

The grace that we, the people of the nations, now enjoy didn't originate with us. It was first extended to Israel, but when it was taken from them due to their rejection, it was given to us. Israel, as God's chosen people, was meant to experience the fullness of God's salvation, yet this was delayed due to their rejection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Israel's Rejection and God's Plan for the Nations

Israel had already reached the height of enjoying the blessings of God's salvation, which was to come through the Messiah, the Savior they had awaited for centuries. Jesus Christ, the promised Savior, came to redeem Israel from sin and oppression. However, they rejected Him as the Messiah, and instead of benefiting from the fruit of their labor and the fulfillment of their promises, they forfeited it.

When Jesus, the Savior of their souls, came, God allowed a spiritual blindness to fall upon them so that they could not recognize Him. This was done for a very specific purpose—to allow the nations (the Gentiles, like you and me) the opportunity to receive grace and salvation. As Paul writes in Romans 11:7-8, "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.'"

God's plan was to extend salvation to the Gentiles, drawing them into His covenant and kingdom. The rejection of Christ by Israel allowed the gospel to spread to the nations.

The Mystery of Israel's Hardening

This blindness wasn't permanent. The apostle Paul describes it as a temporary hardening that would last until the "fullness of the Gentiles" comes in. In Romans 11:25, Paul writes:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

This period, during which the Gentiles are called into the kingdom, is a time of God's mercy for the nations. Israel's spiritual blindness was, and still is, the means by which salvation was made available to the Gentiles. But this blindness will not last forever. There will come a time when Israel's eyes will be opened, and the nation will recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Savior they had once rejected.

The Paradox of Israel's Rejection

Paul's writing in Romans 11:11-12 illustrates the paradox of Israel's rejection. He says,

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Through Israel's failure to recognize Christ, salvation was extended to the nations. However, Paul also points out that Israel's rejection was not permanent. The time will come when Israel will be restored and "jealous" of the salvation that the Gentiles now enjoy. Romans 11:12 goes on to say:

Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

The "fullness" of Israel refers to the time when all of Israel will come to

faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. This will mark the final stage in God's redemptive plan for humanity. The rejection of Christ by Israel is not the end but part of God's sovereign plan to bring about the salvation of the nations.

The Olive Tree Parable: The Grafting of the Nations

The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to illustrate God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles. Israel is the cultivated olive tree, while the Gentiles are the wild olive branches. When Israel rejected the Messiah, God cut off some of the natural branches (Israel) and grafted in the wild branches (Gentiles) to partake in the blessings and promises given to Israel. Romans 11:17-18 says:

And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

This means that the Gentiles have no grounds for pride, as they are

grafted into the blessings that originally belonged to Israel. They are partakers of God's promises but must remain humble and faithful, understanding that they are supported by the root (God's covenant with Israel). Paul warns that if God did not spare the natural branches (Israel), He may also not spare the Gentiles if they do not remain faithful.

Israel's Restoration: God's Promises Are Sure

The time will come when God will restore Israel to Himself. Romans 11:26-27 states:

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.

This is a prophecy that speaks of the national repentance of Israel. God will remove their spiritual blindness and bring them to faith in Jesus Christ. This prophecy is confirmed in Zechariah 12:10, where it says,

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

This is the moment when Israel will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and mourn for having rejected Him. The Spirit of grace will be poured out upon them, and they will embrace Christ as their Savior.

The End Times: The Rapture and the Tribulation

The restoration of Israel will coincide with the closing of the age for the nations. Before this time, there will be a dramatic event known as the Rapture, where the church (the body of Christ) will be taken to meet the Lord in the air. This will signal the end of God's dealings with the Gentiles. Following this, a time of tribulation will come upon the earth, during which the Antichrist will rise to power, and God's wrath will be poured out on a world that has rejected Him.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 speaks about the Rapture:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

During this time of tribulation, the Antichrist will deceive many, and the nations that rejected God will face judgment. However, Israel will be restored, and the kingdom of God will be established on earth.

The Urgency of Salvation

As believers in the gospel, we are called to share the message of salvation before the door of grace is closed. Jesus, in Luke 13:24, tells us,

Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Now is the time to receive the grace of God. The door of salvation is still open, but it will not remain open forever. 2 Corinthians 6:2 reminds us:

For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'

Let us not delay, for the time is near. The Rapture could occur at any moment, and the nations' opportunity for salvation is running out. God has extended His grace to us—let us receive it with open hearts.

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