

# The Mystery of Israel's Blindness

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Calvary Baptist Church of Waterbury, CT  
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Spiritual blindness is a serious issue. If not faced, it can lead to death: that is, an eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire. In the case of our passage, it is a judicial punishment brought upon a people for living in disobedient unbelief.

Though our passage references Israel's hardening, our text also warns the Gentile nations of this danger in Romans 11:21-22

“Be not highminded, but fear: <sup>21</sup> For if God spared not the natural branches (*which is the nation of Israel*), take heed lest he also spare not thee (*the Gentile*). <sup>22</sup> Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

Paul reminds us that we have been granted something we never deserved. It is a privilege to have God's mercy and grace extended to us through Christ. Therefore, we should never take this gift for granted, nor should we squander it.

This blindness did not come upon Israel, “because they killed Christ.” We all had a hand in “killing Christ.” It was our sins that nailed Him to the cross.

The real reason for Israel's spiritual blindness comes from rejecting a millennium and a half of divine revelation. It is the same danger facing the church today. If we are not careful, our own arrogance can cause us to reject the same revelation. The end result will be a hardness of our hearts to the things of God.

## **A little history to Israel's blindness.**

Israel is a chosen people. They were chosen by God to reveal Him and His Word to the world. It says in Deut. 7 . . .

“For thou (Israel) *art* an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you (Israel), nor choose you (Israel), because ye (they) were more

in number than any people; for ye (they) *were* the fewest of all people: <sup>8</sup>  
But because the Lord loved you (them), and because he would keep the  
oath which he had sworn unto your (their) fathers . . .” – Deut. 7:6-8

In Romans 9:4-5 it says,

“*To Israel . . . pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants,  
and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises; <sup>5</sup>  
whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*,  
who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

However, with all their privilege and divine revelation they became ignorant  
of God’s righteousness. In other words, they forsook God, the fountain of  
living waters and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no  
water.”

Hosea 4:6 – describes it this way,

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast  
rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to  
me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy  
children.”

Romans 10 describes Israel has having a zeal for God, but not according to  
knowledge.

Romans 10:2 – “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but  
not according to knowledge.

Amazingly they forsook God’s revelation and set out to establish their own  
righteousness.

Romans 10:3 - “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and  
going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted  
themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Romans 11:7 also records the sad consequences, “Israel hath not obtained  
that which he seekth for.” Even with all their zeal they have failed to find the  
relationship with God they sought.

Does this not sound like people in the church today? Many are repeating the  
very thing that Israel did. I mourn over those who have darkened the doors of

Calvary and then walked away. They are people who sat under the word. They heard God's Word taught over and over again but with no lasting effect.

I remember like yesterday, a young man who sat week after week in a home bible study. He acknowledged the truth that Jesus Christ was the Savior, but as he listened to the cost of the Christian life he later pulled me aside and said this is too difficult, I can't do it. So he went out and establish his own style of righteousness and ended up shipwrecked. Oh how many poor souls have done this!

Two passages help illustrate Israel's waywardness.

Romans 11:8 – "(According as it is written, 'God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;') unto this day.

This passage quotes Isaiah 29:10. The idea is this. When the Lord called Isaiah to preach to the nation of Israel, He warned him that most of his hearers would not listen. Only a small remnant would remain. The result of their failure to hear the Word of God, brought about the judicial punishment of spiritual blindness and hardness of heart.

Several Old Testament passages are cited to support this claim.

"And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: <sup>10</sup> Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway" - .Romans 11:9-10.

Here Paul quotes from a Messianic Psalm – (Psalm 69:22-23). The context of the Psalm prophetically describes the death of the Messiah on the cross.

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" - Ps. 69:21.

Thus David wrote that the result of their rejection of this divine revelation would bring about judicial blindness.

### **The Mystery:**

This is the mystery that is mentioned in Romans 11:25

“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 . . .”

Though the Old Testament leaves hints of the gospel reaching out to the Gentiles. No one in the OT era foresaw the gospel going out to the Gentiles. Nor did they see the emergence of the church or the setting aside of Israel.

Remember, the early church was first exclusively made up of Jews. At Pentecost 3000 Jews got saved. Shortly after that, 5000 Jews were came to Christ and the numbers continued to grow. It took years before the church reached out to the Samaritans and even more time before they went to the Gentiles.

But 20 years after Pentecost the church was noticing the decline in Jewish people being won to the Lord. Most of the increase was with Gentiles. That is why Paul addressed their concern, “What about the Jews?” Furthermore, the church had no priesthood, no temple, no temple sacrifices and more. So the question raised by the Jews in the first Century was, “ave the Jewish people been cast away?”

So Paul answers this in Romans 11:1 – “Hath God Cast Away His People? **GOD FORBID.**” Proof of this fact was Paul himself, he was a Jew and He was saved. He continues in Romans 11:2 – “God has not cast away His people which He foreknew.”

So what happened to the Jewish people? Again, this is part of the mystery. Romans 11:25 says they have been blinded **IN PART**. This will continue until the fullness of the Gentile is accomplished.

The idea here is that this temporary blindness will continue until the full number of Gentiles come into the faith. In others words there is coming a point in time when the grace now extended to the Gentiles will end, as we know it, and God’s face will once again turn to the Jews.

He says in Romans 11:26 – “And so **all Israel will be saved:** as it is written (Isaiah 59:20-12) “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Read Romans 11:27-32.

**Insights:**

Has it ever occurred to you that there is a divine undertaking behind the salvation of a soul. Salvation is not a human work. Yes, it requires us to respond in faith to the message of grace, but it is no less a divine work of grace.

How else can it be that in one day all of Israel shall be saved. That is, all those Jews that survive to the end of Tribulation Period will experience the Holy Spirit's outpouring of grace and they will repent and turn to Christ.

Zechariah 3:9 says, "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone *shall be* seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and ***I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.***"

Zechariah 12:10 says, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."

Zechariah 13:1 says, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

God did all the work necessary for our salvation.

1. God the Father provided the Lamb – His Son.
2. Salvation has to do with the "sanctification of the Spirit" . . . and the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" – 1 Peter 1:2
3. Those who carry his message to the world are to do so, in the power of the Holy Spirit - not in their own power.
4. Those who receive His message are those who have been convicted by the Holy Spirit of sin, righteousness and judgment for it says, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."
5. Jesus also says, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." – John 6:44
6. Then to those who respond in faith and call upon the Lord, He provides us with His righteousness, not ours. "For the *Father* hath made *Jesus* to

be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” – 2 Cor. 5:21

7. This is the greatest gift of all time and has been set before the Gentile world. It was hidden in the Old Testament period, but at great cost it has been set before us. One day the clock will run out on the Gentile world.

We are warned in several places in Scripture not to let this great salvation slip by.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. <sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; <sup>3</sup> **How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him***; <sup>4</sup> God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

- a. Personally, make your salvation sure.

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” – Romans 10:17

- b. If the Holy Spirit is moving in your heart, respond to Him today. There is no guarantee that it will happen tomorrow.

Hebrews 4:7 says, “To day if ye will hear **his voice**, harden not your hearts.

- c. Remember, salvation is a divine work and it happens as God moves. So respond to His prodding.

2. Finally, the days are drawing short. The time of the fullness of the Gentiles is at hand. Soon, God will sound the trumpet, and His attention will return to the Jewish Nation. We should be sincerely concerned for the lost.