

**25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.**

• ου γαρ θελω υμας αγνοειν αδελφοι το μυστηριον τουτο ινα μη ητε παρ εαυτοις φρονιμοι οτι πωρωσις απο μερους τω ισραηλ γεγονεν αχρις ου το πληρωμα των εθνων εισελθη

**26a And so all Israel shall be saved:**

και ουτως πας ισραηλ σωθησεται

### v.25-26a - **General Context**

Here we have arrived at the section of Romans 11:11-32 that has caused the most trouble and, with its difficulties, has brought an air of uncertainty as to both doctrine and application (v.v. 25-26). Yet the historical heartaches brought on by this passage can be avoided if we remember: 1) Paul's interests and arguments previous to this point set the stage for what we read in v.v. 25-26; 2) what goes after this section (v.v.25-26a) is an outworking of the thoughts found in these verses, and 2) we look both at the detail of v.v. 25-26a and its parallels in other parts of Scripture. Great men of old have struggled with this section of God's word. Possibly there is light in a new direction.

### v.25-26a - **Major Issues**

One might be surprised as to the key in understanding the whole of Romans 11:25-26a - the concept of "hardness" (πωρωσις) in Israel. We will look at this concept first.

#### **I. The "πωρωσις" / hardness of Israel in Romans 11:25**

The typical modern understanding of v.v.25-26a is that God has blinded Israel to the light of the gospel until all the Gentiles He intends to

save are brought to that salvation. At that point (the rapture?), God will lift the veil of blindness/hardness of the nation of Israel such that the “all/fullness” of that nation will come to know their Messiah (during the great tribulation?). This is their view of the message/doctrine of Romans 11:25ff.

The older writers (Spurgeon/Calvin/Edwards et. al.), without the tribulation/rapture doctrines of our day, still believed that in the latter days of the gospel era God would lift the *πωροσις*/veil of blindness, and cause a great ingathering of Israelites - an ingathering which would be the centerpiece of a great latter day revival prior to the second coming of Christ. This is their view of the message/doctrine of Romans 11:25ff (indeed, this “Israelite conversion” was, for the Puritans, the centerpiece of Puritan Postmillennialism).

In both cases we have what Herman Ridderbos calls an “apocalyptic miracle of conversion” in Romans 11:25-26a. I think the adherents to either view would agree both as to the substance of what was stated above, as well as to Ridderbos’s summery statement. Yet there are three major problems in the above views that cause (I believe) insurmountable barriers to the acceptance of either position/interpretation.

**First**, we have no hint of such a blindness followed by an “apocalyptic” doctrine of national conversion in the whole of Paul’s argument to this point in Romans 11. Even Paul’s “how much more their (Jews) fullness” in verse 12 is stated to secure the truth that assuredly if Gentiles who turn in faith are saved *through Jewish unbelief* “how much more” sure is Jewish acceptance guaranteed if they turn *in faith*. Indeed, one wonders how such theology as is expounded above regarding v.v. 25-26a combats the problems that prompted Paul to ask his question (which he is still answering) initially (v. 11): “Have they (the people described in 11:8-10) stumbled that they should fall (irrevocably)?” This troubling spiritual condition of the Israelites of his day described in v.v.8-10 - such a condition that Paul: 1) grieved over (9:2), 2) might wished to be cut off from Christ over (9:3), 3) directed his very heart’s desire (10:1), and forced him to deal with the issue in verses 11:1 and 11:11 would hardly find a satisfactory answer in some far-off, latter-day conversion. Indeed, Paul seems in 11:13-14 to have hopes of conversions *by his own ministry*, and *in his own day*!

**Second**, and of this we will say more in the section on “cross-references,” 2 Corinthians 3:3-17, which has much in common with the terms and themes of this section of Romans 11 (esp. 2 Cor 3:12-17), has not so much as a word regarding a great future apocalyptic “unveiling” of Israel. If one reads 2 Corinthians 3 and the Pauline argument and his use of

vocabulary, the great “unveiling” of the apocalyptic future would surely be in his discussion. Much to the contrary though, it was the turning to Christ that Paul associates with the unveiling (2 Cor 3:16), and this was seen by Paul *as a present possibility*, and conversion of the veiled Israelites was not placed in some far future scenario.

