is “the molder.” He wants us to imagine what it would be like for a lump of clay on a potter’s wheel all of a sudden to speak to the potter and ask indignantly, “Why did you make me like this?” The wheel is turning with the clay in the middle, and the potter with his hands is shaping it exactly how he wants. And suddenly the clay cries out and objects to how the potter is forming it. Does this make sense, that the clay should speak and has the right to question the potter who is making it into what he wants? Obviously not. Consequently, Paul’s point is that it is completely irrational and inappropriate for a lump of clay to address its potter in this manner.

Likewise, it makes no sense that we would address the same kind of question to God, “Why did you make me like Esau, to whom You are not committed to fulfill Your promises to Abraham, instead of like Jacob, to whom You are committed to fulfill these promises?” On one level, *our existential level* as human beings, we naturally think that we have the right to determine completely what choices we make and exactly what kind of person we choose to be, so that no one else has the right or authority to tell us what to think, feel, or do. Nevertheless, there is *another level of reality* that it is at work in our existences as human beings and that is completely different. This is *the level of the sovereign God*, who is the uncreated and transcendent author of all the created reality. And Paul likens Him to a potter and us to a lump of clay on His potter’s wheel. And what do we naturally grant the potter who is shaping the clay on

his wheel? The absolute right to mold it exactly as he desires. Therefore, the analogy is that God has the transcendent right to make us the kind of human beings that *He* wants—either to be like Esau and Pharaoh, who may end up persistent rebels against God and who experience His wrath and destruction, or to be like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who end up (like Paul) believing in God and enjoying the fulfillment of His two promises.

As a result, Paul says next in v. 21, “Does not the potter of the clay have the right to make from the same lump one clay pot for honor and another clay pot for dishonor?” How can we say, “No”? It would not make any sense to do so. Of course, the potter of the clay, just as the author of a book (to offer another analogy), shapes the clay and writes his story exactly as he chooses. He is the shaper of the clay and writer of the story *outside the clay and the story* and to whom we all naturally and logically acknowledge the power, authority, right, and prerogative to do exactly as he deems correct and appropriate to accomplish his own purposes. Plus, we naturally allow the author of a novel to hold accountable for their choices the characters whom he creates within his story while he is in the process of telling it. Likewise, it is entirely logical and reasonable to allow God to blame people for their evil choices even though He shapes and causes them, because He exists *outside the creation* on the only uncreated level of reality, while we are characters *inside the creation* in His story and exist strictly on a created level of reality.

In accord with these commonsensical notions (as difficult as they may be for us to accept regarding God and us), Paul then begins the next paragraph, “If God, while desiring to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, has endured with great patience clay pots of wrath, which were made for a destiny of destruction, . . .” Certainly, we are encountering some tough theology to swallow. Paul is saying that God has made some sinful human beings with the express purpose of being angry with them at the final judgment, which, in turn, will result in His destroying them for all eternity. Plus, God will do this because He wants to show off His character and appropriate response of justice and punishment to evil and sin. Indeed, He will be angry with those sinners who persist in being like Pharaoh and rebel against Him, and He will condemn them and assign them to eternal destruction—because this is what they deserve (in spite of the fact that it was God who molded and shaped them and caused them to be this kind of clay pots!).

Paul then expands the logic of these statements to say that, while God has created certain human beings to destroy them eternally, it is “in order that He make known the riches of His glory on clay pots for mercy, which He prepared beforehand for a destiny of glory.” Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Paul are the kind of “clay pots” who will receive God’s eternal “mercy,” and this is exactly what God purposed so that “He prepared” and shaped them on His potter’s wheel to be sinful human beings of authentic belief. Therefore, they satisfy the condition necessary to take part in the “great nation” of earthly Israel and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. With these “clay pots,” God will “make known the riches of His glory,” the magnificence of His forgiveness and gift of moral perfection and life that will go on forever just as God goes on forever into the future—having come from forever in the past.

Then Paul adds an additional explanation of the dynamic between God and sinful human beings, that He has “called” some of them to a “destiny of glory” in eternal life. He means that God actively works upon them and within them to change them into sinners who believe in Him and genuinely want His mercy and gift of eternal life. Besides, these particular human beings are “not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles.” While the entire nation of Israel and descendants of Jacob are a special ethnic group in and of themselves, God has prepared and purposed that some of them within this group and some people within all the other ethnic groups in the world be “clay pots of mercy.” These sub-groups of authentic believers from both the Jews and the Gentiles will experience God’s fulfilling His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. As a result, they will see the “great nation” of Israel on this earth and enjoy eternal life on the next earth as described in Revelation 20-22.

Paul has thus explained in vs. 19-24 that God is the potter of each one of us, His clay pots, meaning also that He is the author of the characters whom He has written into the story of the creation and human history. The result of God’s being our potter and author is that He sovereignly determines our choices, while also rightly holding us accountable for them. In addition, God has “called” both some Jews and some Gentiles to acquire the “glory” of the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham. Because these ideas fit with either **Replacement Theology** or **Status Quo Theology**, we cannot tell from them alone which exactly is Paul’s understanding. I have been suggesting that the latter is correct up to this point in Romans 9, and we will see if this holds true through the rest of the three chapters. For example, Paul now provides further evidence for the potter and clay (author and character) dynamic in Romans 9:25-29 with three quotes from Old Testament prophets.

**ROMANS 9:25-29**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:25</b> This is similar to what He says in Hosea,</p> <p>I shall call those who are not My people “My people” and her who is not beloved “beloved,” <b>9:26</b> and it shall be in the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” there they shall be designated “sons of the living God” &lt;Hosea 2:23;1:10&gt;.</p> <p><b>9:27</b> And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,</p> <p>Even though the number of the sons of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved, <b>9:28</b> for soon Yahweh will execute His determined plan completely on the land &lt;Isaiah 10:22,23&gt;.</p> <p><b>9:29</b> And just as Isaiah foretold,</p> <p>Unless Yahweh of battalions had left behind a ‘seed’ for us, we would have become as Sodom and we would be like Gomorrah &lt;Isaiah 1:9&gt;.</p>	<p><b>25</b> ὡς καὶ ὅτι ἐν τῷ Ὡσηὲ λέγει·</p> <p>καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου καὶ τὴν οὐκ ἠγαπημένην ἠγαπημένην·</p> <p><b>26</b> καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ᾧ ἔρρέθη αὐτοῖς·</p> <p>οὐ λαός μου ὄμεις, ἐκεῖ κληθήσονται υἱοὶ θεοῦ ζῶντος.</p> <p><b>27</b> Ἡσαΐας δὲ κράζει ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ·</p> <p>ἐὰν ἦ ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸ ὑπόλειμμα σωθήσεται·</p> <p><b>28</b> λόγον γὰρ συντελῶν καὶ συντέμνων ᾧ ποιήσει κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.</p> <p><b>29</b> καὶ καθὼς προεῖρηκεν Ἡσαΐας·</p> <p>εἰ μὴ κύριος σαβαὼθ ἐγκατέλιπεν ἡμῖν σπέρμα, ὡς Σόδομα ἂν ἐγενήθημεν καὶ ὡς Γόμορρα ἂν ὁμοιωθῆμεν.</p>

Paul has described how God creates two kinds of human beings—like a potter shaping his clay (or like an author who writes characters into his story). Some sinful human beings will justifiably incur God’s wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction, and some will experience His grace, mercy, and gift of eternal life—with the latter coming from both the Jews and the Gentiles, because they are “called” by God from the entire human race. In v. 25, he says that this is “similar to what [God] says in Hosea” during the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Through this prophet, God told the Jews that He would eventually “call those who are not My people ‘My people’ and her who is not beloved ‘beloved.’” Is God perhaps saying that He is going to “call” Gentiles, who are not technically His chosen people, into the arena of “My [His] people” by causing them to demonstrate authentic belief in Him so that they *replace* Israel—in line with **Replacement Theology**? This is certainly plausible given the language. But I think that the context of Hosea 2:23 points to His speaking of the Jews. Most of the nation of Israel in both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah have been stubborn of heart and rebelling against God around 740 B.C. As a result, they have been acting like pagan Gentiles as if they are not His chosen people. Nevertheless, God declares to them that, at some time in Israel’s future, He will “call” the Jews to repentance and change their hearts so that they will all truly be His “people” of genuine faith and obedience.

I think that God through Hosea is speaking of that miraculous moment when Jesus returns and Israel as an entire nation acquire circumcised hearts and live on the land of Israel under his rule. This is another case of God’s predicting that a sub-group of Jews will finally fulfill the requirement that He has placed upon them to be the “Israel” of Romans 9:6, as He has always wanted them to be. They will each demonstrate authentic belief from a heart which God has changed. But we notice that Paul quotes this Old Testament passage about the Jews just after stating that God makes “known the riches of His glory of clay pots of mercy,...—even us whom He called, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles.” Therefore, even though God is referring to the Jews in Hosea 2:23, is Paul saying that this passage is about both Jews and Gentiles? Or is Paul teaching **Replacement Theology**, that the church is the new Israel, so that it is legitimate to change the interpretation of Hosea 2:23 and understand it to be referring to Christians after Jesus’ first appearance instead of to the nation of Israel? I do not think that either option is correct. Instead, I suggest that Paul is committed to **Status Quo Theology** just as much as God

is, so that he is quoting Hosea about the Jews to make the point that God changes both Jews and Gentiles who have had *unchanged* hearts and gives them *changed* hearts of authentic belief. In other words, similar to Romans 9:6-13, Paul is arguing from the physical Jews to the spiritual Jews and Gentiles.

The people of Israel are God's chosen ethnic group, but it is only some of them to whom He grants authentic belief leading to their being the "great nation" and obtaining eternal salvation. The peoples of the Gentiles are not God's chosen ethnic groups, and it is only some of them, too, to whom God grants authentic belief and participation in the "great nation" of Israel and eternal salvation. Paul is therefore saying that, while God's "mercy" is true of the individual Jews who are "called" to "a destiny of glory," it is also true of the individual Gentiles who are "called" to the same eternal destiny. Therefore, the situation will be "similar" to what God is predicting through Hosea. As I said, in this way, Paul is arguing from the individual, physical descendants of Jacob, who become spiritual descendants of Abraham, to also the individual, physical Gentiles, who become spiritual descendants of Abraham. In this manner, God maintains the status quo of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Next, in vs. 27-28, Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22-23, and I think that it is to the same effect. Paul explicitly says, "And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel," that the "remnant" of Jews "will be saved" from their earthly enemies and from God's eternal condemnation "even though the number of the sons of Israel [Jacob] will be as the sand of the sea." Jacob's physical descendants will be so numerous as to be practically immeasurable. Yet, God will rescue some of them and make them the "great nation" of His Abrahamic promise, freeing them from the oppression of their earthly enemies and from His eternal judgment. Indeed, Isaiah states that "soon Yahweh will execute His determined plan completely on the land." I think that the "soon" in this verse means "forthwith," i.e., as soon as God is ready. And this will be exactly when He has planned to fulfill His promise and make the nation of Israel rule the earth with Jesus the Messiah's ruling them as they together rule the earth.

And the third quote is also from Isaiah, where the prophet predicts the opposite experience of Sodom and Gomorrah for the nation of Israel. Instead of complete destruction, Israel will find themselves in a situation of complete safety, security, and prosperity on the land of Israel. And this will be because God has "left behind a 'seed' for us," which is for the Jews. Throughout history, God has judged and disciplined the Jews, even rather harshly, so that it looks as though they might almost disappear from the earth. However, God has always made sure that this does not happen. And the result is that He will inwardly transform a sub-group of the entire ethnic group of Israel into a people who fulfill the condition to be the "great nation" of His promise. The "seed" of Jews will eventually be a whole nation exhibiting genuine belief and obedience, while also living on the land which God promised them through Abraham, and worshiping God with their changed hearts as He has always required of them. Like the other two passages from Hosea and Isaiah, I think that this will ultimately happen when Jesus returns and finally becomes their Messiah, king, and priest. As Zacharias says in Luke 1:77, the messianic nation of Israel will embrace "the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins" through Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and return. And just as God preserves a "remnant" of Jews whom He calls to live authentic faith, He also calls a sub-group of Gentiles to the same kind of life and eternal destiny.

Again, Paul is declaring that the dynamic of God's purpose, choice, calling, and granting the destiny of eternal life is always the same for all those who gain the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. In the final analysis and in regard to sinful human beings' acquiring the fulfillment of God's promises, He does not employ a mechanism towards Jews that is any different from His mechanism towards Gentiles. He supernaturally changes their inwardness, so that they become genuine in their belief and obedience to Him—and now also to Jesus as the Messiah. Consequently, to argue from the physical Jewish descendants to spiritual Jewish descendants works also as a good argument for God's working among the other ethnic groups of physical Gentiles and causing some of them to become spiritual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is why Paul says God's calling both Jews and Gentiles to "a destiny of glory" (cf. vs. 23-24) is "similar" (*hos* (ὅς)) to His calling Jews from the nation of Israel to the same destiny, as stated in Hosea and Isaiah.

Therefore, Paul is continuing to uphold the **Status Quo Theology** of the Abrahamic Covenant, and he continues to speak of this in the next paragraphs of Romans 9:20-10:3.

