

# The Gospel According To Paul: Romans

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## ***Israel Will Be Saved by Accepting the Messiah, "Even As It Is Written" (11:25-32)***

*I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup>And in this manner (houtos) Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer (ho hruomenos) will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. <sup>27</sup>And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." (Isaiah 59:20; Jeremiah 31:33,34) <sup>28</sup>As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, <sup>29</sup>for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. <sup>32</sup>For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*

These verses are some of the most misinterpreted verses of the New Testament. Some use them to prove a conjectured universal conversion of "all Israel" to Christianity following a massive return of Jews to the homeland of Israel. A careful exegesis of these verses, however, will not support this interpretation.

The term first confronting us in these verses is "mystery". The

mystery Paul speaks of consists of three particulars: first, that a hardening in part had befallen Israel; second, by this hardening a full number (*pleroma* - a large quantity) of Gentiles had come into Christ; and thirdly, he cites a messianic prophecy as to the manner in which all Israel may be saved.

That a hardening of a part of Israel had come about is precisely what Paul had stressed in 11:1-9. In 9:7, and in 11:5, he mentioned a remnant of Israel who had believed in Christ, but the larger part were obstinate; hence, they had rejected God in rejecting his Son, the Messiah; and consequently, God had rejected them. This theme was very forcefully expressed by Jesus during his earthly ministry, as was expressed by John in his Gospel and letters (cf. John 3:18; 8:24; 14:6; 2 John 9).

Further, this hardening or obstinacy had come about "until the fullness of the Gentiles had come in." The Greek term translated "until" is *charis hou*, a compound idiom of a conjunction and a relative pronoun meaning, with reference to time, "until, so long as, to the point that." The term fullness simply means "a full number or large quantity." It does not mean a fixed number; in fact the word "number" is not even in the Greek text. The word is *pleroma*, which simply means "fullness," i.e., a large quantity. The point Paul is making here is that the obstinacy of the Jews had made it possible for the Gentiles to come to God, and a large number of Gentiles were doing just that.

### **In This Manner All Israel Will Be Saved**

Here we come to the most critical verses:

*And so (houtos- in this manner) all Israel shall be saved: even as (kathos – just as) it is written, **There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer**; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: And this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Rom 11:26-27).*

The Greek term translated "so" is very important to Paul's point here. It is the adverb *houtos* meaning "in this manner" (i.e., **in this manner** all Israel will be saved). To what is he referring? He is referring to the Scripture that follows. Another important Greek term is important to a full understanding of this text. It is the adverb *kathos* meaning "just as" or "even as." Our text reads literally: ". . . and **in this manner** (*houtos*) all Israel will

be saved, **just as** (*kathos*) it is written: the Deliverer will come out of Zion; and will turn ungodliness from Jacob."

### The Deliverer of Isaiah

Here in these words of Old Testament Scripture (Isaiah 59:20) is "how" all Israel will be saved, **just as** (*kathos*) it is written. Paul is obviously pointing to this messianic prophecy as the means of Israel's salvation. There is nothing in this verse that teaches that a special deliverer will come out of Zion in some distant day to bring about a special deliverance of the nation of Israel. Paul believed that Jesus of Nazareth was their deliverer and there was no other, nor would there ever be.

Isaiah is, unquestionably, the most quoted book in the writings of Paul. The Scripture quoted here is Isaiah 59:20, "And **the Redeemer** shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the LORD." The context of this verse is significant. Isaiah 59 is part of Isaiah's prophecy of the redemption of Israel from Babylonian captivity. This block of material runs from chapter 40-55. Within this block of text is found a collection called by Old Testament scholars, "the Servant Songs." Here an individual God calls, "my servant" appears and is depicted as one who has something to do with Israel's deliverance. In chapter 40 Isaiah is told, "Comfort, comfort my people, Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned," (40:1-2). Then, in verse 3, Isaiah writes of, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'." Then in verse 9, he says, "O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

