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MYSTERION AND THE SALVATION OF “ALL ISRAEL”  
IN ROMANS 9–11

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Philip Chase Sears  
May 2019

**APPROVAL SHEET**

MYSTERION AND THE SALVATION OF “ALL ISRAEL”  
IN ROMANS 9–11

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To Sarah,

my wife and mother to our children, who labors faithfully unto our Lord as my helper and  
ministry partner. I thank God for you and I love you.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1 En.	1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)
1QH <sup>a</sup>	1QHodayot <sup>a</sup> or Thanksgiving Hymns <sup>a</sup>
1QM	Milhamah or War Scroll
1QpHab	Peshier Habakkuk
1QS	<i>Serek hayyaad</i> or <i>Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline</i>
2 Bar.	2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)
3 Bar.	3 Baruch (Greek Apocalypse)
<i>ABD</i>	D. N. Freedman, ed., <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
<i>ANET</i>	J. B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3rd ed. with supplement
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Animal Apoc.</i>	<i>Animal Apocalypse</i>
Apoc. Moses	Apocalypse of Moses
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gringrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>ExpTim.</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i>



FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
Gk. Apoc. Ezra	Greek Apocalypse of Ezra
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HTA	Historisch Theologische Auslegung
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Jdt	Judith
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
Jub.	Jubilees
LAB	Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)
LAE	Life of Adam and Eve
L&N	Johannes P. Louw and Eugen A. Nida, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NA <sup>28</sup>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28 <sup>th</sup> ed.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
OG	Old Greek
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary

<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>The Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Sym	Symmachus
<i>SWJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
Theo	Theodotion
<i>TLOT</i>	J. Ernst, and W. Claus, <i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (eds.), <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
T. 12 Patr.	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
T. Iss.	Testament of Issachar
T. Levi.	Testament of Levi
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
T. Zeb.	Testament of Zebulun
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZRG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte</i>

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## PREFACE

The process of writing this dissertation has been humbling and, on many levels, an instrument of sanctification in my life. Humbling, because it has revealed my limitations, reminding me that I can do nothing apart from God's sustaining grace. This realization then has proved beneficial to my soul as the Lord has drawn me closer to him through his word and constant prayer. Therefore, for these two reasons alone, I'm grateful for the privilege of rigorous doctoral studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

I'm also thankful for Dr. Thomas Schreiner, who has patiently and graciously reviewed countless drafts of this dissertation. His feedback has pushed me to be both thorough and precise. Most importantly, he has taught me what faithful Christian scholarship looks like by not forsaking a love for Jesus, the church, and my family. I'm grateful to Dr. Brian Vickers, who has invested in me over these years and has challenged me to be a better writer. I'm also thankful to Dr. Jarvis Williams, who provided the encouragement needed to pursue this dissertation topic, challenging me to read Paul as a Second Temple figure and giving me thorough feedback on an initial seminar paper.

I would be remiss if I did not show thanks to Oak Park Baptist Church, who not only gave me the freedom to pursue a PhD, but saw the long-term value in it for their edification through the pulpit. Finally, I must thank my wife, who has supported me and endured the long road of theological studies for most of our marriage. She has sacrificed in many ways, but never wavered in her love for me, our children, or her Savior. Her commitment has created a healthy environment for our five wonderful children so that they would not see my studies as a rival to them. She sacrificed time with me so that Grace, Hannah, Andrew, Lillian, and Luke would not be slighted. May God bless her

labors in the home for the eternal benefit of our children. And may God bless the efforts put into this dissertation to reveal the unsearchable depths of his glorious wisdom in the gospel, the mystery of Christ (Rom 16:25–26).

P. Chase Sears

Charlestown, Indiana

May 2019

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Romans 9–11 is admittedly one of the more difficult sections of all Paul’s letters. These theologically dense chapters center on God’s redemptive plans for the nation of Israel in light of the coming of Christ. While most of Israel has rejected Christ, Paul maintains that God’s covenantal promises to them have not failed (9:6). Concluding this lengthy treatise, Paul describes God’s redemptive plan as a “mystery” (μυστήριον) which will result in the salvation of “all Israel” (11:25–27). However, though Paul’s intent was to keep his readers from ignorance, chapters 9–11 remain shrouded in mystery for contemporary readers. That such a fog rests upon interpreters is evident in the variety of viewpoints adopted to understand Paul’s climactic words, “and in this way, all Israel will be saved” (καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται, v. 26).