**ROMANS 9:10-10:3**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>9:30</b> Therefore, what shall we say? That the Gentiles, who were not looking for justification, laid hold of justification, and this is the justification which is by virtue of belief. <b>9:31</b> But Israel, while striving after the Covenant of justification, did not arrive at the Covenant. <b>9:32</b> Why not? Because they did not pursue justification by belief but as though they could obtain it by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, <b>9:33</b> just as it was written,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and an offensive rock, and he who believes in it will not become ashamed &lt;Isaiah 8:14; 28:16&gt;.</p> <p><b>10:1</b> Brothers, my heart's desire and my appeal to God on their behalf is for their salvation. <b>10:2</b> I attest that they have a zeal for God, but it is not according to a proper understanding. <b>10:3</b> Because they do not really grasp God's justification and seek to establish their own justification, they do not submit to God's justification.</p>	<p><b>Romans 9:30</b> Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβεν ἡ δικαιοσύνην, δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως. <b>31</b> Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης ἔεις νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν. <b>32</b> διὰ τί; ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἔργων ἡ προσέκοψαν τῷ λίθῳ τοῦ προσκόμματος, <b>33</b> καθὼς γέγραπται:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιών λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασυχυθήσεται.</b></p> <p><b>Romans 10:1</b> Ἀδελφοί, ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας καὶ ἡ δέησις πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν εἰς σωτηρίαν. <b>2</b> μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὅτι ζῆλον θεοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀλλ' οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν <b>3</b> ἀγνοοῦντες γὰρ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν ὁ[δικαιοσύνην] ζητοῦντες στήσαι, τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑπετάγησαν.</p>

Now that Paul has argued from three Old Testament passages the similarity of certain Jews' and certain Gentiles' becoming authentic in their faith and obedience to God on the basis of His gracious choice, while all other Jews and Gentiles remain unbelieving and disobedient (also on the basis of God's sovereign purpose and plan), he again expresses his sadness about the condition of most of "Israel." In 9:6, with this word he meant spiritual Israel, the Jews who acquire God's grace and authentic faith. Here, he means the physical, unbelieving Israel, the Jews who continue to rebel against God and who lack authentic faith. Paul begins by asking the rhetorical question, "Therefore, what shall we say?" And he is referring to the fact that God has "called" Gentiles to salvation and to eternal salvation, while causing Jews, who are His chosen ethnic people, to be allotted to eternal destruction.

Paul answers this question in v. 30 by explaining in more detail what has happened to both Gentiles and Jews. On the one hand, Gentiles "were not looking for justification," and yet they have "laid hold of justification?" And how have they done so? By "virtue of belief." For example, the Gentile Christians in Rome to whom Paul is writing. Were they traveling the far reaches of the empire desperately searching for the God of the Jews and Jesus as the Messiah? Not at all. Most likely, they were quite content in their existences as pagan idolators, while assuming that they would persist in this religion for the rest of their lives. Then, all of a sudden, someone came along (we do not know who this person was) and talked to them about the good news of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. And remarkably, indeed miraculously, God changed their hearts, and they believed the message which they were hearing. As a result, they acquired a standing before God of "justification" that will eventually lead to eternal salvation.

However, Paul says in v. 31 that "Israel," i.e., the Jewish nation for the most part, have been "striving after the Covenant of justification," but they "did not arrive at the Covenant." This is a key notion about the Mosaic Covenant. It seems that most Christians believe there is a radical distinction between the Mosaic Covenant (of Moses, obviously) and the New Covenant (of Jesus), that it is theologically possible to become acceptable, justified, and eternally saved by following only the latter. However, I think that Paul is affirming here that a Jew can acquire "justification" before God by *properly obeying* the Mosaic Covenant. And how are they able to do so? According to Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:1-10, by God's circumcising

their hearts, so that they pursue performing all 613 commandments with changed hearts and humble repentance and belief.

Yet, the people of Israel in Paul's day were "striving" to obey this covenant without doing so in the manner in which God required for them to acquire "justification." And why were they not achieving "justification" before God as they sought to obey the Mosaic Covenant? "Because," Paul says in v. 32, "they did not pursue [it] by belief," which is to say that they did not have changed hearts by which they were believing God authentically for the truth which He conveyed to them through the Mosaic Covenant. Instead, they thought that "they could obtain it by works." Their lack of changed inwardness kept them in their sinfulness to the degree that they thought that they could make themselves worthy of "justification" and the rest of God's promises simply by obeying the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant outwardly and by means of their own human (sinful!) ability and resources.

This meant, Paul says, that they "stumbled over the stumbling stone," which God expressed in Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, "Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and an offensive rock, and he who believes in it will not become ashamed." I suggest that in the context of Isaiah 8 and 28, the "stumbling stone" in Jerusalem is God's grace and sovereign initiative to make the Jews a people who satisfy His condition for salvation and for receiving His promises. It is God, as the transcendent author of the story, who causes people by His grace to become changed in their hearts and who believe in Him genuinely. But if the Jews stumble over this stone of God's grace, both by not seeing their sin accurately and by not recognizing the significance of God's purpose and plan to extend mercy to them on the basis of His own gracious choice, then they can labor all they want to obey the Mosaic Covenant and never obtain what they hope to receive—"justification" and the fulfillment of His promises.

Because this is the situation for most of the Jews in his day, Paul is lamenting (again) to his fellow Christians, who are Gentiles in Rome, "Brothers, my heart's desire and my appeal to God on their behalf is for their salvation." As he said at the beginning of chapter 9, he has a profound ache in his heart for his fellow-countrymen, the Jews, to become authentic believers in God and in Jesus as their Messiah. He wants them to obtain the same salvation from God's wrath and destruction that he has found. Paul admits that the Jews, such as those in leadership in Jerusalem, who rejected Jesus as the Messiah and persuaded the Romans to crucify him, "have a zeal for God." They are definitely studying their Old Testaments, the Mosaic Covenant, and the teachings of their key recent theologians, so that they are engaging every fiber of their beings, their hearts and souls, into obeying God and what He has taught the Jews in His scriptures. Consequently, no one can deny that they are committed and serious about their attempts to please God by following His commandments. Nevertheless, all this effort and activity "is not according to a proper understanding."

Pauls says that the Jews "do not really grasp God's justification," which means that they have not comprehended the humanly insoluble depth of their sin. They do not understand that it is impossible for them to please God in and of themselves and apart from His sovereign, gracious work within them. As a result of their tragic *mis*understanding, they "seek to establish their own justification" based on their religious "works" of performing the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant." Thus, "they do not submit to God's justification" of the necessity of *first* His changing their hearts by His grace and *then* their demonstrating authentic belief in Him and in Jesus as the Messiah—while also pursuing obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as their national obligation as Jews.

Is Paul expressing **Replacement Theology**—that the relatively few Jewish Christians and the proportionately many Gentile Christians have replaced Old Testament Israel, because the latter have forfeited their right to the Abrahamic promises by attempting to gain God's acceptance and blessing through their "works" of the Mosaic Covenant and their rejection of Jesus the Messiah that comes from their sin and unbelief? It would certainly seem that this is the case. But, in Romans 10:4-13, Paul goes on to explain more carefully God's purpose for the Mosaic Covenant in His relationship with the nation of Israel and how this purpose pertains to becoming a follower of Jesus.

### **ROMANS 10:4-13**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>10:4</b> For the goal of the Covenant is the Messiah with the result of justification to everyone who believes. <b>10:5</b> For Moses writes concerning</p>	<p><b>Romans 10:4</b> τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι. <b>5</b> Μωϋσῆς γὰρ γράφει τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου ὅτι</p>

<p>justification that is by virtue of the Mosaic Covenant,</p> <p>The man who practices the things shall live by means of them &lt;Leviticus 18:5&gt;.</p> <p><b>10:6</b> And justification by virtue of belief speaks in this manner,</p> <p>Do not say in your heart &lt;Deuteronomy 9:4&gt;, “Who will ascend into heaven &lt;Deuteronomy 30:12&gt;?”</p> <p>This is to bring the Messiah down. <b>10:7</b> Or,</p> <p>“Who will descend into the abyss &lt;similar to Deuteronomy 30:13&gt;?”</p> <p>This is to bring the Messiah up from the dead. <b>10:8</b> Rather, what does it say?</p> <p>The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart &lt;Deuteronomy 30:14&gt;.</p> <p>This is the message of belief, which we are proclaiming, <b>10:9</b> because, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <b>10:10</b> With the heart a person believes with the result of justification, and with the mouth he confesses with the result of salvation. <b>10:11</b> For the scripture says,</p> <p>Everyone who believes in it will not become ashamed &lt;Isaiah 28:16&gt;.</p> <p><b>10:12</b> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same person is Lord of all, because He is rich towards all who call upon Him.</p> <p><b>10:13</b> For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved &lt;Joel 2:32&gt;.</p>	<p>ὁ ποιήσας ὁ αὐτὰ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.</p> <p><b>6</b> ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη οὕτως λέγει·</p> <p><b>μὴ εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου· τίς ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν;</b></p> <p>τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χριστὸν καταγαγεῖν <b>7</b> ἢ·</p> <p><b>τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον;</b></p> <p>τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν. <b>8</b> ἀλλὰ τί λέγει;</p> <p><b>ἐγγύς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου.</b></p> <p>τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ κηρύσσομεν. <b>9</b> ὅτι ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ. <b>10</b> καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν. <b>11</b> λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή·</p> <p><b>πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ καταισχυθήσεται.</b></p> <p><b>12</b> οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλλήνου, ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς κύριος πάντων, πλουτῶν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους αὐτόν·</p> <p><b>13</b> πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται.</p>
--	--

There are at least two ways to translate Romans 10:4—

- 1) “For the Messiah is the end of the Covenant for righteousness to everyone who believes.”
- 2) “For the goal of the Covenant is the Messiah with the result of justification to everyone who believes.”

The first translation, common in many English Bibles, makes it sound as though Jesus, with the New Covenant, brings a complete end to the Mosaic Covenant, so that the Jews should no longer concern themselves with it at all. Indeed, some Christians go so far as to claim that any Jew who seeks to follow

the Mosaic Covenant in grossly sinning against God, because this constitutes an abject denial of Jesus as the Messiah—even if the person believes in Jesus as the Messiah. But I do not think that option #1 is coherent with what Paul goes on to say in v. 5 when he quotes Leviticus 18:5, “The man who practices the things shall live by means of them.” And Paul says that Moses writes this statement “concerning justification that is by virtue of the Mosaic Covenant.” In other words, Moses is presenting the important truth that actually performing “the things” of the Covenant, which are the instructions of the Mosaic Covenant, brings life (and eventually eternal life) to the Jew who does so. But what kind of performing or practicing are both Moses and Paul talking about? I think that it is exactly the same one that the New Testament requires of Christians who obey the good news of Jesus as the Messiah. The proper and life-bringing practice of either the Mosaic Covenant or the New Covenant is that which comes from a changed heart and authentic belief in God.

Therefore, if a Jew obeys the Mosaic Covenant in this biblical manner, Paul says that he will recognize that “the goal of the Covenant is the Messiah with the result of justification to everyone who believes.” The changed-heart Jew is the one who understands that bringing sacrifices and offerings of bulls and goats to God does not result in His complete and eternal forgiveness. Instead, these animal sacrifices only point to something (or someone) else whose sacrifice accomplishes this vital response from God. Sacrificing and offering animals to God is merely a picture of another more important and necessary sacrifice—that of the Messiah. Nevertheless, before Jesus arrived and became this indispensable offering to God when he died on the cross, the Jews in Old Testament times who exhibited authentic belief in God, while they were genuinely committed to following the Mosaic Covenant, achieved “justification” in anticipation of a better sacrifice than their bulls, goats, pigeons, etc.

Paul then goes on to explain, starting in 10:6, “And justification by virtue of belief speaks in this manner, ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?”’ This is to bring the Messiah down.” Here and through v. 9, he quotes from Deuteronomy 9:4 and Deuteronomy 30:12-14 where Moses encourages the Israelites *individually* (“you” is singular in both passages) not to go in the direction of their natural, sinful inclinations, which is to think that their consistent, *outward* practice of God’s instructions in the Mosaic Covenant is what pleases Him. They will tend to believe that performing the religious rituals and ceremonies that God prescribes in the Covenant will make them *worthy* of His promises and blessings.

Here are both passages as Moses writes them,

**Deuteronomy 9:4** “Do not say in your heart when Yahweh your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness Yahweh has brought me in to possess this land,’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Yahweh is dispossessing them before you.”

**Deuteronomy 30:11** “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. **12** It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **13** Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **14** But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

In the first passage, Moses wants each Israelite to realize that his righteous behavior God is not making himself and his fellow Jews worthy of the land which God is giving to them. Instead, the evil practices of its indigenous peoples, the Canaanites, has reached the point where God desires to do away with them and replace them with the Israelites. In the second passage, Moses is teaching the people of Israel to realize that obeying the Mosaic Covenant, all 613 of its commandments, is not impossible for sinful human beings like them. Instead, it is a matter of their hearts, of their *changed* hearts that is most important that will then lead to their demonstrating authentic belief in God and pursuing genuine obedience to Him under the covenant.

Paul wants to communicate the same things regarding his contemporary fellow-Jews and starts by quoting the first part of Deuteronomy 9:4, “Do not say in your heart.” Just as Moses encouraged each individual Israelite not to have the wrong impression of himself, neither does Paul want any one of his fellow Jews to think more highly of himself and to conclude that he *deserves* the Messiah because his righteous behavior under the Mosaic Covenant. The Old Testament Israelites were sinful just like the Canaanites, and the New Testament Jews are just as sinful as the Gentiles in the Roman Empire.

Then, Paul continues with a question the individual Jew may ask, “Who will ascend into heaven?” And he interprets the question, “This is to bring the Messiah down.” Thus, Paul adds the Jew’s concern that it simply may be too much to expect the Messiah to appear, even while he works hard to deserve him through his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Similarly, he goes on to paraphrase the next verse in Deuteronomy, “Who will descend into abyss?” And he interprets this, “This is to bring the Messiah up from the dead.” Can the Jew do something, such as his outward, religious obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, to make the Messiah come up from the dead and act on his behalf and on behalf of the entire nation of Israel, so that he destroys their earthly enemies and establishes them in prosperity and safety on the land of Israel?