In 41:8-9, he speaks of Israel as "my servant," saying,

*But you, Israel, are **my servant**, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham my friend. <sup>9</sup>You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, and said to you, "You are **my servant**, I have chosen you and have not cast you away.*

In verses 13-14, he says,

*For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, "Fear not, I will help you." <sup>14</sup>"Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD and **your Redeemer**, the Holy One of Israel.*

Then, in chapter 42, the first “servant song” appears (verses 1-5); but God speaks of this “servant” as a specific individual, “Here is **my servant**, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on **him** and **he** will bring justice to the nations (Gentiles).” Throughout chapter 42 one finds the language and imagery Jesus used to respond to the question of John the Baptist concerning his identity as the Messiah. The blind see, those who sit in prison are brought out of darkness; but those who are in darkness are identified as Israel, whom he calls, “**my servant**,” (42:18-20).

In chapter 43 we pick up a “deliverer” or “redeemer” theme. In each case it is God who is identified as the deliverer. The Hebrew words used are *ga'al* – meaning a deliverer or redeemer, someone who rescues someone or sets someone free who is in bondage; the second term is *yesha* meaning “a savior.” In some instances the verb or participle form of the word is used, conveying essentially the same concept as the noun. In Isaiah 43:1, God says to Israel, “Fear not for **I have redeemed** (Hebrew *ga'al*, Greek LXX *lutroo* – to redeem or deliver) you,” and in verse 3, we find, “For I am the Lord, you God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior (Hebrew *yesha*, Greek LXX *ho sozon*).” God tells Israel that he redeem them and bring them back to the Jerusalem so that they may be a light to the nations. In 43:11, he says, “I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no **savior** (Hebrew *yesha*, Greek LXX *ho sozon*).

Chapters 44-48 are filled with the repeated theme of the sins of the forefathers and the second chance Israel is receiving. In 44:6 we read, "This is what the LORD says, Israel's King and **Redeemer** (Hebrew *ga'al*, Greek LXX *ho hrusamenos* – the one delivering), the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” In 45:15, Isaiah says of God, “Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and **Savior** (Hebrew *yesha*, Greek *soter*) of Israel;” and in verse 21, God says to Israel, “There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a **Savior** (Hebrew *Yesha*, Greek LXX *soter*), there is none but me.”

Then in 49:1-6, we find the second servant song, and, here again, we

see an individual rather than corporate Israel; and again, this servant figure is the one who is given the responsibility of bringing Israel back to God and he will become the light to the Gentiles. In 49:7, Isaiah again identifies God as, “**the Redeemer** (Hebrew *ga'al*, Greek *ho hrusamenos* –the one delivering) and Holy One of Israel.” In verse 26, God identifies himself to Israel as “**your Savior**” (Hebrew *yeshu'a*, Greek LXX *ho antilambanomenos* – the one giving help). The third song is found in chapter 50:4-11, where the servant is given an “instructed tongue” in order that he might bring the word of God to the people Israel. In 50:10, he speaks as one who has the authority of God,

*Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant?  
Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of  
the LORD and rely on his God (Isaiah 50:10).*

Then in Isaiah 52, we find the words Paul quotes in Romans 10:15, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, **who brings salvation**, who say in Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” Another Pauline quote, found in 2 Cor 6:17, is drawn from Isaiah 52:11. It is the fourth servant song with which Christians are most familiar. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is the most powerful and messianic of the servant songs; here we see a suffering servant who takes upon himself the sins of mankind. Chapters 54-55 return to Israel as the servant of the Lord with promises of blessings if Israel remembers its God when it returns to the homeland.