**Third**, and this is at the heart of Christs’ Olivet sermon and Paul’s theology in all of Romans/Galatians/etc., let us examine - via a question/answer format - the concepts surrounding this hardness/blindness/*πωρωσις* of Israel in v.25.

**Q1: What is this blindness/hardness -**

Mt 13:13ff: “Therefore, speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah , which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for these people’s heart has waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

Mt 15:14: “Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind.”

Mk 4:11f: “And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive: and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins be forgiven them.”

Lk 8:10; “And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables: that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”

Jn 9:39: “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.”

Jn 12:37bff: “...yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which He spoke, ‘Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah has said again, ‘He has blinded their their eyes, and hardened their heart: that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.’

Acts 28:24b-27 “...and some believed not...And when they agreed not

among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people has waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

**A1:** The Israelite blindness was a blindness in perceiving Christ as the Messiah sent by God, and promised in the Old Testament.

**Q2.** Who is blinding Israel?

**A2:** God.

**Q3.** Why was Israel blinded?

Lk 19:41-44: “And as He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou had known, even thou, at least in *this thy day*, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; *because thou knew not the time of thy visitation.*”

**A3:** God was judging them for rejecting Christ.

**Q4.** What is the justification/basis for God’s blinding of Israel? That is, why *Israel as a nation*? Why *national* punishment/blinding/hardening?

**A4:** Surely the answer is in the fact that Israel alone had - as a nation - a covenant with God. Thus we read in Deut 29:1; “These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses *to make with the children of Israel.*” Included in the “words of the covenant” were the blessings for Israel upon national obedience (Deut 28:1-13), and the curses for Israel upon national disobedience (Deut 28:15-68). Included in the curses for disobedience we find, “The Lord shall smite thee with madness, *and blindness*, and astonishment of heart,” Deut 29:28.

But now here is the problem with the above scenarios. The book of Hebrews emphatically establishes that the new covenant has a better mediator (1:4), a better hope (7:19), better sacrifice (9:23), better blessings (substances, 10:34), a better land (11:16), a better resurrection, (11:35) - all by virtue of the better sacrifice/blood, Christ (12:24). Thus, Hebrews 8:7-13 plainly states, “if that first (e.g. Mosaic) covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them (God said) **‘I will make a new covenant (v.v.7-8)...In that He saith, a new covenant, He hath made the first old,(8:13).’**”

In other words, the covenant that forms the basis for the rewards and punishments of Israel’s national actions (the old/Mosaic covenant) has been made obsolete by the covenant of Christ. *This means the punishment of blindness upon Israel for her sin is as antiquated as the covenant which undergirds the punishment.* This further means that national promises simply no longer exist, because the covenant upon which such promises would be based is, in a word, ***obsolete.***

Therefore, the idea that national Israel has some type of future - redemptive or otherwise - cannot be theologically maintained. Romans 11:25-26a cannot be teaching a doctrine of a future, national conversion or “fullness.” Such promises do not exist. All promises are Ye and Amen exclusively in Christ and the new covenant ratified in His blood - *a covenant made with individual sinners only.*

## **Ia. Attendant truths of Romans 11:25f and “πρωσις”/hardness**

Therefore, the views of Romans 11:25-26a as a Pauline exposition of future “mass/all/fullness” conversion near the end of all time cannot be maintained from what we know of the rest of God’s word. It just will not fit.

Yet, if we remind ourselves of what Paul’s theology has been *previous to this point* in his exposition, we will find a surprisingly clear path to what his interests are Romans 11:25-26a. Indeed we will find Paul is, in verses 25-26a, repeating truths he has stated all along in 11:11-24!

We must remember that all that Paul will say in v.v. 25-26a regarding “blindness,” “fullness of the Gentiles,” “so all Israel shall be saved” etc., is based on his desire to keep the Roman Gentiles from being “wise in their own conceits.” We are told this is his reason for unfolding the “mystery” of v.v. 25-26a. We have seen previous to this point Paul’s exhortations to “boast not,” v.18; “you stand [not by your own merit but] by faith,” v. 20; “be not high-minded, but fear,” v.20 - all of which are reasons for his exposition. Then why not apply those same principles to verses 25-26a?