This latter question by a Jew is different from the actual words of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:13, but Paul borrows his point to make a more important point—that not only has God sent the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, but He has also required that he offer himself to God through death on the cross as a propitiation to assuage His wrath and anger. Because Jesus obeyed God and willingly suffered death on the cross, God rewarded his obedience by raising him from the dead. No Jew has earned the Messiah. And no group of Jews, the nation of Israel, deserve him either. God has sovereignly and mercifully brought him into existence to die for the sins of the world and to be raised into the glory of His eternal kingdom where he will rule over both Jews and Gentiles who have acquired changed hearts through God’s grace and have demonstrated authentic belief.

God’s gracious purposes through the Messiah and in the midst of people’s divinely caused belief is why Paul goes on to ask in v. 8, “Rather, what does [the Mosaic Covenant] say?” Well, it says in Deuteronomy 30:14, “The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” Moses is speaking of the “message” of the Mosaic Covenant. But Paul quotes Moses to indicate that, in the same way, the new “message” of Jesus as the Messiah is now “near” the Jews and *should be* “in [their] mouth[s] and in [their] heart[s].” He means, as he goes on to say, that this is “the message of belief,” which both the Mosaic Covenant from Old Testament times and that of the apostles in New Testament times “are proclaiming.” The new “message” is about Jesus as the crucified and raised-from-the-dead Messiah, which the Jews should *believe* just as certainly and quickly as God required that they believe Moses’ message about the Mosaic Covenant—because, in v. 4, “the goal of the Covenant is the Messiah with the result of justification to everyone who believes.”

Then, in v. 9, Paul explicitly states, “because, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” He is covering both the intellectual base of the Jew’s mind and the spiritual base of his heart. As one of Jesus’ apostles, Paul is proclaiming the “message” of God regarding His Messiah, who is the “Lord Jesus.” When a Jew hears the information about Jesus and willfully and genuinely speaks of him as his “Lord,” then he is fulfilling the requirement that God has placed on him in order to gain eternal salvation. Thus, if the Jew’s heart and inwardness is such that he authentically believes that God raised Jesus from the dead because he qualified to become the king and high priest of all Jews who exhibit this kind of belief, then he will obtain God’s promise to Abraham of eternal life.

Again, Paul makes this clear by stating in v. 10, “With the heart a person believes with the result of justification, and with the mouth he confesses with the result of salvation.” Here he speaks of the two steps that can occur in a sinful Jew’s life. The first step is “justification” whereby he stands to obtain eternal life, and his authentic belief in God and in Jesus brings him into this place. The second step is “salvation” from God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction that will occur in the future, and his confession of Jesus as his Lord, Savior, Champion, and crucified/resurrected High Priest will result in this future experience. And it really is genuine belief that is the telltale sign of the Jew who has become this kind of sinful person, for “the scripture says” in Isaiah 28:16, “Everyone who believes in it will not be ashamed.” The “it” here in Isaiah 28 is the Davidic Covenant, through which God promised to King David that his descendants would rule over Israel, so that eventually one final descendant of David would become king of the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, “everyone” who believes this covenant to be true and that Jesus is its ultimate fulfillment will never be embarrassed or ashamed of doing so, because his final experience will be living forever with Jesus as his ruler.

Even though Isaiah 28 refers to the Jews, Paul hitchhikes off the word “everyone” and goes back to another point that he is making in these three chapters of Romans, that the dynamic of God’s grace and changing the hearts of sinful human beings applies to both “Jew and Greek,” because “there is no distinction between” them when it comes to acquiring genuine belief and obtaining God’s eternal salvation (10:12). Gentiles fulfill God’s requirement for salvation through their authentic belief from changed hearts

just as Jews do also. And this is because “the same person,” i.e., God, is “Lord of all” sinful human beings, who procure His mercy and the promises that He made to Abraham. This means, too, that Gentiles, who have been in the past, are now, and will be authentic believers when Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom on the land of Israel so as to rule over the whole earth, will participate in both the “great nation” of earthly Israel as stated in Revelation 20 and the Kingdom of God on the new, eternal earth described in Revelation 20-22.

And the reason why both Jews and Gentiles experience the same grace and promises of God is “because He is rich towards all who call upon Him.” Every sinful human being whose heart God changes in the course of time receives the same wealth and abundant gifts from God—participation in Israel’s future, glorious kingdom and in eternal salvation. Furthermore, Paul substantiates this from the Old Testament by quoting Joel 2:32, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Like the other prophetic passages which Paul has quoted in vs. 4-13, Joel is referring specifically to the Jews. But Paul exploits his meaning of the word “everyone” in the same way he did with Isaiah 28:16, because the methodology that God uses to save Jews is the same one that He uses to save Gentiles. He circumcises their hearts, so that they genuinely believe the truth which He presents them, whether through Moses with the Mosaic Covenant or through Jesus with the New Covenant, and they call upon God to be merciful towards them and grant them the fulfillment of His promises.

Is all this discussion by Paul about “justification” through belief in the Mosaic Covenant of Moses and through belief in the New Covenant of Jesus within the historical context of **Replacement Theology** or **Status Quo Theology**? Does Paul see the Christian community of Jews and Gentiles as the replacement of the unbelieving nation of Old Testament Israel? Or does he see the Christian community as comprised of believing Jews, who will eventually become the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3, and of believing Gentiles, who will participate in the “great nation” and acquire eternal life like their Jewish counterparts? I suggest that the latter, **Status Quo Theology**, is true. While there is no difference between how God changes the hearts of Jews and Gentiles, so that both demonstrate authentic belief in Him and now in Jesus, I think that He still remains faithful to His promise to Abraham to cause his physical descendants to become the most powerful nation in history under the rule of Jesus their Messiah. In addition, He still remains faithful to Abraham to grant eternal salvation to all people from every ethnic group, including the Jews, who imitate his faith.

But someone might wonder if the “message” to the Jews has always been clear and loud enough that God can hold them accountable for not believing Him? And is there any silver lining to the fact that most Jews’ have not believed the information which God has presented to them? Paul answers these questions in Romans 10:14-21 as a great lead-in to his final comments in chapter 11 about God’s purposes for both the Jews and the Gentiles.

### ROMANS 10:14-21

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>10:14</b> Therefore, how may they call on Him whom they did not believe? And how may they believe what they have not heard? And how may they hear apart from someone’s making proclamation? <b>10:15</b> And how may they proclaim unless they are sent, just as it was written,</p> <p>How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news of good things &lt;paraphrase of Isaiah 52:7&gt;</p> <p><b>10:16</b> However, not everyone obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says,</p> <p>Lord, who believed our message &lt;Isaiah 53:1&gt;?</p>	<p><b>Romans 10:14</b> Πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέσονται εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν; πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οὐ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; πῶς δὲ ἤκούσωσιν χωρὶς κηρύσσοντος; <b>15</b> πῶς δὲ κηρύξωσιν ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσιν; Ἰκαθὼς γέγραπται</p> <p>ὡς ὠραῖοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων ὁ[τὰ] ἀγαθὰ.</p> <p><b>16</b> Ἄλλ’ οὐ πάντες ὑπήκουσαν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Ἡσαΐας γὰρ λέγει</p> <p>κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν;</p> <p><b>17</b> ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Ἰησοῦ τοῦ. <b>18</b> ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; μενοῦνγε</p>

<p><b>10:17</b> Therefore, belief is from hearing, and hearing is through the message of the Messiah. <b>10:18</b> Nevertheless, I say, they did not hear, did they? On the contrary,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the inhabited world &lt;Psalm 19:4&gt;.</p> <p><b>10:19</b> But I say, Israel did not know, did they? First, Moses says,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I will annoy you terribly by that which is not a nation. I will make you angry by a nation who do not understand &lt;Deuteronomy 32:31&gt;.</p> <p><b>10:20</b> And Isaiah is bold and says,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I was found by those who were not seeking me, and I became manifest to those who were not inquiring after me &lt;Isaiah 65:1&gt;.</p> <p><b>10:21</b> Yet, to Israel He says,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people &lt;Isaiah 65:2&gt;.</p>	<p><b>εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξῆλθεν ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν καὶ εἰς τὰ πέρατα τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ ῥήματα αὐτῶν.</b></p> <p><b>19</b> ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ Ἰσραὴλ οὐκ ἔγνω; πρῶτος Μωϋσῆς λέγει</p> <p><b>ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς ἐπ’ οὐκ ἔθνει, ἐπ’ ἔθνει ἀσυνέτω παροργιῶ ὑμᾶς.</b></p> <p><b>20</b> Ἡσαΐας δὲ ᾠποτολμῶ καὶ λέγει</p> <p><b>εὐρέθην ὁ[ἐν] τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ζητοῦσιν, ἐμφανῆς ἐγενόμην ἰ τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ἐπερωτῶσιν.</b></p> <p><b>21</b> πρὸς δὲ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ λέγει</p> <p><b>ὄλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐξεπέτασα τὰς χεῖράς μου ἰ πρὸς λαὸν ἀπειθοῦντα ἰ καὶ ἀντιλέγοντα\.</b></p>
--	--

First, in vs. 14-15, Paul briefly outlines the process by which people, Jews and Gentiles, arrive at the point in their lives where they “call on” God so that they eventually become “saved” (cf vs.12 &13). “How may they call on Him?” They must “believe” the truth about God. And “how may they believe” this truth? They must “hear” it. And “how my they hear” it? Someone must “proclaim” it to them. And what is the mechanism that motivates people to “proclaim” the message of truth? They “are sent”—passive voice. In other words, God is the one who sends out those whom he designates as messengers of the truth which He wants sinful people to hear, so that they believe it and call on Him to grant them mercy and life according to the fulfillment of the promises which He made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. This is the process which God has decided to use to achieve His purposes for saving human beings from His wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction.

And Paul paraphrases Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news of good things!” This verse is in the context of God’s lamenting that a foreign nation, Babylonia, is ruling and oppressing His “people,” the Jews. Nevertheless, He is going to change Israel’s circumstances, and they will truly “know” Him as their God. This is great and wonderful news, and God through Isaiah expresses how “lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,” which is the message that God will be faithful to His people and rescue them from foreigners and their enemies. In this manner, Paul can use Isaiah’s clear statement that implies that it is God who provides the one who speaks good news about Israel to teach the same thing about the method by which anyone calls on God and acquires salvation and eternal life from Him through their belief in the “good news of good things” they hear—because it has been proclaimed to them.

“However,” in spite of the clear message from God, Paul comments in v. 17, “not everyone obeyed the good news,” which should not surprise us. He has been saying all along in chapters 9 and 10 that some people believe in God and some people do not. Then, he quotes Isaiah 53:1, “Lord, who believed our message?” I think the context indicates that it is both believing Jews and believing Gentiles who are asking this question. They are wondering if anyone else besides them is going to believe the message as they have?

Is this multi-ethnic group aware that ultimately God determines who becomes an authentic believer and who does not? Perhaps they have inferred this from the fact that they, both the chosen ethnic people of God and those outside this chosen group, have all acquired the right to receive the fulfillment of His promises. And it seems that Paul is quoting them from Isaiah to highlight the fact that the process which he has just described for how people end up calling on God is correct. Thus, he goes on in v. 17, "Therefore, belief is from hearing, and hearing is through the message of the Messiah."

Paul is explicit that certainly belief in his day includes acknowledging that Jesus, who suffered death on the cross followed by resurrection from the dead, is the Son of God. And Isaiah, in chapters 52 and 53, predicted that the Jews' Messiah would suffer for the people. Plus, God has communicated the good news of His salvation through the Messiah to both Jews and Gentiles, while the dynamic that exists between Him and sinners has always been in play. God opens the hearts and minds of some Jews and some Gentiles, so that they genuinely believe in Him and the Messiah. But He does not do so for all the other people of all the various ethnic groups, both Jews and Gentiles.

However, can it be said these other people did not hear enough about the Messiah to convince them to engage in authentic belief in their hearts? Paul asks in v. 18, "They did not hear, did they?" He quickly responds, "On the contrary, 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the inhabited world.'" This quote is from Psalm 19:4 concerning how the whole creation through its existence constantly declares that there is a God, so that no individual human being, whether government official, religious ruler, renowned scientist, thoughtful philosopher, creative artist, successful businessman, famous athlete, popular actor, or anyone who might be the least important person in the world can claim that there was not enough information for him to believe in God. Paul and Psalm 19 are implying that if all a sinner does is believe in the Creator of the creation *with authentic belief (obviously with a changed heart)*, then he is satisfying the necessary condition to obtain God's mercy, forgiveness, and life in the "great nation" of Israel and on the eternal earth.

What a radical concept! That the quantity or details of the truth, which a person believes, does not result in obtaining God's promises. Instead, it is the quality of the person's heart while believing the truth (as a result of God's changing the sinner's inwardness) that does. In other words, the primary and fundamental condition and requirement which God has placed on us to become qualified for His future promises is a changed heart (from which authentic belief and moral obedience springs). This is why Moses states clearly in the Mosaic Covenant,

- Deuteronomy 10:12** "Now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God require from you, but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul,  
**10:13** and to keep Yahweh's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?  
**10:14** Behold, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.  
**10:15** Yet on your fathers did Yahweh set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.  
**10:16** **So circumcise your heart**, and stiffen your neck no longer." [emphasis mine]

I think that Moses is saying that it is existentially impossible for a sinful Jew to what God "requires" of him—to fear God, to obey God, to love God, and to serve God—unless first his heart is circumcised and changed by God, as affirmed by Moses in Deuteronomy 30:6 that will happen when God restores them from all the foreign lands where He has scattered them, brings them into the land which He promised them, and He has compassion on them,

- Deuteronomy 30:6** "Moreover Yahweh your God **will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants**, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live." [emphasis mine]

We notice that God "will circumcise" the hearts of the nation of Israel in order that they become people who genuinely believe, love, and obey Him. This is also why Paul says explicitly in Romans 2:28-29,

**Romans 2:28** The **true Jew** is not the one who is such outwardly, and neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, **2:29** but **the true Jew** is one **in his hidden, innermost parts**. And **circumcision is of the heart by means of the Spirit**, not of the letter. In addition, his praise is not from men but from God. [emphasis mine]

Thus, we see that the primary and fundamental condition and requirement which God has placed on us, Jews and Gentiles, to become qualified for His future promises is a changed heart (from which authentic belief and moral obedience springs). And He is the one who produces it within us. An important logical conclusion is that Abraham did not have to believe in Jesus *per se* in order to obtain God's blessings of participating in the "great nation" of his people and of eternal life. He needed to believe in only the information that God provided him around 2,000 B.C. And it follows that, if the only information about God that a sinner acquires is the message of the universe that He has created the universe, then his belief in this message will result in God's granting him the fulfillment of His promises, including eternal mercy and life. Therefore, too, God can change a person's heart and cause him to believe whatever truth he presently knows, and this truth can be from anyone or anything whom God has "sent," and his belief in this "good news" is enough to satisfy the necessary condition for taking part in His promises.