The remainder of the book of Isaiah consists of the prophet’s continuing revelation of God’s promise to deliver Israel. It is in this context that Paul’s quote of Isaiah 59:20 is found, “**“The Redeemer** (Hebrew *yeshu'a*, Greek LXX *hrusamenos*) will come to Zion, to those of Jacob who repent of their sins, "declares the LORD.” The “deliverer/redeemer” theme follows in 60:16, “You will drink the milk of nations and be nursed at royal breasts. Then you will know that I, the LORD , am **your Savior** (Hebrew *yeshu'a*, Greek *ho sozon*), **your Redeemer** (Hebrew *ga'al*, Greek LXX *exairoumenos*) the Mighty One of Jacob.” This theme follows in 62:11 with, “The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, **your Savior** (Hebrew *yeshu'a*, Greek LXX *ho soter*) **comes!** See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him'.”

It is no coincidence that when God came into the world as one of us,

the angel told Joseph, you are to give him the name him Jesus (*yeshua*) because he will save his people from their sins,” (Matt 1:21). The name "Jesus" is the translation of the Greek *Iesous*, which is the translation of the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which is itself taken from the Hebrew *yesha*, found throughout these Isaiah texts translated as "savior.". The word means "savior" or "deliverer." Jesus is called *soter* (savior) and *ho sozon* (the one saving) throughout the New Testament, and here in this Romans text (11:26), he is identified as *ho hruomenos* – the one delivering or "the deliverer," also used of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament, in verb/participle form as here in this text, (cf. Luke 1:74; Romans 7:4; 2 Cor 1:10; Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:17 and 18).

Now, what is the significance of the sweeping survey of the larger part of the book of Isaiah? It is not without cause that Isaiah is called “the messianic prophet.” The material we have presented here is replete with messianic overtones and undertones. Paul’s argument that there will be a redeemed remnant from Israel is rooted in the book of Isaiah. In fact, Paul’s quote in Romans 9:29, “unless the Lord had left us a remnant,” is from Isaiah 1:9, and this theme is repeated throughout Isaiah chapters 1-37, in no less than fifteen occurrences (1:9; 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 14:22, 30; 15:9; 16:14; 15:3; 37:4, 31-32), in addition to the reference in 46:3, within the Servant Songs block.

In Paul's mind, Isaiah 59:20 was clearly fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and this is precisely what is saying here in this text. The coming of the deliverer/redeemer out of Zion, the turning away of ungodliness, the establishment of a new covenant, and the taking away of the sins of Israel, have all been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. If the Jews will not believe him to be their deliverer, they will not be delivered, not at the time of Paul's writing, not at the present time, or at a future time.

**(5) Doxological Closing of the Redemption  
Drama Section (11:33-36)**

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! <sup>34</sup>"For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" (Isaiah 40:13) <sup>35</sup>"Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be repaid to him?" (Job 41:11) <sup>36</sup>For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory*

*forever. Amen, (Rom 11:33-36 NKJV).*

With these words Paul concludes the theological block of this letter. Here again Paul draws from the Servant Song section, reinforcing the idea that he is heavily influenced by the messianic interpretation of the servant song materials of Isaiah.

*Who has understood the mind/spirit (ruach) of the LORD , or instructed him as his counselor? <sup>14</sup> Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding? (Isaiah 40:13-14)*

These words reinforce Paul's defense of God's sovereignty and omniscience found in 9:14-21. The fact that man does not understand what God is doing does not mean that God does not know what he is doing, or that what he is doing with reference to the human race is unjust, questionable judgment, or is not in the best interest of the human race. In God's wisdom, he knows best what should be done in every situation of our existence. His knowledge is fully adequate to inform his thinking in every conceivable aspect of every situation. His judgments are unquestionable in every way in terms of what should be done in every situation and with every person involved in every situation. Man does not know the mind of *Yahweh*, even though man never tires of second guessing God and arrogantly setting his will over against the will of God.

Man would never consider himself capable or worthy of counseling God, but he continually subjects God's revelation to interpretations that empty what God has said of its original and intended meaning, even suggesting that what God has revealed stands outside the realm of rational credibility and acceptability. This is the issue with which Paul began this section of this letter (1:18-11:36), and everything preceding this doxological closing (11:33-36) of this block of material should be read and considered in light of these words.

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