Scholars typically focus their attention on three questions to decipher the mystery of Romans 11:25–27. First, what does Paul mean that “a hardening has come partially upon Israel” (πάρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν, v. 25a)? Second, how does the full inclusion of the Gentiles relate to the salvation of “all Israel?” And third, what is the identity of “all Israel” (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ, v. 26)? In tackling these questions, scholars have exerted considerable energy focusing on the grammatical, literary, and rhetorical elements of Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11.<sup>1</sup> Yet, these detailed analyses have not led to a consensus in unveiling the mystery of 11:25–27.

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<sup>1</sup>For an elaborate chiasmic construction of Rom 9–11, see N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1195–1258. For other analyses of Rom 9–11, see Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 44–199; Johann D. Kim, *God, Israel, and the Gentiles: Rhetoric and Situation in Romans 9–11* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 115–42; James W. Aageson, “Scripture and Structure in the Development of the Argument in Romans 9–11,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1986): 265–89.

While any interpretation of Paul's mystery must weigh the grammatical, literary, and rhetorical features of the text, scholars have not given enough attention to the "mystery" (μυστήριον) itself. Many acknowledge that "mystery" (μυστήριον) refers to something "previously hidden, but now revealed" and have primarily focused on the *content* of the mystery in Romans 11:25–27; but few have given any attention to its *function* in the entire argument of chapters 9–11. Hence, a closer look at the context of Paul's use of μυστήριον may grant clarity for how it functions in Romans 9–11.

Over the last century there has been an increased interest in Paul's use of μυστήριον. While the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* posited an influence from Greco-Roman mystery cults,<sup>2</sup> in more recent years scholars have attributed a Jewish apocalyptic influence.<sup>3</sup> As a result, most discussions concerning the NT use of μυστήριον have explored its Jewish roots from the book of Daniel, the DSS, and the vast array of other Second Temple literature. Brown represents the majority of scholars concluding,

We believe it no exaggeration to say that, considering the variety and currency of the concept of divine mysteries in Jewish thought, Paul and the NT writers could have written everything they did about *mysterion* whether or not they ever encountered the pagan mystery religions. "Mystery" was a part of the native theological equipment of the Jews who came to Christ.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978), 389–90; Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970); Percy Gardner, *The Religious Experience of Saint Paul* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 57–101; Alfred Loisy, *Les Mystères Païens et Le Mystère Chrétien* (Paris: Nourry, 1914).

<sup>3</sup>See, Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 19–41; Günther Bornkamm, "Μυστήριον," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 4:814–15; Raymond E. Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament: The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the NT* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 1; D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 2:413; Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 16; G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 29–55.

<sup>4</sup>Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament*, 69.

Within a Jewish context, mystery reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for understanding history and revelation. More specifically, it connotes a previously concealed revelation of God’s eschatological wisdom concerning his redemptive plans. Often these mysteries convey insight into a particular component of God’s redemptive purposes in the eschaton (e.g., judgment, reward, persecution, or new creation). Characteristic of these mysteries is that they convey hidden revelation accompanied by a more complete—and unforeseen—interpretation of its meaning (cf. Dan 2:28–29; 9:24–27; 1Q27 1 I, 1–4; 1QpHab VII, 1–8).<sup>5</sup>

While surveys on the NT use of *μυστήριον* abound, few works have explored its function within an individual book or corpus. To date, the only canonical books to receive an extensive treatment on their use of *μυστήριον* include Ephesians<sup>6</sup> and 1 Corinthians;<sup>7</sup> whereas Paul’s use of *μυστήριον* in Romans has been limited to surveys<sup>8</sup> or succinct notes within commentaries.<sup>9</sup> Due to their brevity, these treatments fall short of

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<sup>5</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 106–7.

<sup>6</sup>Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mysterion: Meaning and Content* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1977).

<sup>7</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*.

<sup>8</sup>Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament*, 50–52; Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 170–74, 206–7; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 84–108; T. J. Lang, *Mystery and the Making of a Christian Historical Consciousness: From Paul to the Second Century* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 43–46, 110–17.