However, Paul asks in v. 19, is it still possible that "Israel did not know" or have enough information about how human history was going to unfold with some Gentiles' becoming authentic believers in God while some Jews would remain rebellious against Him? Paul's answer is, "No." Israel did know, and he refers to God's statement around 1500 B.C. in Deuteronomy 32:31, "I will annoy you terribly by that which is not a nation. I will make you angry by a nation who do not understand." Most English Bibles translate the Greek words *ego parazyloso humas ep' ouk ethnei* (ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς ἐπ' οὐκ ἔθνει), "I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation." We typically understand the word "jealous" to refer to a situation where someone else has something that we really want, and we are jealous of their having it—especially if we cannot have it too. And sometimes we go after it with a vengeance, so that the end justifies the means. But I think that this situation regarding God and the Jews is different. The whole verse in the NAS95 reads,

**Deuteronomy 32:21** 'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.'

Notice that Paul quotes only the second half of the verse. I suggest that God is not going to create a situation where the Gentiles acquire something and the Jews look at them and say, "We want what the Gentiles have and, therefore, are jealous to the point that we will use any means possible to get it." Instead, the situation is like what Paul is seeing among the Jews. He has been traveling the Roman Empire and declaring that the Jewish man, Jesus, is the Messiah. For the most part, though, the Jews are rejecting Jesus, while many Gentiles are believing in him. The result is not that the Jews are "jealous" of the Gentiles. Instead, they are greatly annoyed at both Paul and those who are embracing his message. In their opinion, Paul is providing the Gentiles with false information and, therefore, deserves to die for being a false prophet. Plus, they believe that Jesus was a false Messiah, so that he deserved to die.

Consequently, I have translated *ego parazyloso humas* (ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς), "I will annoy you terribly." And this is in line with what God says next in Deuteronomy 32:31, "I will make you angry by a nation who do not understand." Previously, the Gentiles did "not understand" God, but when someone, such as Paul, told them the message of Jesus the Messiah, they not only understood this good news, but they also believed it—much to the consternation of the Jews. But the Jews were not angry because the Gentiles obtained something which they did not have. They were upset that the Gentiles were embracing from Paul both what they considered to be a false message of the Bible and a false Messiah. Most religious Jews, even today, believe that Moses and the Mosaic Covenant, not Jesus and the New Covenant, should be the focus of everyone's relationship with God. And it angers them that anyone thinks otherwise about how to understand their scriptures.

Similarly, I would translate the first part of Deuteronomy 32:21, "They have annoyed Me terribly with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols." Thus, God was very irritated and angry with the Jews for worshiping false gods and misunderstanding the Old Testament. Their obsession with the Mosaic Covenant and performing its commandments eventually led them to reject Jesus as the Messiah and to believe that their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant was the only basis for God's

blessings and mercy. But we also know that this misunderstanding by them was because they lacked changed hearts and authentic belief in God. And only God can fix this problem, which is what Paul is emphasizing and declaring that He does for those whom He chooses, both Jews and Gentiles.

Next, Paul finishes this section with two verses from Isaiah. First, in v. 21, he states that "Isaiah is bold and says, 'I was found by those who were not seeking me, and I became manifest to those who were not inquiring after me'" (Isaiah 65:1). Then, in v. 22, he writes, "Yet, to Israel He says, 'All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people'" (Isaiah 65:2). Here are both verses of Isaiah in the NAS95 version of the Bible,

**Isaiah 65:1** "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;  
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.  
I said, 'Here am I, here am I,'  
To a nation which did not call on My name.  
**65:2** I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,  
Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts."

I think that God is speaking of the Gentiles in v. 1 and of the Jews in v. 2. Thus, He "permitted" Himself to be "sought" and "found" by "those who did not" either "ask" or "seek" Him. The Gentiles, collectively, are the "nation which did not call on [His] name." While they were not even looking for God, they "found" Him, because He somehow made Himself known to them (even by means of the creation), changed their hearts, and caused them to believe and obey Him. On the other hand, God "spread out [His] hands all day long to a rebellious people," the Jews, who "walk in the way which is not good," while "following their own thoughts."

The point that God is making in Isaiah 65:1 and that Paul is making in Romans 10:20 is that Gentiles, who neither received nor knew about the Bible and the Mosaic Covenant that God gave to the Jews, so that they were not "seeking" to obey God but were worshiping false gods, *all of sudden* came upon the truth about God and believed in Him. Paul certainly observed this phenomenon as he traveled in Asia Minor and Greece and proclaimed the good news of Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles. It was truly miraculous that many of the pagan Gentiles embraced the good news of the Jewish Jesus as the Messiah.

But then the point that God is making in Isaiah 65:2 and that Paul is making in Romans 10:21 is that Jews, to whom God was constantly communicating through the Old Testament and His prophets, so that they could know Him intimately, remained "disobedient and obstinate." Paul says, "Yet, to Israel He says, 'All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people'" (Isaiah 65:2). Paul observed this phenomenon, too, during his travels in the Roman Empire as he was speaking about Jesus. Most Jews rejected the message and even attempted to kill him.

Therefore, with the help of the prophet Isaiah, Paul is describing a situation where the chosen ethnic people of God, the Jews, who have received the covenants, the Torah, and the requirements for how to worship Him, are rejecting their God, while Gentiles, who generally have been clueless about God (except for the creation's speaking to them about Him), have somehow stumbled upon the correct information about the nature of reality and have embraced the truth of God (even that of Jesus the Messiah through Paul's teaching during his travels in Asia (modern Turkey) and Greece). Is Paul, therefore, claiming that God has replaced the Old Testament Israel of the Jews with the New Testament church of mostly Gentiles and some Jews (**Replacement Theology**)? Or does he hold to **Status Quo Theology**, that God all along planned to change the hearts of some Jews and of some Gentiles on His way to making the nation of Israel the most powerful ethnic group in history and granting eternal life to all authentic believers? Has God rejected the Jews because they have rejected Him, even by crucifying their own Messiah, so that His focus now is on the Gentiles (along with a few Jews such as the apostle Paul) and the "church," i.e., the followers of Jesus? Or has God rejected most of the Jews and embraced some of them while rejecting most of the Gentiles and embracing some of them in the midst of **Status Quo Theology**? I think these verses of Romans 10 are still in the context of **Status Quo Theology** and that chapter 11 will show that God is continuing to maintain the status quo in history. We begin with Romans 11:1-6.

**ROMANS 11:1-6**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:1</b> What I am asking is this—God has not rejected His people, has He? Absolutely not! For, indeed, I am an Israelite, from the “seed” of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.</p> <p><b>11:2</b> God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew &lt;Psalms 94:14&gt;.</p> <p>Or do you not know what the scriptures say about Elijah as he pleads with God against Israel,</p> <p><b>11:3</b> Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life &lt;1 Kings 19:10,14&gt;.</p> <p><b>11:4</b> Yet, what is the divine response to him?</p> <p>I have kept for Myself 7,000 men who have not bowed their knee to Baal &lt;1 Kings 19:18&gt;.</p> <p><b>11:5</b> In the same manner, therefore, at the present time, there exists a remnant according to His gracious choice. <b>11:6</b> And if it is by means of grace, it is not by virtue of works. Otherwise, grace is not grace.</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:1</b> Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἀπόσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὅτι; μὴ γένοιτο· καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν.</p> <p><b>2</b> οὐκ ἀπόσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν προέγνω.</p> <p>ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε ἐν Ἡλίας τί λέγει ἡ γραφή, ὡς ἐντυγχάνει τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ ὅτι;</p> <p><b>3</b> κύριε, τοὺς προφῆτας σου ἀπέκτειναν, τὰ θυσιαστήρια σου κατέσκαψαν, καὶ γὰρ ὑπελείφθη μόνος καὶ ζητοῦσιν τὴν ψυχὴν μου.</p> <p><b>4</b> ἀλλὰ τί λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ χρηματισμὸς;</p> <p>Ἦ κατέλιπον ἐμαυτῷ ἑπτακισχιλίους ἄνδρας, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔκαμψαν γόνυ τῇ Βάαλ.</p> <p><b>5</b> οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ λείμμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν <b>6</b> εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐδέτι ἐξ ἔργων, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐδέτι γίνεται χάρις ὅτι.</p>

At the end of chapter 10, Paul made it clear with the quotations from Isaiah 65 that God has caused some Gentiles to become His genuine followers, while He has not done so for all the Jews. But because the Jews, starting with Abraham, began their journey in history as the “chosen people of God,” has God shifted His focus from them to the Gentiles and, perhaps, rejected the Jews altogether, so that now He will fulfill all His promises of the Abrahamic Covenant for the “church” comprised mostly of Gentiles who are believers in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah? In other words, is **Replacement Theology** correct, and **Status Quo Theology** incorrect? It seems plausible, considering, in Paul’s day, how disobedient the Jews had been for 1,500 years since the Mosaic Covenant and, in our day, for 3,500 years. And it especially seems to make sense in the light of the Jews’ having sentenced Jesus to death and crucified their own Messiah. Nevertheless, I believe that Paul shows us that he thinks differently.

He begins chapter 11, “What I am asking is this—God has not rejected His people, has He? Absolutely not! For, indeed, I am an Israelite, from the ‘seed’ of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Paul knows that His explanation of God’s sovereign choices of both some Gentiles’ and some Jews’ acquiring His mercy could be construed as God’s shifting His promises from the Jews to the Gentiles, especially in his day where it certainly appears from the book of Acts that not only are more Gentiles believing in Jesus as the Messiah, but also the Jews are so annoyed and angered by the message which Paul has been proclaiming that most of them want to kill him. Therefore, he asks the question about where the Jews, “[God’s] people,” stand in His eyes? If Paul believed that the “church” has replaced “Israel,” then certainly here he would answer his question with a resounding, “Yes!!!” Instead, he states emphatically, “Absolutely not!!!” Which is to say that God has definitely not abandoned and rejected them!”

And the first piece of evidence that he presents of this fact is himself. Paul is “an Israelite” and thereby a descendant of Jacob, which means, too, that he is “from the ‘seed’ [physical line] of Abraham.” He also claims descendancy from Jacob’s youngest son, “Benjamin.” By virtue of his physical affiliation with Abraham, Jacob, and Benjamin, Paul is certainly one of God’s chosen people ethnically speaking.

Plus, God has changed his heart and inwardly transformed him into an authentic believer in Jesus the Messiah. Indeed, Paul is a member of "Israel" as he used the word in 9:6, which proves that God has not rejected "His people," the Jews.

Paul, then, explains the theology of his *Jewish* faith, "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew," which mostly is a quotation from Psalm 94:14. He is saying that God predestined certain sinful human beings to become changed inwardly by His transcendent work and to demonstrate authentic belief and obedience after this change. In the context of Psalm 94, these are Jews, who are "His people" by virtue of the promise He made to Abraham eventually to make them a "great nation." Psalm 94 speaks of God's judgment of the Gentile nations who speak ill of the Jews and who even seek to harm them by killing widows and orphans. While God will destroy these Gentiles, He says categorically that He will not abandon "His people," the Jews. Then, by adding the words "whom He foreknew" to v. 14 of the psalm, Paul is confirming his statement in Romans 9:6, that "all those who are from Israel [Jacob], these are not Israel." Not every Jew who is physically descended from Jacob becomes a person of authentic belief through God's changing his heart. It is only those, like Paul, "whom He foreknew" before He brought the story of human history into existence and whom He therefore chose to become changed inwardly during the course of their lives. Yet, this does not mean that God abandons the nation of Israel as a whole and replaces them with the Christians of the last two millennia.

Paul continues in v. 2 to ask his readers rhetorically if they "do not know what the scriptures say about Elijah as he pleads with God against Israel." In v. 3, he quotes Elijah from 1 Kings 19:10 & 14, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." Elijah has killed the priests of Baal, and Jezebel, a Sidonian and King Ahab's wife, who persuaded him to worship Baal, has promised that she will kill Elijah in retribution for his killing her priests. He flees into the wilderness as far as Mt. Horeb where God had met with the Israelites and given them the Mosaic Covenant. The angel of God comes to Elijah and asks him what he is doing there. Elijah's complete response is found in 1 Kings 19:14,

**1 Kings 19:14** Then he said, "I have been very zealous for Yahweh, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Paul paraphrases the last part of Elijah's response to the effect that Jezebel has been able to convince the rest of the Jews in the northern Kingdom of Israel not only to turn away from God, but also to hunt down Elijah and put him to death. Hence, as he runs for his life, the prophet thinks that he is the sole believer in Israel. And then Paul says to his readers, "Yet what is the divine response to him?" God says in 1 Kings 19:18, "I have kept for Myself 7,000 men who have not bowed their knee to Baal." Thus, God encourages Elijah that he is not alone in his faith and that there are several thousand Jews in Israel who are not worshiping false gods and who possess changed hearts so as to believe and obey Him. The situation certainly looked bleak to Elijah, but God was assuring him that it was not.