Note:Remember, a crucial question that requires an answer is: **In what way can we grasp verses Romans 11:25-26a so as to see and discern the end for which Paul wrote it (the nullification of Gentile pride)?** Or, to put it another way, **“How do the details in the revelation of Paul’s ‘mystery’ combat and then negate this Gentile “conceit?”**

All the above moves us in the direction of *how* “hardness upon Israel until the Gentiles be come in...” would be a deterrent to Gentile pride and high-mindedness. Paul drives his points regarding the hardness of Israel and subsequent themes home to us in two ways.

**First**, we read in 11:11; 11:13-14; 11:30-31 that: “through their (Israel’s) fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy [and save some, DMT];” “I magnify my ministry, (as apostle to the Gentiles), if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh, and save some of them;” “For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their (Israel’s) disobedience, even so these (Israel) also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they may also may obtain mercy.” Note in the above passages the fourfold linkage of: Jewish unbelief(1), causing Gentile redemption(2), followed by Israelite jealousy/conversion(3), all of which was revealed by

Paul to negate Gentile pride(4). The repetition of (1)-(2)-(3)- resulting in negation of Gentile hubris(4) is well established in Romans 11:11-32.

**Secondly**, ponder how the common issues in Paul's revelation of the mind of God with respect to Jew/Gentile salvation emphatically counteracts Gentile boasting, in that: 1) It was not the *faith* of the Gentiles which brought salvation to them but, much to the contrary, the *unbelief of Israel* that caused the gospel to come to the Gentiles, and 2) the salvation of the Gentiles was actually a means to a goal, and this goal was the redemption, via jealousy, of the same Jews whose unbelief caused the gospel to go to the Gentiles in the first place! ***Either way one looks at Gentile redemption, the cause and/or purpose finds its origins in Israel, not in anything regarding the Gentiles!*** This is the mechanism in Romans 11 Paul reveals so as to humble his Gentile readers!!

Now what should be an evident observation in our examination of the previous statements of Paul in Romans 11:11ff is to see he uses the combination of the above arguments - indeed the very pattern we have observed [e.g. (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)] - **in Romans 11:25-26a!** Note: "For I desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, *lest you be wise in your own conceits*(4), that *blindness* in part has happened *to Israel*(1) *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come*(2), And so [so, greek/οὕτως, 'in this way/manner,' e.g. the means/manner of Gentile redemption] *all Israel shall be saved*"(3).

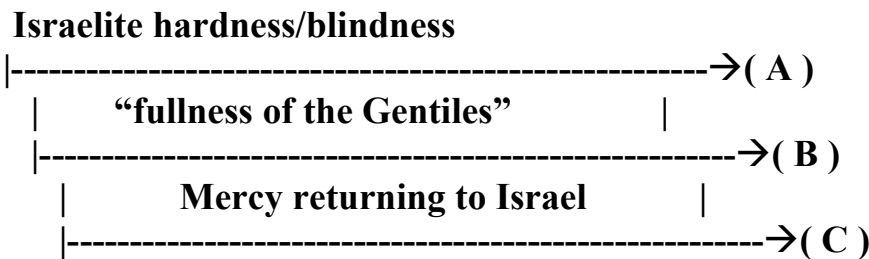
## **II. Romans 11:25 and "the fullness of the Gentiles"**

If there is a universally accepted interpretation of any term in this verse full of difficult terms in Romans 11:25-26a, it is the understanding of "fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Everyone this author has come into contact with - whether verbally or through literature - sees this phrase as being equal, more or less, to "when all the Gentiles have believed and come to the redemption which God has purposed." No interpreter requires "fullness of the Gentiles" to mean *every* Gentile - in either an absolute sense (indeed, some were in hell when Paul penned the words), nor in the gospel/church age. There seems to be unanimity that "fullness of Gentiles" means the "full" or "complete" gathering of Gentiles in the context of the discussion/subject (most say this "fullness" in Romans 11:25 occurs just prior to the second coming, or the rapture). But let's look further.