Thus, Paul goes on to add in v. 5, "In the same manner, therefore, at the present time, there exists a remnant according to His gracious choice." The words "in the same manner" are key. Paul is saying that God is dealing with the Jews in his day, around A.D. 50, according to the same dynamic and purpose as He did in Elijah's day around 850 B.C. The people of Israel, the Jews, may be steeped in sin and rebellion against God at any one time in history, but He never gives up on them completely, even after they have rejected and put to death their Messiah on the cross. In other words, God is not interested in replacing His chosen people, the Jews, with the Christians of the last two thousand years (**Replacement Theology**). Instead, He is always maintaining the status quo of the Abrahamic Covenant (**Status Quo Theology**).

God perpetually causes a "remnant," a relatively small group of Jews, to have circumcised hearts and to believe and obey Him. And He does this "according to His gracious choice," literally "according to the choice of grace." Just as Paul has been arguing throughout these three chapters, God chooses to exercise His grace towards certain sinful individuals among both Jews and Gentiles. No one deserves His grace or the resultant change of heart, belief, and eternal salvation. These are all simply a gift from God, and here Paul assures his Gentile readers that a "remnant" of Jewish believers (and Paul is one of them) "exists" in their day.

Therefore, Paul is declaring unambiguously and explicitly that "God has not rejected His people," the Jews (cf. v. 1). He has foreknown and predestined some of them to believe in Him, and this constitutes

His continued faithfulness and loyalty to them as a nation—as Paul will go on to explain in the rest of the chapter. In addition, in v. 6, he clarifies that God’s “gracious choice” is “not by virtue of works.” No sinner can make himself worthy of God’s grace and the fulfillment of His promises. He cannot perform obedience to God such that He is obligated to pay him with His forgiveness, joining in the “great nation” of Abraham’s descendants, and eternal life. Salvation and taking part in the promises of God comes to a sinner strictly “by means of grace” and not by earning them. “Otherwise, grace is not grace,” and it turns into a wage that God pays to someone who deserves it. However, again, no sinner deserves anything good from God. Therefore, Paul continues laying out the ramifications of this for the Jews in Romans 11:7-10.

**ROMANS 11:7-10**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:7</b> What then? That which Israel is seeking, they did not obtain this. However, the chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened, <b>11:8</b> just as it is written,</p> <p>God gave them a dull spirit &lt;Isaiah 29:10&gt;, eyes to see not and ears to hear not down to this very day &lt;Deuteronomy 29:4&gt;.</p> <p><b>11:9</b> Even David says,</p> <p>Let their table become a snare, a trap, a stumbling block, and a just recompense to them.</p> <p><b>11:10</b> Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and may their backs bend through everything &lt;Psalm 69:22,23&gt;.</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:7</b> Τί οὖν; ὁ ἑπιζητεῖ Ἰσραὴλ, τοῦτο οὐκ ἐπέτυχεν, ἡ δὲ ἐκλογή ἐπέτυχεν· οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ ἐπωρώθησαν, <b>8</b> ὡς γέγραπται·</p> <p><b>ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα κατανύξεως, ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ ὠτα τοῦ μὴ ἀκούειν, ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας.</b></p> <p><b>9</b> καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει·</p> <p><b>γενηθήτω ἡ τράπεζα αὐτῶν εἰς παγίδα καὶ εἰς θήραν καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον καὶ εἰς ἀνταπόδομα αὐτοῖς.</b></p> <p><b>10</b> σκοτισθήτωσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ τὸν νῶτον αὐτῶν διὰ παντὸς σύγκαμψον.</p>

Paul asks, “What then?” He knows that people will question him about the present situation of the nation of Israel? His response is that the Jews, “Israel,” are “seeking” the fulfillment of God’s promises to them through Abraham. However, “they did not [and do not] obtain this.” Why not? Because they were and are under the impression that they can make themselves worthy of it by means of their diligent obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Obviously, this is the wrong approach, and Paul goes on to say, “However, the chosen obtained it,” while “the rest were hardened” in their hearts. Again, the dynamic that exists between God and the Jews is His sovereign choice of which of them whose inwardness He changes, and which of them whose inwardness He chooses to remain the same, that is, with hearts that rebel against Him. The latter Jews’ hearts “were hardened” by God, as Paul substantiates by combining words from Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4, “God them a dull spirit, eyes to see not and ears to hear not down to this very day.”

In Isaiah 29, God pronounces judgment on Jerusalem and its inhabitants to the effect that the nations will wage war against them. However, God will judge and destroy these nations who turn against Him and His people, the Jews, while He will also make the Jews dull and stupid when it comes to believing and obeying Him properly. In Deuteronomy 29, Moses encourages the Israelites to obey God through the covenant which He has made with them at Mt. Horeb, but he also admits that God has not changed all their hearts in order for them to do so. As a result, God will judge and discipline them in the future when they disobey Him and the covenant.

Yet, as we have seen, Moses says in Deuteronomy 30 that God will eventually circumcise their hearts and bring them into the land to fulfill His promise to them. Again, statements regarding God’s sovereign choices that determine whether or not individual Jews and individual Gentiles will be genuinely obedient to Him are all over the Bible—as Paul has been pointing out in these three chapters of Romans. Clearly, these verses from the Old Testament are further evidence that God has been in control of which Jews believe and which ones do not. Has the nation of Israel obtained the fulfillment of God’s promise to make

them a “great nation?” No, because most of them have sought His promises with hard hearts and as if they can earn them. Consequently, only “the chosen” among the Jews have met the condition that will result in their joining in the “great nation” that they will eventually become.

Paul then adds, **11:9** “Even David says [approximately in Psalm 69:22-23], ‘Let their table become a snare, a trap, a stumbling block, and a just recompense to them. **11:10** Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and may their backs bend through everything.’” David wrote this psalm when his fellow Israelites were seeking to kill him, and he appeals to God not only that He rescue him from his enemies, but also that He destroy them. David had the right to wish these things on people because he was the first Son of God and Anointed One (Messiah, Christ) as the king of Israel, serving as God’s proxy on the land and the whole earth. Just as God has the right to call for and bring about the destruction of His enemies, so does David as God’s representative in the creation. Paul’s point is both that there were Jews in David’s day who were hostile to God and His “Messiah,” i.e., David, and that David sought God’s salvation and encouraged Him to deal with his enemies, who were clearly unbelievers, in a just manner.

In this way, Paul uses David as an example of one whom God has “chosen” to have a changed heart, to believe in God with genuine belief, and to “obtain” God’s assurance that he will join in the fulfillment of the promises that He made to Abraham. And Paul uses David’s contemporaries, who were seeking to kill him, as examples of “the rest” who “were hardened” in their hearts within the nation of Israel. Therefore, with vs. 7-10, Paul is explaining how God maintains the status quo of the Abrahamic Covenant, so that we can conclude that He never replaces the nation of Israel with the church of Christianity.

Then, in Romans 11:11-16, Paul asks and answers another question which his readers might infer from all the negative things which he has said about the Jews.

**ROMANS 11:11-16**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:11</b> In addition, I am asking this—they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Absolutely not! But, through their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles in order to annoy them terribly. <b>11:12</b> And if their transgression be wealth for the world and their failure be wealth for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness be!</p> <p><b>11:13</b> Thus, I say to you, Gentiles, as far as I am certainly the apostle to the Gentiles, I am glorifying my ministry, <b>11:14</b> if somehow I annoy terribly my kinsmen and save some of them. <b>11:15</b> If their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from those who are dead. <b>11:16</b> And if the first portion is holy, the lump is also. And if the root is holy, the branches are too.</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:11</b> Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι ἢ σωτηρία τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εἰς τὸ παραζηλώσαι αὐτούς. <b>12</b> εἰ δὲ τὸ παράπτωμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος κόσμος καὶ τὸ ἥττημα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν.</p> <p><b>Romans 11:13</b> Ὑμῖν Ἦδὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν· ἐφ’ ὅσον ἔμεινεν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου Ἦδοξάζω, <b>14</b> εἴ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν. <b>15</b> εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἢ πρόσλημις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν; <b>16</b> εἰ Ἦδὲ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἁγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα· καὶ ὅτι ἡ ῥίζα ἁγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι.</p>

Here in v. 11 is a key question for Paul to ask, because someone could infer from all the bad things that he has said about the abject unbelief of most Jews throughout their history that God has abandoned the nation of Israel, especially because they rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Perhaps, they have stumbled by their disobedience to the point of falling completely out of favor with God, meaning that they have rebelled against Him to the extent that they are no longer His chosen people as an ethnic group who once were included in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Has the Jews’ rejection of God and Jesus the Messiah resulted in God’s rejection of the Jews completely? Is He done with the Jews now and cares about only Gentiles’ (or at least mostly Gentiles’ and a very few Jews’) being His people? Is **Replacement Theology** correct, because **Status Quo Theology** finally met its match—the Jews’ unbelief and rejection of their Messiah?!

Paul’s answer is, “Absolutely not! and, therefore, “No, not at all.” Instead, Paul says that “through their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles in order to annoy them terribly.” God is working out His Old Testament plans and statements, which Paul quoted in 10:19 (cf. Deuteronomy 32:31), where the

design of history is first to annoy the Jews through the message of Jesus, whom they rejected and through its being taught by Jews like Paul and embraced by Gentiles, in order to motivate the Jews eventually to embrace Jesus as their own Messiah—after watching the Gentiles embrace him. Again, they do not become jealous *per se*, but annoyed and angry at what they believe to be the wrong message of Jesus and their scriptures, before they finally realize that the wrong message is the right message. Paul seems to be implying that the more annoyed God makes the Jews by their hostility to the good news of Jesus, the more wonderful will be their accepting this information and finding eternal salvation through it.

At the beginning of chapter 11, Paul used himself as a prime example of God's not having abandoned the Jews. Indeed, how could Paul, a former, harsh persecutor of Christians, even become a Christian through the inward work of the Spirit of God if God has abandoned all Jews who have rejected Jesus as the Messiah? Here is a similar point in v. 11, that the unbelief of so many Jews that culminated in their spurning and putting to death their own king, Jesus, will not deter God from fulfilling His promises to them eventually. God may annoy the Jews with what they believe to be a false message about a false Messiah, but He will not turn away from His promise to them as His ethnic chosen people.

In v. 12, Paul indicates that the resultant effect, first of the Jews' unbelief and then of the Gentiles' becoming believers, is that the latter, non-Jewish community gets rich on God's grace and the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, which includes eternal salvation. The unbelieving Jewish community becomes part of God's plan for the Gentiles in large numbers to come to faith and receive God's blessings. However, God has not finished His salvific work towards the Jews, so that Paul states, "how much more will their fullness be." This is to say that the Jews will experience the same riches and wealth of God's grace and benefit when He fulfills His promises to them in the most complete manner. Thus, "their fullness" is the filling out of God's promises to the nation of Israel when everyone of them will become an authentic believer and will live on the land of Israel under the rule of Jesus after he returns to establish the first stage of the Kingdom of God on the earth (the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20). This is also when God makes the Jews the "great nation" of Genesis 12 and they, with Jesus, rule over the Gentile world. In a moment, we will see Paul refer to a similar "fullness of the Gentiles" in v. 25.

Then, in v. 13, Paul indicates that, as the sole "apostle to the Gentiles," among whom are the Christians in Rome to whom he is writing, he is actually working to the benefit of the Jews by fulfilling this responsibility. He says, "I am glorifying my ministry." He means that he is making his job just that much more magnificent by moving human history along on an existential level towards God's fulfilling His promise to the Jews to make of them a great nation (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). Exactly how is he doing this?

In v. 14, he says that it is by being God's instrument of proclaiming the message of Jesus as the Messiah, so that Gentiles are believing it, thereby annoying "terribly" his fellow-Jews, making them just that much more aware of this good news of salvation through Jesus, resulting hopefully in "some" of the Jews believing it for themselves. Consequently, Paul kills two birds with one stone. By being the one who "save[s]" Gentiles with his proclaiming the gospel to them and irritating the Jews to no end with his so-called lies, he is furthering along human history according to God's eternal plans and purposes, so that it is very possible that the effect may be to "save some" Jews even in his own day. After all, Jesus is Jewish, and so it is for the Jews first and foremost that Jesus is the Messiah (cf. Romans 1:16, etc.).

But it is not difficult to understand why Jews become so annoyed and angry. People, e.g., Paul and his co-workers such as Timothy and Titus, are traveling around the Roman Empire and claiming that a man, whom the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, deemed to be a charlatan, is the Messiah and that Gentiles who believe in him are not required to keep the Mosaic Covenant, which has been at the center of Judaism for 1500 years! Yet, Paul said at the beginning of chapter 9 that he would give up his own salvation in order to see his fellow Jews believe in the gospel. Similarly, he also hopes that they become so annoyed and angry at his proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah that they think about this information very carefully and believe in him (by the grace of God).

I think in v. 15 that Paul is again stating, albeit indirectly, that God has not completely abandoned the Jews. While the "rejection" of the Messiah by most Jews (or God's rejection of them, because ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν can mean either) has resulted in His making Gentiles His friends through their belief in Jesus, then the "acceptance" of Jesus as the Messiah by more Jews than the current remnant (or God's acceptance of them, because ἡ πρόσλημις can mean either) will turn out to provide them with "life," i.e., eternal life. Instead of experiencing death and destruction, to which they are currently headed, the Jews who change their minds and believe in Jesus will experience "life from those who are dead." From those who have died, God will raise Jews to eternal life and to take part in the millennial kingdom of Jesus' ruling over the Jews and the world. Thus, the "acceptance" of "some" Jews of the gospel now in Paul's day will result in

their being raised literally “out of the dead ones” and enjoying life in the Kingdom of God that lasts forever as opposed to being among the “dead” who will pass out of existence as their final punishment from God for their stubborn disobedience.