**First**, the context and subject in which we find the phrase "fullness of Gentiles" is one of the *blindness of Israel* - a subject which carries with it the issue of *judgment*. Now Paul's purpose in discussing the "fullness of the Gentiles" is to bring to bear on the issue of Israelite judgment an

concomitant subject - *mercy to Israel*, as Paul confirms five verses later in v.v. 30-31: “for as you (Gentiles) were once disobedient to God, but now have received mercy through their (Israel) disobedience, even so (greek, οὕτως/english ‘in like manner’) these (Israelites) also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you, they (Israel) may also obtain mercy.” ***In other words, for Paul, the themes of Israel’s blindness, “Gentile fullness,” and mercy returning to Israel are inextricably linked.***

If we may chart the idea here, as Israelite judgment came, Gentile salvation unfolded. Further, parallel to the “fullness of the Gentiles” is the mercy manifest to the blind nation of Israel (and this is why 11:25 is followed by 11:26a; “and thus [in this manner] all [the fullness of] Israel shall be saved). The latter two themes are *simultaneous* and, along with the initial blindness/judgment of Israel in redemptive history, are *dependent* upon one another. Thus we might illustrate Paul’s thought as follows:



( A ) / ( B ) / ( C ) are historically linked/related concepts for Paul (and, of course, us), and ( B ) & ( C ) are events that; 1) mutually spring from Israelite blindness/judgment, and 2) are inter-dependent. ( A ) is the cause, of which ( B ) & ( C ) are the *inter-related, inter-dependent* effects.

**Secondly**, as the blindness was *the initial* judgment upon Israel for their unbelief, *the consummation* of their national judgment/punishment was the destruction of the holy city, Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This issue was prophesied at length in Matt 24/Mk 13/Lk 21, and is given emphasis in Matthew after the triumphal entry into the city by Christ in Matthew 21:1-11. After His entry into the holy city, He drives the moneychangers out (Matt 21:12ff), curses the fig tree (Matt 21:18ff), and begins to rebuke Israel for her hardheartedness.

But I would like to take a detailed view at Christ’s words in Matthew 22:1ff and the marriage parable (esp. v.v. 2-7): “The kingdom of God is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.



Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, see, I have prepared my dinner; my ox and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. And when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, **destroyed those murderers, and *burned up their city.***”

The above is an echo of the destruction Christ prophesied regarding Jerusalem in Matt 24:1-3; Mk 13:1-2; Lk 21:5-6, as well as the Old Testament prophecy regarding the same in Daniel 9:24-27. Here are some segments from Daniel’s famous prophecy: “**Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and thy holy city**(v24)...the street shall be built in troublesome times(v25)...after 62 weeks Messiah shall be cut off (crucified) *...and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolation’s are determined*(v26)...*And on the wing of abominations shall one be who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate*(v27).”

Indeed, in the prophetic statements of the Olivet discourse (Matt/Mark), a key, common element is that the days of this desolation/punishment are shortened (e.g. the judgment comes to an **end/consummation!**, Matt 24:22; Mk 13:20). In other words, with the destruction of the holy land/city God brought to a end/consummation His wrath against His nation which had rejected their Messiah and His gospel.

God’s wrath against Israel had its initial manifestation in the blinding of the nation and was consummated by the annihilation of the people and their land. **With this final act, God *finished His work of judgment regarding Israel.***

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Now the doctrinal conclusions are the following: the bringing in of the Gentiles (e.g. their “fullness”) is an act of mercy by God in concert with Israel’s blindness to the end that Israel might be provoked unto salvation. To say it another way, God’s judgment upon Israel is not His only acts/workings toward them. He was also - as Paul was writing - saving Gentiles, and thereby holding out grace via the Gentiles to these same Israelites.