In keeping with the point which Paul is making about God’s faithfulness to the Jews, he uses two analogies in v. 16. The first is that of dough. If the “first portion,” the initial part of the dough which the baker begins to knead, is thought by him to be important for making bread, then the rest of the dough is important also. Paul is speaking chronologically and historically. He is referring to the promises which God made to Abraham and repeated to Isaac and Jacob. If these three men were important enough to God that he conveyed the promises to each one individually, then these same promises are still in effect thousands of years later and likewise pertain to their descendants. As a result, the promises still hold for the Jewish nation, and **Status Quo Theology** is correct—even though most Jews have not properly believed God.

The second analogy is that of a tree. If the “root” of the tree is important to the one tending the tree, then the “branches” are also. Again, if the very beginning of the Jewish nation with the promises to the patriarchs was important to God, then the continuation and fulfillment of these promises in the existence of future “branches” is important to Him also. These “branches” are future participants in the fulfillment of the promises to the Jews first and to Gentiles second, *both* who adopt the same kind of belief as Abraham—as Paul will go on to explain, starting in vs. 17-24.

**ROMANS 11:17-24**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:17</b> If some of the branches were broken off, and you, being from a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them such that you became a partaker with them in the rich root of the olive tree, <b>11:18</b> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are arrogant, you do not support the root, but the root supports you. <b>11:19</b> Then you will say, “Branches were broken off with the result that I was grafted in.” <b>11:20</b> That’s right. They were broken off because of their unbelief, and you stand because of your belief. Do not be arrogant, but fear, <b>11:21</b> because, if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.</p> <p><b>11:22</b> Behold the kindness and severity of God. To those who fell, severity. But to you, God’s kindness, if you remain in His kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut off. <b>11:23</b> And these others, if they do not continue in unbelief, they will be grafted in, because God is powerful enough to graft them in anew. <b>11:24</b> If you were cut off from what according to nature is a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more certainly will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:17</b> Εἰ δὲ τινες τῶν κλάδων ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ ἀγριέλαιος ὢν ἐνεκεντρίσθης ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ συγκοινωνὸς τῆς ῥίζης τῆς πιότητος τῆς ἐλαίας ἐγένου, <b>18</b> μὴ κατακαυχῶ τῶν κλάδων· εἰ δὲ κατακαυχᾶσαι οὐ σὺ τὴν ῥίζαν βαστάξεις ἀλλ’ ἡ ῥίζα σέ. <b>19</b> ἔρειψ οὖν ἐξεκλάσθησαν ἑ κλάδοι ἵνα ἐγὼ ἐγκεντρισθῶ. <b>20</b> καλῶς τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἔξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ τῇ πίστει ἔστηκας. μὴ ὑψηλὰ φρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ. <b>21</b> εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, [μὴ πως] οὐδὲ σοῦ φείσεται.</p> <p><b>Romans 11:22</b> ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν ἑ θεοῦ· ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἑ ἀποτομία, ἐπὶ δὲ σέ ἑ χρηστότης ἑ θεοῦ, εἴαν ἑ ἐπιμένῃς τῇ χρηστότητι, ἐπεὶ καὶ σὺ ἐκκοπήσῃ. <b>23</b> κάκεινοι δέ, εἴαν μὴ ἑπιμένωσιν τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ, ἐγκεντρισθήσονται· δυνατὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς πάλιν ἐγκεντρίσαι αὐτούς. <b>24</b> εἰ γὰρ σὺ ἐκ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐξεκόπησ ἀγριελαίου καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεκεντρίσθης εἰς καλλιέλαιον, πόσῳ μᾶλλον οὗτοι οἱ κατὰ φύσιν ἐγκεντρισθήσονται τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐλαίᾳ.</p>

Starting in v. 17, Paul continues the second analogy by admitting that some of the “branches,” i.e., individuals of the Jewish nation, by virtue of their unbelief, “were broken off” and became dislodged from the promises of God, while unnatural branches of sorts, Gentiles, “being from a wild olive tree,” became participants in His promises. These believing Gentiles joined in God’s fulfilling His statements in Genesis 12:1-3 that were first addressed to Abraham, the first Jew, and therefore, by extrapolation, to the Jews after him. These promises are the very “rich root of the olive tree,” of the “tree” of the people of Israel,

starting with Abraham, and of the sinful human beings who imitate Abraham's belief, both Jews and Gentiles, while the latter are "from a wild olive tree."

Hence, Paul is saying that the "rich root" of the promises is the very wealth of the both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Therefore, this "rich root" constitutes not only some kind of participation in the "great nation" of Israel by the Gentiles, but also their obtaining God's eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God. Notice that Paul uses the singular "you" (*su* (σὺ)) to encourage each individual Gentile among the Roman Christians to think about the significance of his becoming qualified for the fulfillment of God's promises, while nevertheless a whole host of Jews, who are the chosen people of God ethnically speaking, will miss out on both the temporal and the eternal elements of these promises.

We learn from the rest of the Bible that, in several ways, the Gentiles will participate in God's promise to make of the Jews a "great nation." Gentiles, who were believers and previously died, will be raised from the dead and transformed into immortal and morally perfect beings when Jesus returns. Plus, they will rule with him over the entire world during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. The same will be true for Gentiles who are still alive at Jesus' return. They will be lifted from the earth and transformed into morally perfect and eternal beings. Then, they will return to earth to reign with Jesus over Israel and over the rest of the world. I think it is also safe to assume that Gentiles, who become believers during the millennial kingdom, will acquire eternal life on the new and eternal earth of Revelation 21-22 with all the other believers, both Jews and Gentiles. However, the Bible is not clear on how this happens to millennial kingdom believers who die, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Nevertheless, in v. 18, Paul warns Gentiles, who are now taking part in the Abrahamic and Israelite promises of God, not to become "arrogant" and think that they have made themselves worthy of God's blessings (as the Jews unfortunately have thought down through the centuries). This kind of arrogance on the part of believing Gentiles towards unbelieving Jews fails to appreciate the nature of the "rich root" of the promises of God which were conveyed to Abraham and his Jewish (and Gentile!) descendants in Genesis 12-21 by His grace.

As Paul has pointed out and points out here, sinful people do not make themselves worthy of the promises which constitute the "rich root." Instead, people, some of whom are not even seeking God's blessings (Gentiles), end up receiving them because God sovereignly and independently chooses to change them by the inward work of His Holy Spirit. Then, by His continued faithfulness to them, God maintains the perseverance of their faith so that they eventually possess eternal life. In this way, the gracious promises of God "support" believing Gentiles and their inward change and faith. The Gentiles "do not support the root." As a result, no human being will be able to say that his salvation has anything to do with him *apart from and independent of God and His grace*.

In v. 19, Paul anticipates a response by prideful Gentiles who have just heard him encourage them not to become arrogant and who are thinking that they have done something worthy of obtaining the fulfillment of the "rich root" of the promises of God. Their comment is that the unbelieving Jews "were broken off" from their own natural olive tree of "Israel" and lost the opportunity to enjoy God's promises, while believing Gentiles, like themselves, have taken their place on the tree when they were "grafted" into it. Again, with the singular "you" (*su* (σὺ)), Paul is writing this hypothetical conversation with a Roman, Gentile Christian, who is speaking in v. 19.

Paul says in v. 20 that his Gentile interlocutor is actually correct—to a degree. The Jews lost their participation in the Romans 9:6 "Israel" of the promises "because of their unbelief." And his fellow Christian, who is a Gentile, "stand[s]" to receive these promises "because of [his] belief." But surely Paul is implying everything that he has said about belief—that it ultimately comes from God and His gracious work in the heart of a sinful human being, so that none of us has any basis on which he can brag or boast about being accepted by God. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Roman, Gentile believer not to be "arrogant" so as to allow his pride to be a part of his thinking about his relationship with God in contrast to unbelieving Jews, as if the latter are not good people, while he deserves God's forgiveness and eternal life because something good in him has made him worthy of God's blessings. Instead, Paul wants the authentic, Gentile believer to continue to "fear" and revere God in a way that reflects his understanding that if it were not for His sovereign grace in the midst of the humanly insoluble problem of his sin, he would end up being condemned by Him—exactly like the Jews who are not humbly repentant and who have been "broken off" from their own tree.

Indeed, Paul is never so presumptuous to think that anyone who claims to believe in God and Jesus is an authentic believer. Therefore, he says here in v. 21 that if his individual Gentile reader continues to be arrogant, he is only pretending to be a Christian, which means that God will not "spare" him in the

same way that He “did not spare the natural branches,” the unbelieving Jews. All unbelieving Gentiles, regardless of their claim to worship God and embrace Jesus as the Messiah, will miss out on the fulfillment of God’s promises the same way that unbelieving Jews will miss out on it. And this is because their arrogance demonstrates that they actually do not have *authentic* belief. They are striving to obtain God’s acceptance and mercy with the same erroneous mentality as the Jews who are trying to earn God’s favor through their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. The key Paul will say in v. 22 is to remain in God’s kindness through persevering in humble faith.

Thus, Paul continues in v. 22 to urge his Roman, Gentile, Christian reader to consider carefully who God is. He is both kind and severe. He is kind to those who genuinely repent of their sins and believe in Him and Jesus the Messiah. And He is severe, just, and condemning towards those who are arrogant and reject Him, even if they are claiming to believe in Him. Therefore, “to those who fell,” the Jews who have persisted in rebelling against Him, God will perform His “severity” and wrath. To those who (supposedly) have become believers, God will grant His “kindness.” But this is only if they “remain in His kindness,” which is to say, if they have hearts that have been truly changed by God so that they demonstrate authentic belief. “Otherwise,” Paul warns his individual reader, “You will be cut off” like all the unbelieving and arrogant Jews. The prideful Gentile will lose his being “grafted in” to the natural olive tree, because he never really was attached to it in the first place. He will miss out on the “rich root” of the promises of God, both to make the nation of Israel the most powerful group of people in all history and to grant eternal life to those who imitate Abraham’s humble belief.

Consequently, with the analogy of the tree and the stated reality of the importance of authentic belief, Paul has presented the concepts of God’s “kindness” (grace, mercy, and love) and His “severity” and justice (judgment, condemnation, and eternal destruction). The Jews who “fell,” i.e., who rebelled against God and rejected His truth, particularly the truth of Jesus as the Messiah, are in the process of receiving God’s “severity.” The Gentiles, who have been “grafted” into the Jewish tree of God’s Abrahamic promises, are receiving God’s “kindness.” However, in order for them to obtain the fulfillment of His promises, they must satisfy the condition by their *persevering* in authentic and humble belief, which Paul has made clear exists in any individual by only the sovereign, gracious will of God. Otherwise, the unbelieving Gentiles are in the same boat as the unbelieving Jews and will incur God’s wrath and destruction.

Likewise, Paul is saying in v. 23 that there is always the possibility that the current unbelieving Jews, “these others,” become truly believing—“if they do not continue in unbelief.” In which case, God will “graft them in anew,” obviously because He “is powerful enough” to do so. God can change Jews’ hearts through the work of His Holy Spirit (just as He has the previously ignorant and unbelieving Gentiles’ hearts) and make them a part of the “olive tree” that is rooted in His promises, which, according to Genesis 12, belongs to Abraham and his physical descendants on an ethnic level.

This is what the “anew” means. Jews have an ethnic claim to God’s promises just by virtue of their being Jewish. Therefore, in a sense, they begin life as “children of the promise” (cf. Romans 9:8). But they will take part in the promises only if God powerfully changes their inwardness and they become authentic believers. They start life as ethnic Israel and therefore appear as though they are *bona fide* members of God’s chosen people. However, due to their unbelief, they do not fulfill the condition necessary for participating in the greatness of the nation of Israel and in eternal life. As a result, as unqualified branches, God breaks them off, so to speak, from the natural tree of ethnic and eternal “Israel” (cf. 9:6; 11:17ff.), with the result that they incur His anger and condemnation. However, if they eventually become authentic believers, then God will make them “anew” a true part of His long-term chosen people.

Indeed, Paul has already said that, in an ethnic sense (and I keep emphasizing this), the Jews occupy a primary position to receive God’s promises to Abraham, because they are his physical descendants through both the miracle baby Isaac and the second fraternal twin brother Jacob, so that they will eventually become the “great nation” of inwardly changed Jews on the land of Israel (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). They naturally (cf. v. 21) are branches of the “cultivated olive tree,” while Gentiles originate connected to a “wild olive tree.” These latter, according to v. 24, were “cut off” from their own ethnic tree of Gentiles and then “grafted contrary to nature into [the] cultivated olive tree” of the Jews. As members of ethnic Israel, the Jews therefore have the right to the fulfillment of the promise of the land of Israel and the restored Davidic kingdom (which I think Revelation 20 describes), while the non-Jews who come from other ethnic groups do not *per se*. It is as though the Jews have the right of first refusal to the Kingdom of God—the privilege of deciding whether to accept or reject God’s promises before they are offered to others.

Nevertheless, according to 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 20, the believing Gentiles will help rule the restored Kingdom of Israel and the rest of the world—as long as they acquired genuine belief before Jesus’ return. Or they will be welcome to live on the land of Israel with the Jews if they become believers after Jesus’ return (cf. Isaiah 56). And Paul’s main point here is that God will “much more certainly” graft into their own ethnic tree believing Jews. Of course, by definition, their being grafted in to their own tree will be something that is not “contrary to nature.” Paul cannot stress enough that the nation of Israel, the Jews, are the rightful recipients of God’s promises—even if most of them do not end up enjoying their fulfillment because God sovereignly chooses not to grant some of them His grace, a changed heart, and authentic belief and obedience. In other words, **Replacement Theology** is not Paul’s theology. **Status Quo Theology** is. The “church” of believers in Jesus does not replace the people of Israel as God’s chosen people who acquire the Abrahamic promises. God will eventually change the hearts of all living Jews, who will live on the land of Israel under the rule of their crucified, risen, ascended and returned Messiah and king, Jesus of Nazareth. Plus, the last statement in v. 24 with the phrase “much more certainly” makes it sound as though this will actually happen to the Jews, that there will be a revival of faith and obedience among them, which, I think, is where Paul heads in vs. 25-32. First, we will look at vs. 25-27.

**ROMANS 11:25-27**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:25</b> Brothers, so that you are not trusting in your own wisdom, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, that a partial hardening has occurred to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <b>11:26</b> And without further ado all Israel will be saved just as it is written,</p> <p>The One who delivers will come out of Zion; He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob &lt;Isaiah 59:20&gt;, <b>11:27</b> and this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” &lt;Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33-34 &gt;.</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:25</b> Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ᾔτε [παρ’] ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πῶρως ἂν ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ <b>26</b> καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται, καθὼς γέγραπται</p> <p><b>ἤξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος,</b> <b>ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ.</b> <b>27 καὶ αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἰ</b> <b>διαθήκη,</b> <b>ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν.</b></p>

I think that Paul adds this paragraph of vs. 25-27 (and the next paragraph of vs. 28-32) so that the Roman, Gentile Christians to whom he is writing do not think of themselves as having taken over from the Jews the primary position as God’s people. Plus, it may be that he wants to make sure that they are not relying on only what they have learned so far about the biblical message, which probably is not as complete as that which Paul is presenting to them in the entire letter.

The word “mystery” in v. 25 appears in other letters of Paul, where it refers to something that is spoken of before, e.g., in the Old Testament, and eventually becomes clear when it happens in human history at just the right time for God to bring it about (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:3-5). The future event or set of circumstances remains hidden, not because the Old Testament never says anything about it, but because people do not quite understand it completely and accurately *until it actually arrives according to God’s sovereignty*. Then it is out in the open and made explicit, and everyone who has eyes to see will not only observe it happening, but also *believe* it. Therefore, a biblical “mystery” is something that requires God to open a sinful person’s mind and heart in order to recognize the event and the people involved for what they truly are and to understand them correctly, so that the person embraces the truth being conveyed by God for the sake of his eternal life and salvation.

An example of a “mystery” is Jesus’ death on the cross. Certainly, Isaiah 53 predicts it, but the Jews did not grasp and comprehend this “mystery” until Jesus spoke of it during the three years he taught in Israel and after it actually happened (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:7-10). Another example is the eternal destiny of believing Gentiles, that they would become full-fledged partakers of the Abrahamic promises without the obligation to obey the Mosaic Covenant. Certainly, Genesis 12:1-3 predicts it, but the Jews and Gentiles

did not fully comprehend this “mystery” until Paul became the unique apostle to the Gentiles and proclaimed to them the message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (cf. Ephesians 3:3-5).

In the case of v. 25, Paul has been pointing out the “mystery” in Old Testament verses, which indicate that the Jews have rejected God in the past, are rejecting Him now, and will continue in the future to reject Him, their God (because they are His chosen ethnic people), while the Gentiles, who more naturally worship the material elements and false gods of this world, change their minds and embrace Him. Here Paul states plainly the fact of the Jews’ rejection of God, “that a partial hardening has occurred to Israel.” In other words, there is only a relatively small group of Jews, a “remnant” according to 11:5 and of which Paul is a member, who are genuinely believing in Jesus as the Messiah, such that this will be the situation for the Jews for a determinate and precise period of time. On the other hand, there is obviously a large portion of Jews who do not believe, which Paul calls a “partial hardening... to Israel.” We also remind ourselves that in Romans 9:6 Paul said the same thing, “all those who are from Israel, these are not Israel.” Those who are “not Israel” and, therefore, not authentic believers in God are the same as the large group of Jews who constitute “a partial hardening” that “has occurred to Israel.”

Then, Paul goes on to say that this will be the spiritual complexion and disposition of the Jewish nation “until the fullness of Gentiles has come in.” Paul has been emphasizing God’s sovereign choice of both Jews and Gentiles, whom He changes inwardly, so that they become authentic believers in Him and in Jesus. Therefore, “the fullness of Gentiles” could refer to the moment when God completes the number of Gentiles whom He has chosen and the last Gentile in His plans becomes a believer. However, assuming more Gentiles turn to God during the restored Kingdom of Israel after Jesus returns, I think that Paul means something different. He had written in v. 12 of the “fullness” of the Jews. There, I interpreted him to mean God’s fulfilling His promise to the Jews, not only when everyone of them will be an authentic believer and living on the land of Israel under Jesus’ rule after he returns to establish the first stage of the Kingdom of God (the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20), but also when they exercise hegemony over the earth as the most powerful nation in human history. This will be when God makes the Jews the “great nation” of Genesis 12, so that they, with Jesus ruling over them, rule over the Gentile world.

In line with this interpretation, I think that Paul in v. 25 is describing God’s finishing His plan to allow (even cause) the Gentiles to exercise supreme authority over the world that includes the Jews. When the time arrives when the Gentiles will no longer rule the world, God will bring about a great global and political reversal as stated in Deuteronomy 28:10-14—

**Deuteronomy 28:10** “So **all the peoples of the earth** will see that you are called by the name of Yahweh, and they **will fear you**.

**28:11** Yahweh will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, **in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give you**.

**28:12** Yahweh will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and **you shall lend to many nations**, but you shall not borrow.

**28:13** **Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail**, and **you only will be above**, and **you will not be underneath**, if you listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully,

**28:14** and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. [emphasis mine]

It seems that most commentators believe Paul, with the words “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,” to be talking about the last predestined Gentile to become a believer before God fulfills His promise to “Israel”—whether “Israel” means the “church” of followers of Jesus (**Replacement Theology**) or the Jews (**Status Quo Theology**). In the light of God’s stated plan in Deuteronomy 28 for both the Jews and the Gentiles, it makes more sense to me that Paul is referring to a shift in greatness from the Gentiles, who have been ruling the world from their various countries, to the Jews, who will do so from the land of Israel. And, most importantly, this will happen only when Jesus returns, which will trigger a mass revival among the people of Israel, when God changes the hearts of all the Jews who survive “The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord” of Malachi 4:5. These events will also coincide with the last days of the rule of the Gentile Beast of Revelation (cf. Revelation 13,14,19,20). Nevertheless, during the ensuing “millennial kingdom” of Revelation 20 when Jesus rules from Jerusalem, more than likely additional

Gentiles throughout the world will become authentic believers—just as all the Jews who live during the time of the restored Kingdom of Israel will be genuine followers of Jesus as their Messiah and king.

If Paul really is talking about a major global political change, which I think he is, then *houtos* (οὗτος) at the beginning of v. 26 means “without further ado” as I have translated it. As soon as God has finished causing the Gentiles to rule the world, He will transfer this global authority to Jesus and the Jews “without further ado”—without there being one second of delay in regard to His fulfilling His Abrahamic promise to the nation of Israel to make them the most powerful political entity in human history. Consequently, “all Israel will be saved,” just as Paul says.

In the light of our discussion, there are at two options (and two possible theologies) for what Paul means by these words of v. 26, “And without further ado all Israel will be saved.” One option is that “all Israel” refers to all the Jews and the Gentiles who, by the end of history, have become the *new* Israel and chosen people of God because of their genuine belief in Jesus the Messiah. This is **Replacement Theology**, where Bible students call this total group of believers “the church.” The second option is that “all Israel” means every Jew on the earth who lives through God’s final judgment and discipline of them, so that they become the first generation of believing Jews during the “millennial kingdom” of Revelation 20 under Jesus’ rule as their king. This is **Status Quo Theology**, where this total group of believers is only the nation of Israel in the light of God’s maintaining the status quo of the Abrahamic promise to his physical descendants. It does not make sense that, for almost three chapters, Paul would provide an explanation of God’s relationship with the Jews in line with **Status Quo Theology** and then, all of a sudden, switch to **Replacement Theology**. Plus, he next quotes mainly one prophetic passage in the Old Testament, Isaiah 59:20-21a and then states its impact on Israel by alluding to two other prophetic passages in Isaiah 27:9 and Jeremiah 31:33-34. With these Old Testament passages, I think that Paul is referring to God’s commitment to carry out His promise to the nation of Israel.

The quote starts in the last half of v. 26 and is from Isaiah 59:20. The whole verse from the Hebrew text in Isaiah reads,

**Isaiah 59:20** “And One who redeems/delivers will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares Yahweh.

But it is also helpful to consider the Greek translation of this verse that comes from the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Septuagint, which was quoted more often than not by the New Testament authors,

**Isaiah 59:20** “And the One who delivers will come for the sake of Zion (καὶ ἥξει ἕνεκεν Σιών ὁ ῥύμενος), and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ).”

Then, here again is my translation of Paul’s Greek words which are a quote of Isaiah 59:20 but which come mainly from the Septuagint,

**Romans 11:26** The One who delivers will come out of Zion (ἥξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥύμενος); He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ).

In chapter 59 of Isaiah, God rebukes the nation of Israel at the time of the prophet, around 730 B.C., for their flagrant disobedience of the Mosaic Covenant. Yet, as usual, He adds a note of hope and tells them that He will still forgive them. He says in v. 20 that “One who delivers will come to Zion” in the Hebrew text and “the One who delivers will come for the sake of Zion” in the Greek text. While our tendency may be to interpret the “One who delivers” as Jesus, the context of Isaiah 59 points to Yahweh. God Himself is Israel’s Savior. Plus, several times, the book of Isaiah refers to God as both the King and the Deliverer of the nation of Israel. For example, there is Isaiah 44:6 where the Hebrew word (יְהוָה) and the Greek word (ῥύομαι) are the same as in Isaiah 59:20.

**Isaiah 44:6** “Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and the One who delivers him (יְהוָה) (ὁ ῥυσάμενος αὐτὸν), Yahweh of hosts:  
‘I am the first and I am the last,  
And there is no God besides Me.’”

In this way, the prophet Isaiah often extols God, Yahweh, as the Jews' Savior and Champion. Nevertheless, we know from the New Testament that God sends His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, as the very icon of God to be the actual instrument and basis for His rescuing the Jews from both their sins and their earthly enemies in accord with His promises in Genesis 12:1-3.

As I indicated above, Paul's quote of Isaiah 59:20 closely matches that of the Septuagint, but he says that the "One who delivers" comes "out of (ἐκ) Zion" instead of "for the sake of (ἐνεκεν) Zion." Certainly, the Jews would agree with all three texts, that the One who saves them from their earthly enemies, God as *their* God, Yahweh, will come "to," "for the sake of," and "out of" Zion. He comes "to" the people of Israel, "for the sake of" the people of Israel, and "out of" the people of Israel. I think that Paul uses the preposition ἐκ (= "out of") to emphasize that God is primarily the God of the Jews, because He has chosen to locate Himself in the land of Israel, in Jerusalem, and on the temple mount of Mt. Zion itself. While the Jews are scattered throughout the Roman Empire in Paul's day, and the land of Israel is occupied by a foreign army, the Romans, the Jews are still God's chosen ethnic people, and the land of Israel with its capital city of Jerusalem and the temple on Mt. Zion is still God's land for the people of Israel. When He delivers them completely according to the first promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, He will do so in and out of Jerusalem and the land which He gave to the Jews.

And what does God's delivery look like when He comes "out of Zion?" He does not come simply "to those who turn from transgression" among the Jews, as the Hebrew text indicates. In the Septuagint's and Paul's words, He "will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." I think that Paul has in mind that God, the Savior and Champion of the physical descendants of Jacob, will save them from all three of their adversaries and opponents—1) their earthly enemies, 2) their own sin, and 3) God's earthly and eternal condemnation. And He will do so by means of His icon on earth, Jesus the Messiah. Consequently, Isaiah 59:20 is a prediction that God will cause the Jews to become a people who are properly obedient to Him, which must include their authentic belief in Jesus the Messiah. Through his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return, Jesus will become the basis for God's saving His ethnic chosen people from all their own sin, "ungodliness," and unwillingness to obey Him, along with saving them from their sin's eternal consequences and all the violent and malicious opposition from their earthly enemies to grant them their rightful status on the land of Israel.

Such statements by Paul, when he quotes the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, point us to the second option and theology above. When God has reached the place in His plans and purposes such that the Gentiles' political, ideological, and military dominance of the world ends, He will shift this authority and power to the Jews, while He produces a mass revival of heart, mind, and faith among them according to the **Status Quo Theology** of the Abrahamic Covenant. In addition, God, the ultimate King of the Jews, and Jesus, the final Davidic king of the Jews, will primarily exercise their authority and power over them and with them, since God through Jesus is the "One who delivers" to, for the sake of, and out of the holy place of the Jews, which is Zion, Jerusalem, and the land of Israel.

The last statement of this paragraph is v. 27, where Paul conflates the first part of Isaiah 59:21 and one part of Isaiah 27:9 with an allusion to two parts of Jeremiah 31:33-34. These three passages from the Hebrew text, but with the Greek Septuagint wordings, are,

**Isaiah 59:21** As for Me, this is My covenant with them (καὶ αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ' ἐμοῦ διαθήκη),” says Yahweh: “My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,” says Yahweh, “from now and into perpetuity.”

**Isaiah 27:9** Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven;  
And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin (ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν):  
When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones;  
When Asherim and incense altars will not stand.

**Jeremiah 31:33** “Because this is the covenant (ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη) which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares Yahweh, “I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

**31:34** And they will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares

Yahweh, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (ὅτι ἕλεως ἔσομαι ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι).”

Then, here again is my translation of Paul’s Greek words with his Greek words of v. 27,

**Romans 11:27** and this is My covenant with them (καὶ αὐτὴ αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ’ ἐμοῦ<sup>2</sup> διαθήκη), when I take away their sins (ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν).