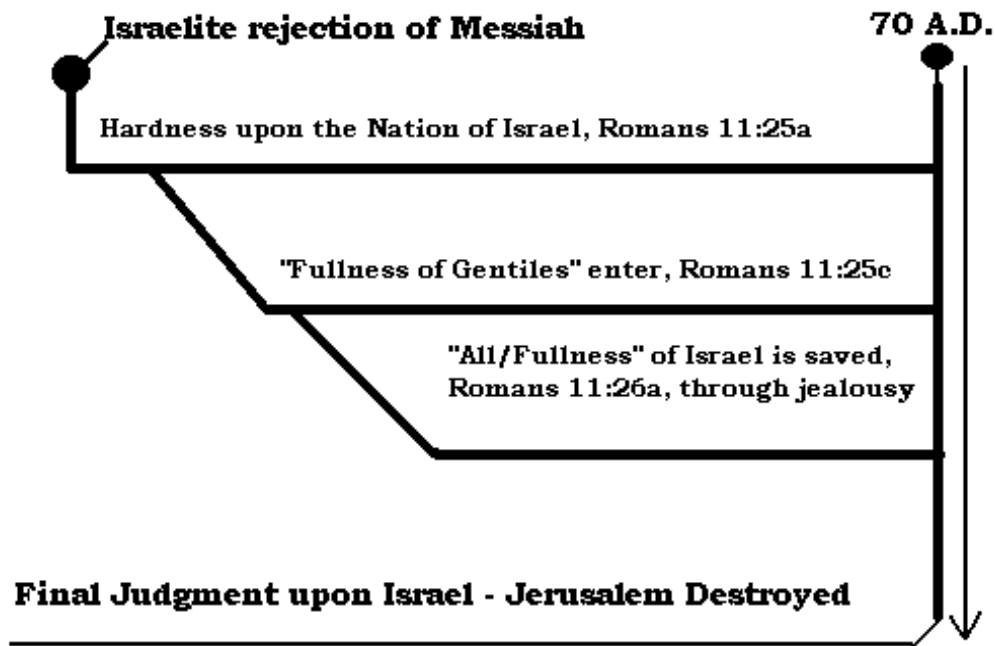
**But there came a time when the blindness of Israel, which we saw as a judgment of God for their rejection of Christ, came to an end via**

**the final, consummate judgment of Israel and her land/city - the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.**

This means that the “judgment” of blindness has ended, and with it the means of mercy which God ordained to deliver Israelites prior to their final judgment as a nation - that means being the “fullness of the Gentiles.” This “fullness” of Gentile salvation was *directly related* to the deliverance of the “fullness” of Israel through jealousy. But seeing God has finished His judgments of Israel, God is no longer “blinding” Israel, and thus the means to secure some of the blind Israelites - the “fullness of the Gentiles” - is no longer a means of Israelite deliverance. **Both the “blindness” of Israel and the “fullness” of Gentiles have been fulfilled, accomplishing their purposes in God’s redemptive works in the context of God’s covenant judgments/mercies.**

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Again, we may do well to see visually the doctrines expounded by Paul in Romans 11:25-26a.

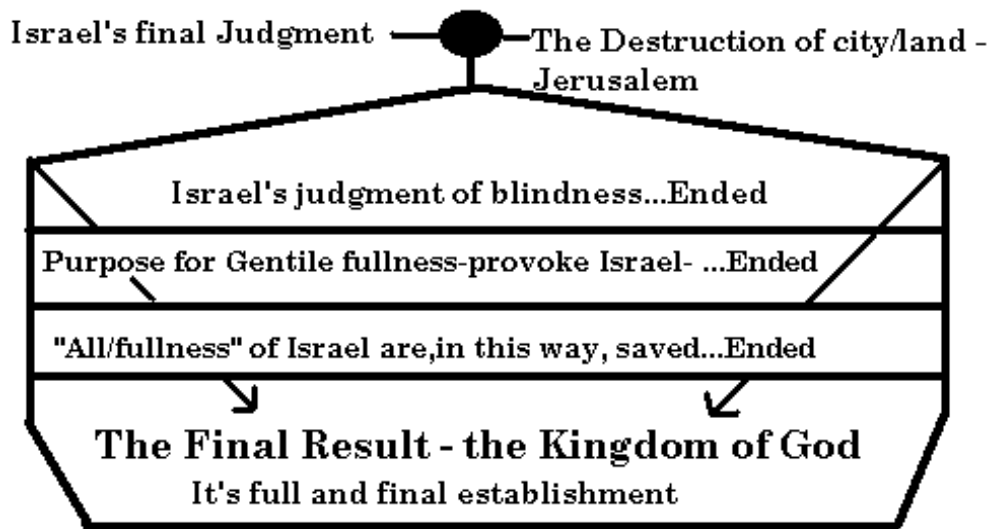


Thus, the “fullness” of Israel, or “all Israel” [1] as v. 26a puts it (in juxtaposition to the “remnant” of Israel, 11:5) is gathered in through the “fullness of the Gentiles;” and the “fullness” of the Gentiles [2] is gathered in as a result of the judicial blindness upon Israel [3]. *All three are inter-related in the history and timing of God’s redemptive purpose.*

And just as when Christ who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek came (Heb 6:20-7:28), the Levitical priesthood was made obsolete; Just as when the “Lamb of God” came (Jn 1:29), He makes all other lambs and their sacrifices obsolete; so to, as God has finished the judgment upon Israel which He began with judicial blindness, He makes “national jealousy” obsolete - for His covenant people are no more, God has given the kingdom to a new nation, Matt 21:43.

There is no more need for the bringing in of Gentiles to make Israel jealous - hence their “fullness” has come in (that is, the full number of Gentiles prior to Israel’s final judgment). Israel was spared for 40 years between their crimson sin of crucifying the Just and Holy one and the wrath of God being poured out for that sin\*\*. Thus, in like manner to the Gentiles - and prior to their final annihilation - their (Israel’s) fullness has come in (that is, prior to their final destruction, the remainder of redeemed Israelites, added to the “remnant,” equals their “fullness.”)

**A.D. 70**



\*\* In giving us the understanding of “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” (Lk 23:34), this is the view of some - that Jesus was asking for time for His killers to come to the grace He had secured on the cross before the wrath of God fell (cf. Acts 2:16-21).

And example is from Klaas Schilder’s three volume work on the suffering, trial, and crucifixion of Christ. If I may glean from his chapter on “Father forgive them” in volume three: “Just who are those for whom the Savior is praying? Who are to share in the blessing for which He now prays (to) the Father?... The greek language of the New Testament uses various shades of connotation in speaking of it (forgive)... There is a forgiveness which

consists solely of a temporary suspension of the charge or of the sentence... This ...plea is not for the justification of the sinner(s);...it simply desires that God will temporarily withhold the terrible punishment...on this generation of vipers... Hence Christ is not praying for a cancellation of execution, not even for a postponement of execution, but for the suspension of the judgment of wrath which is sure to come in any case.”

### **III. “and so\*\* all Israel shall be saved”**

From the truths learned up until now regarding the first two important phrases; “blindness of Israel”\*\*\* and “fullness of the Gentiles,” the meaning of “and so Israel shall be saved” should be, more or less, transparent.

\*\* The greek word here in 11:26a translated “so” or “thus,” οὕτως, means “in this way/in this manner/in this fashion.” It is used elsewhere in Romans 11: in 11:5 we read, after Paul speaks of a remnant in Elijah’s day in 11:4, Paul says “Even so (οὕτως, in like manner)...there is at the present time;” and in 11:31, after speaking of the fall of Israel bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, “Even so (οὕτως, in like manner)...these (Israelites)also have now not believed, that through the mercy shown you (Gentiles), they may also obtain mercy.” I say this because with Paul’s use of “until the Gentiles be come in” in 11:25c, we who read in English automatically see the word “then” in 11:26a as following “until.” So, unconsciously, we read 11:25c-11:26a as follows: “until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and then all Israel shall be saved.” But the word translated in the KJV as “so” **always** means “in this manner”/“in this way” - **never** “then.” Indeed, there is a different and unique word the greek writers used for “then”/greek, “τοτε,” used 140+ times in the New Testament. More will be said in the section on “**Key Words**.”

\*\*\* This author did not include an exposition of the phrase “blindness of Israel *in part*” simply because all expositors see the “in part” cannot mean partial blindness of all individual Israelites, but rather part of Israel as a whole is blind; that is, some out of all the nation are blinded to the gospel.

Referring back to note “\*\*\*” on “οὕτως,” Paul is saying in verses 25c-26a; “blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; *and in this manner* (i.e. the manner of Gentile jealousy/provocation enunciated in verses 11,12,13-14,and 30-31) *all Israel*

*shall be saved.*” This “all Israel” is the ingathering of the “fullness” of Israel by the “mystery” of Gentile ingathering Paul explained to us, plus the Remnant mentioned in the earlier part of Romans 11. It is the “fullness” of verse 12; that is, the completion of Israelite redemption.

Now this does not imply (nor does Paul) that salvation for all or any who might have some slight or intimate genealogical relationship to Abraham/Moses/12 Tribes is hopelessly excluded from the gospel now (e.g. 1998). It simply means in redemptive history, God has ended the Mosaic Covenant, and with it all ethnic issues related to salvation, privilege, etc. All stand before God as “under sin,” Rom 3:9. Any privileges, promises, blessings - indeed all religious dogma stands in relationship to the “everlasting covenant” secured by the blood of Christ (Heb 13:20).