Very simply, Paul finishes his statement of v. 26 from Isaiah 59:20 by quoting the first part of Isaiah 59:21. Then, he borrows a small part of Isaiah 27:9 and alludes to two small parts of Jeremiah 31:33-34 to complete the idea. As we saw, Isaiah 59:20 indicates that God will rescue His people, the Jews, from their sins (and, by extrapolation, from the harmful intents of their earthly enemies), and doing so will be His “covenant” with them. The completion of this idea by Paul is to say explicitly that God will be “the One who delivers” them “when [He] take[s] away their sins”—a clear reference to a portion of the second line of Isaiah 27:9. And we know that He forgives the Jews only on the basis of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Plus, we notice that the last and larger part of Isaiah 59:21 makes exactly the same point, “My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,” says Yahweh, “from now and into perpetuity.” In other words, Paul is paraphrasing this longer statement, that God’s mercy towards the Jews will go on “into perpetuity” during the existence of their “offspring” and their “offspring’s offspring.” God’s commitment to and forgiveness of the Jews will never end, and I suggest that this is as long as their restored Kingdom of Israel lasts under the rule of Jesus their Messiah on the land which God promised them in Genesis 12:1-3. The two verses from Jeremiah 31 are also saying the same thing—that God makes a “covenant...with the house of Israel” such that He will “forgive their iniquity, and their sin [He] will remember no more.” Therefore, God is explicitly declaring in all three of these passages that this covenant and this forgiveness will be *for the Jews*.

As a result, Romans 11:26-27 is also referring to the second option, which is **Status Quo Theology**. God has made the New Covenant *with the Jews* (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34), and He will forgive their sins through Jesus the Messiah, which will become the basis for His shifting the rule of the world from the Gentiles to the Jews when Jesus physically ushers in the latter’s “fullness.” Paul is implying that whatever large-scale unbelief the Jews experience after Jesus’ first coming, it will eventually be counteracted by a mass Jewish revival when “all Israel will be saved” as stated in v. 26. Plus, all indications in the prophetic books of Isaiah through Malachi and the book of Revelation are that this renewal of the Jews occurs at Jesus’ second coming when God through him as the Messiah establishes the “millennial kingdom” of Revelation 20 on the land of Israel and throughout the world.

Paul then finishes his explanation of the spiritual dynamics of the Jews and Gentiles in vs. 28-32.

**ROMANS 11:28-32**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:28</b> On the one hand, they are enemies with respect to the good news on your account. On the other hand, they are beloved with respect to the choice on account of the fathers, <b>11:29</b> because the gracious gifts and calling of God are unchangeable. <b>11:30</b> Just as you formerly were disobedient to God and now have been granted mercy because of these ones’ disobedience, <b>11:31</b> so also these are now disobedient for your being granted mercy, so that they may be granted mercy. <b>11:32</b> God has enclosed all in disobedience, in order that He may show mercy to all.</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:28</b> κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐχθροὶ δι’ ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας· <b>29</b> ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ. <b>30</b> ὥσπερ γὰρ ᾤ ἐμεῖς ποτε ἠπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ, ἡ νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ, <b>31</b> οὕτως καὶ οὗτοι νῦν ἠπειθήσαν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἐλέει, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἡλεηθῶσιν. <b>32</b> συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὸς πάντας εἰς ἀπειθειαν, ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσει.</p>

In v. 28, Paul is continuing to explain that eventually all the Jews alive at the end of the present age will become authentic believers in God and in Jesus the Messiah. He says to his Gentile readers that the Jews have actually been God's "enemies with respect to the good news" because of their unbelief and rebellion against Him. But this has been and is "on your account," meaning for the benefit of these Gentile, Christians in Rome, so that the gospel has not only gone out to the Gentiles, but also, through God's sovereign choice and grace, has had a positive effect on them and caused some of them to become authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, the Gentiles have embraced "the good news" in the midst of the Jews' rejecting it.

Nevertheless, the unbelieving Jews, indeed all the Jews, "are beloved with respect to the choice on account of the fathers." In Genesis 12 and following, God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the recipients of His promises to make them and their physical descendants in due course the most powerful nation in human history and to grant them the blessing of eternal life if they demonstrate authentic belief—which we know the three "fathers" did. Therefore, the Jews have always existed under the umbrella of these promises with the potential to be loved by God and made true Jews, i.e., the "Israel" of Romans 9:6. At any time in their history, God could cause them to experience all that He has promised them, just as He has chosen the Roman, Gentile, believers to participate in these same promises when Jesus returns and inaugurates the Kingdom of God as described by the Old Testament prophets and Revelation 20-22.

In. 29, Paul ends the sentence with a very important statement with respect to God's dealings with the Jews in the present realm. His "gracious gifts" to them of the promises which He made to Abraham, and the "calling" of them as His chosen people ethnically, so that they will experience the fulfillment of His promises at some point in the future, "are unchangeable." God never goes back on His word to the Jews and modifies His promises to them by granting them to some other people, even "the church," which He would be doing if **Replacement Theology** were true. And this is in spite of their rejecting Jesus by executing and crucifying him. Therefore, God in no way abandons the Jews altogether, even though, during their existence, He has judged them and disciplined them harshly for their unbelief and disobedience. For example, they endured the destructions of the northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians (722 B.C.), of the southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians (586 B.C.), and of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans (A.D. 70 and A.D. 132-135).

Even so, God's promise to the "fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to make of their physical descendants a "great nation" (cf. Genesis 12:1-3), one that comprises only authentic believers like Abraham and one that rules the world as the Gentiles have, will be fulfilled sometime in the future. The prophets of the Old Testament and the book of Revelation indicate that this will coincide with the coming of the Messiah, i.e., the second appearance of Jesus when he inaugurates the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Plus, the completion of God's promises to the Jews will happen, Paul is saying, because a promise by God is a promise. He never reneges on His promises, so that the Jews always remain the ethnic chosen people of God in human history, in spite of most of them rejecting their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, during such a long period of time (two thousand years so far).

Paul continues in v. 30 by explaining to His Roman, Gentile readers that their situation is analogous to that of the unbelieving Jews. These Romans, as pagan idolators, were "formerly...disobedient" to God, so that they were subject to His wrath and eternal judgment, condemnation, and destruction. However, with so many of the Jews' "disobedience" and refusal to embrace their Messiah Jesus, God has sent the message about him to the Gentiles, and they "now have been granted mercy" by becoming authentic believers in Jesus. They have discovered and embraced God's eternal forgiveness by becoming like what all the Jews will be when Jesus returns—genuine followers of their Messiah when God changes *their* hearts just as He has been changing the hearts of Gentiles along the way.

Then, in v. 31, Paul finishes the analogy of the tree with its root of the promises of God and the branches of authentic believers, both Jews and Gentiles, by saying that the situation is essentially reversed from what the tree originally symbolized. The natural branches, the Jews, are "now disobedient" and basically the "pagan idolators" of sorts, while the unnatural branches, the Gentiles, are "being granted mercy" and have become the chosen people of God (which sounds like **Replacement Theology**). However, this is only so that "these," the Jews, "may be granted mercy" in the future when they as an ethnic group as a whole become authentic believers and obtain God's forgiveness and mercy as the Gentiles have done so (which confirms **Status Quo Theology**). While *all* the physical Jews are Israel, the chosen ethnic people of God, only the physical Jews *with changed hearts* are truly "Israel," His chosen ethnic people who will participate in His bringing about the promise of making them the "great nation" of

Genesis 12:1-3. This is where Paul started these three chapters in v. 6 of Romans 9, “all those who are from Israel [Jacob], these are not Israel,” and it is where he ends here in chapter 11.

In v. 32, Paul completes the history lesson of God’s relationships to both Jews and Gentiles. He says that “all” the different groups of people, the Jews and the Gentiles, have experienced unbelief and disobedience of God, because “God has enclosed” them in the inherent sin of their human natures. But this has been “in order that He may show mercy to all” the different groups. God causes all the peoples and nations to include some individuals of authentic belief, which results in their receiving His mercy and eternal life, and to include some individuals of unbelief, which results in their incurring His condemnation and destruction. Consequently, even though the Jews in the present realm are God’s chosen people ethnically speaking, He has always intended that both some of the Jews and some of the Gentiles obtain His eternal forgiveness through Jesus the Messiah as their advocate and not by means of the Mosaic Covenant, which is strictly a Jewish covenant.

**ROMANS 11:33-36**

My Translation	Greek NAS28
<p><b>11:33</b> O the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unfathomable are His decrees and incomprehensible are His ways.</p> <p><b>11:34</b> For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor &lt;Isaiah 40:13&gt;?</p> <p><b>11:35</b> Or who has first given to Him that it should be paid back to him &lt;Job 35:7; 41:11&gt;?</p> <p><b>11:36</b> For from Him, for the sake of Him, and for the purpose of Him are all things. To Him be the glory into the ages. Amen.</p>	<p><b>Romans 11:33</b> Ὡς βάθος πλοῦτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ ὡς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ.</p> <p><b>34</b> τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου; ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο;</p> <p><b>35</b> ἢ τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ;</p> <p><b>36</b> ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.</p>

After using the last three chapters to provide his Roman, Gentile Christian readers a biblical lesson on God’s purposes for humanity, Paul now steps back and wonders at His magnificence and that it involves a rather complicated story about the Jewish nation and its citizens and about the Gentile nations and their citizens. He has explained that God is demonstrating His character by featuring His justice and mercy whereby different Jews and different Gentiles will experience one or the other, thus culminating at the end of the *present* age in a final display of God’s loyal love and faithfulness to the Jews when He causes them to become the most powerful political institution in all human history.

Certainly, God’s wisdom and knowledge of the created reality as He works out His purposes regarding His justice and mercy are so deep that it is impossible to understand all there is about what He is doing and causing to happen in the world. God decrees and determines that the history of both the people of Israel and the peoples of all other races, colors, and creeds will be what it is. And all we can do is marvel at what He is doing with them, while declaring that we do not really comprehend the whens and the whys of all the little details that make up this cosmos and earth. At least, though, we have the biblical texts, as difficult as they are to study and understand, to guide us in comprehending as much as we can. We may often ask, “Why in the world is such and such a thing happening?” or “Why would God even allow (much less cause!) certain things to take place?” And while we do not know the complete answers to these questions, God always does and encourages us to trust Him. We must trust Him that He knows exactly what He is doing in orchestrating the events of human history to their final conclusion both of the restored Kingdom of Israel that He has planned in the present, temporary realm and of the eternal kingdom that will follow it on the new earth of Revelation 21. This the Bible on every page implies or explicitly assures us.

“O the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unfathomable are His decrees and incomprehensible are His ways,” Paul says in Romans 11:33. Then, he quotes Isaiah 40:13 in verse 34, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor.” Think for a moment about an invisible, uncreated being who has never not existed and who will always exist. And try

to imagine Him as someone who has created at least 200 billion galaxies in the universe such that the number of protons, electrons, and neutrons, i.e., sub-atomic particles, that He has created is 10 with 73 zeros after it. The inventive and imaginative ability of God and His mind is so vast that only He knows all that He knows and has made. This means that, by means of our observations of nature and our study of the Bible, we are granted a small glimpse into a tiny part of His unfathomable and profound knowledge. We observe His creation and human history while also learning about Him and His purposes for us on this earth as we gratefully take in the information presented by the biblical authors. Meanwhile, God knows exactly what is going on with not only every human being on this planet, but also every other element of this vast universe. Plus, God's wisdom is so perfect and great that only He can advise Himself on what He ought to do with respect to every tiny particle of the creation and exactly how He ought to direct the story of human history.

In v. 35, Paul communicates the ideas of Job 35:7 and 41:11, "Or who has first given to Him that it should be paid back to him." No doubt we often would like to give God advice on how He should cause either world history or our own stories to proceed. Of course, we would love for Him to take our advice, because we honestly think that we know better than He does on what should have happened, what should be happening, or what should happen in the future. But Paul assures us that no one can provide something to God such that He is obligated to listen to him and even repay him. God in His providence as the transcendent creator, owner, and author of the entire creation is always the giver to all human beings of life, breath, physical sustenance, and eternal forgiveness and life (if He chooses), so that they owe Him for everything that they need and have—and not the other way around. And Paul has been emphasizing that God grants His grace and mercy to sinful human beings who deserve only His justice and condemnation. We are always beholden and indebted to God. He is never beholden to us.

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul says, "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, in the light of whom are all things, and we exist in the light of him." Here, in Romans 11:36, he says the same thing, "For from Him, for the sake of Him, and for the purpose of Him are all things." Paul summarizes quickly and precisely the exact relationship between God the Creator and all the other elements which exist apart from Him. This relationship is such that every element of the creation is, in the final analysis, a product of God's making it. In addition, every element exists with God's being the one who is most interested in it. Regardless of how fascinated by some aspect of the creation we might be, e.g., a flower, a person, a business venture, or truth, no one is more intrigued by it than God, because He is the one who made it and brought it into existence within the created reality. Otherwise, He would not have made it.

And He has created every element. As I said, every electron, proton, and neutron in the 200 billion galaxies of the universe participates with suitable fanfare in His plan to bring about the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus as its king. We may use something for our own human purposes, but God uses everything for His divine purposes which far exceed ours in their meaning, value, and worth. Galaxies, stars, planets, moons, clouds, oceans, mountains, trees, animals, birds, fish, and human beings are all created things, so that they are not God and are distinctly separate from Him. He is uncreated, and they exist only because He has brought them into existence. He is a personal, eternal being, and they last for only so long as He wants them to. He is the independent author of the story which unfolds within the creation, and they are merely a contingent part of the story, dependent on Him for their every characteristic, attribute, quality, and experience within time.

To these fundamental ideas of the connection and relationship between God and the creation, Paul responds in v. 36 with a kind of doxology, "To Him be the glory into the ages." Surely God should and will get all the praise and applause for what HE has done, is doing, and will do that, according to the Bible, will go on forever into eternity and all the "ages" that could possibly exist with God as their creator. Finally, Paul ends this section with a simple "Amen" from the Hebrew language, meaning "May this all be affirmed by me and everyone else who understands God's inscrutable knowledge and plans with the limited knowledge we have as human beings."