To conclude on “and so all Israel shall be saved,” Paul is thinking of the “all” or “fullness” of Israelites, not in some type of absolute sense, but; 1) Jews who turn from unbelief to faith in the Messiah (Rom 11:23-24), and 2) the ordained means of gathering this believing Jewish “all” or “fullness” - Gentile “fullness” - *prior to the destruction of the Old Testament basis for this ethnic division via the passing of the Mosaic Covenant and its great expression prophetically - the desolation of Jerusalem* (Matt 24:15-21; cf. Luke 21:20-24; Daniel 9:25-27; Heb 8:7-13).

**Let us paraphrase Romans 11:25-26a: “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own opinion, that the judgment of hardness has happened to part of Israel such that the gospel has gone to the Gentiles, and this will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this manner of Gentile salvation unto Israelite provocation - prior to God’s final judgment upon Israel - all/fullness of Israel shall be saved.”**

#### v.25-26a - **Key Words**

**πωρωσις/hardness/blindness** - Of the three uses of this noun, Mark 3:5 and Ephesians 4:17 speak of hearts that are *hard*, and therefore are *blind*. Our interest is in the fact that the verb form of this word is used in Romans 11:7, implying blindness. But even more important (and we will examine this in the “cross-reference” section), the verb form is found in 2 Corinthians 3:14 where the whole context (2 Cor 3:3-17) is dealing with our

interests here - the Old Covenant vs. the New Covenant and the theology surrounding these doctrines. In a word, **2 Corinthians 3 will confirm the teachings of Romans 11:11-32!**

**οὕτως/so/thus** - KJV translates “so,” verse 26a. As has been noted previously, the word οὕτως has been used in 11:5, and will be used again in 11:30. In all cases there is no temporal meaning (e.g. **when** something occurred), but always the idea of manner (e.g. **how** something occurred). The classic use is its first in the New Testament - Matthew 1:18 - “now the birth of Jesus Christ was οὕτως / *in this way*.” Our temptation will be, because of Paul’s use of “until” in verse 25c, to see the “so/οὕτως” as equal to “then/τότε.” But Paul, in using the word οὕτως, speaks to us regarding the “how” of Israel’s fullness, not the “when.” That is, Paul means to say in 11:26a, “*in this way* - the way of Gentile fullness/salvation leading to jealousy - *all Israel shall be saved*.”

**αχρὶς οὗ/ until which** - It is here that Paul deals with the issue of time and its function in the plan of God in saving hardened Israel (***remember, this was Paul’s original inquiry in 11:11!!***). This is also an important “mystery.” Israel’s fullness will be established via Gentile fullness. To negate Gentile boasting, God will use them to gather Israel in, **and this shall be true until the fullness of the Gentiles have come in**. Now we have established that: 1) “blindness” was a judgment of God upon Israel for her unbelief, and 2) God’s final judgment upon Israel was the vengeance of His wrath upon the people and their city - Jerusalem (Lk 21:20-24). This means that God’s judgment was in effect up to the time He cut off all mercies to this nation.

**πληρωμα/fullness** - As has been stated previously in verse 12 and “how much more their *fullness*,” the emphasis with this word is a gospel ingathering which is in addition to a previous salvation. In other words - and as in the parable of the wine and wine skins - “fullness” is the “topping off” or filling of the wineskins.

For Paul, he has spoken of a remnant (11:5). The “fullness” is the completion or addition of sinners to the body of saints (what we might call the “filling up” of the redeemed). It may emphasize addition, or the end of addition - that is, completion.

The fullness of the Gentiles here in verse 25 is the full measure of Gentiles brought to redemption parallel to the times of Israel’s blindness.

This is the key. It is gospel ingathering *relative to the Jewish rejection* (see verse 11b). This “fullness” is not absolute, but contextual.

**πᾶς/all** - The “all” of “all Israel” in verse 26a seems clearly to be equivalent to the “fullness” of Israel in verse 12. It is possible Paul used “all” (instead of the expected “fullness”) to emphasize the universal nature of salvation available to these fallen Israelites. This is why Paul will quote from some Old Testament promises, starting with verse 26b. The expanse of both gospel promise and redemption is a necessary truth in the question/answer of verse 11:11 and 11:12-32.

### v.25-26a - **Cross References**

**2 Corinthians 3:3-17** - One can hardly underestimate the importance of this passage. Our word of interest in verse 25, “*πῶρωσις/hardness*,” is used in a related form in 2 Cor 3:14, translated “but their minds were *hardened*.” The subject of this section is the same as our subject in Romans 11 - the New covenant vs. the Old covenant and the spiritual condition of the Jews in relationship to these covenants.

The first section (v.v. 1-5) is general truths regarding Paul’s New covenant ministry. Part II (v.v.6-11) establishes the superiority of the New over the Old covenant. Part III (v.v.12-18) is the practical reasons why Paul’s kinsman, the Jews, do not see that the glory of the Old covenant has been completely superseded by the glory and truth of the New.

Paul proclaims frequently in this section that the glory of the Old covenant has a glory that has been nullified or rendered null. This is so important that Paul says the four times in just eight verses (v.v. 7,11,13,14)! The glory of the Old covenant - which is described as “glorious” (v.v. 7,9,11) - Paul says “*has no glory* by reason of the glory (of the New covenant) that excels.”

Now in this exposition, Paul speaks of his gospel and its rejection by the Jews. He says they are “blind” (v.14), and to his day a veil is upon their hearts so as to not see the gospel (v.14,15). Then he says in verse 16, “nevertheless, when it (Israelites) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” Now for our studies in Romans 11:11ff, Paul seems to have no long term eschatological theme of conversion, but rather a genuine prospect of Jews turning to the Lord. And the veil of blindness which is such a part of 2 Corinthians 3:14-18 is seen as lifted, not in some far future, but rather when an Israelite turns to Christ, for Paul says the Old covenant is made

clear in Him (see Luke 24:44). **This turning was, for Paul, a reality in his day, and this “blindness” in 2 Corinthians 3 is the same as the Romans 11 “blindness” - indeed, it is a commentary on some of the Romans 11 themes.**

### **Luke 21:24 - “times of the Gentiles” -**

#### **Matthew 24:15-21**

**15**Therefore when you see abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (whosoever reads, let him understand)

**16**then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains **17**Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.

**18**And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

**19**But woe to those who are pregnant and to those with nursing babies in those days!

**20**And pray that your flight may not be in the winter or on the sabbath.

**21**For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as has not been since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be.

#### **Luke 21:20-24**

**20**And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof draws nigh.

**21**Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

**22**For these be the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled



**23**But woe unto them that are with child, and to the that give suck in those day! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people

**24**And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the *times of the Gentiles* be fulfilled.

It seems clear by the comparison of the Olivet Discourse of Matthew to Luke that the Great Tribulation was the seven year history leading up to the consummation in August A.D. 70 when the Roman armies crushed the Jews and both the city and the temple (comp. Mt 24:15, “when you see” with Lk 21:20, “when you... see.” This conclusion can hardly be avoided given the Matthean use of “great tribulation” in Matt 24:21 combined with the “desolation” caused by Rome in Lk 21:20,24.

Now Luke’s phrase in Luke 21:24 “the times of the Gentiles” is the closest term to our “fullness of the Gentiles” in Romans 11:25, it is probable that they are referring to differing aspects of the same issue - the time and seasons of the final dissolution of Israel and their relationship/covenant with God. This is by far the easiest and most satisfying understanding of the phrase “fullness of the Gentiles.”

#### v.25-26a - **Summary**

If we again give an understanding of 11:25-26a through a paraphrase: “I would not have you ignorant of this mystery lest you be overly wise, that blindness to the gospel has come upon a part of Israel until which time the full measure of Gentiles be saved: and in this manner - the manner of Gentile salvation unto Jewish jealousy - the fullness of Israel shall be redeemed.”

Again let us remind ourselves of two truths: 1) Paul is still dealing with the question in verse 11 and the issue of the salvation of Paul’s Jewish kinsman, their blindness to the gospel, and the possibility of their recovery spiritually, and 2) the blindness of Israel was a judgment - which judgment would come to its finish with A.D. 70 and the full and final judgment upon Israel for their rejection and murder of their Messiah.