<sup>9</sup>Many commentators note the Jewish context to Paul’s use of *μυστήριον* often defining it as something previously hidden, but now revealed. Moo states, “Paul uses the word ‘mystery’ with a technical theological meaning derived from Jewish apocalyptic. In these writings ‘mystery’ usually refers to an event of the end times that has already been determined by God—and so, in that sense, exists already in heaven—but which is first revealed to the apocalyptic seer for the comfort and encouragement of the people of Israel. Paul also speaks of a mystery as something that had been ‘hidden’ from God’s people in the past but had now been revealed in the gospel” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 729. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 690; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 441; Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 672; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Röm 6–11*, vol. 2, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Zurich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 253–54; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 594–95. To my knowledge, no commentator has shown what bearing this Jewish context of *μυστήριον* has on Paul’s argument in Rom 9–11.



investigating what bearing *μυστήριον* has on Paul's use of OT Scripture, the structure of his argumentation, and its relationship to eschatological fulfillment.

Recently, Beale and Gladd have explored the function of *μυστήριον* in Romans 11, particularly as it concerns the apparent reversal of the “Jew first, then Gentile” order of salvation anticipated in the OT (Isa 49:5–6) and repeated in the NT (Acts 1:8; Rom 1:16).<sup>10</sup> They contend that this two-fold pattern of “Gentile first, then Jew” expressed in Romans 11:11–12 was a mystery prophesied from Deuteronomy 27–32.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, in retrospect, Paul uncovers a seed form of this reversal in Deuteronomy. While Paul does rely on Deuteronomy to explain the current phenomenon of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles (Rom 10:19), Beale and Gladd's treatment does not adequately explain Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in Romans. By narrowly defining the mystery in Romans as the reversal of the “Jew first, then Gentile” pattern of salvation (1:16) they have effectively deemphasized the central component of the mystery: the Christ event. Furthermore, by limiting the mystery to Paul's reading of Deuteronomy they neglect to explain how the unveiled mystery elucidates other prophetic passages in Romans 9–11.

However, Richard Hays's hermeneutical project provides a helpful way forward in articulating how mystery functions in Romans 9–11. For Hays, Paul sees the promises of God taking

an entirely unexpected turn because of the world-shattering apocalyptic event of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus. When he rereads Israel's Scripture retrospectively, Paul finds numerous prefigurations of this revelatory event—which nevertheless came as a total surprise to Israel and continues to function as a stumbling block for those who do not believe. Once the Scriptures are grasped in light of this hermeneutical key, their pervasively eschatological character comes into focus; therefore, Paul seeks to teach his readers to read Scripture *eschatologically*, mindful of God's final judgment of every human thought and action, while also looking forward in hope to God's final reconciliation of all things to himself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 84–108.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>12</sup>Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's*

It is this surprising fulfillment of Israel's Scripture in Christ that Paul identifies as a mystery (Rom 16:25–26) and functions to explain God's redemptive purposes for Israel and the nations. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to rehearse what others have written on the Pauline mystery. Rather, the goal is to fill a gap in the discussion and focus upon how the Jewish context of the Pauline mystery informs one's reading of Romans 9–11. In this way, greater clarity may be gained to understand God's plans for the salvation of "all Israel" (v. 26a).

### Thesis

The aim of this study is to build upon the emerging consensus that the Pauline mystery is rooted in a Jewish apocalyptic context, reflecting a "once hidden, now revealed" schema.<sup>13</sup> For Paul, this mystery schema divides history into distinct ages of concealment and revelation. Thus, I will explore how such a mystery schema impacts his use of mystery in Romans 11:25–27, along with the greater argument of chapters 9–11. To this end, my thesis is that the Pauline mystery of 11:25–27 recalls a "once hidden, now revealed" schema whereby Paul reimagines Israel's history around the advent of Christ, unveiling God's redemptive plan concerning Israel's plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures.<sup>14</sup>

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*Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), xvi.

<sup>13</sup>Christopher Rowland provides a helpful explanation of "apocalyptic." He states, "We ought not to think of apocalyptic as being primarily a matter of either a particular literary type or distinctive subject-matter, though common literary elements and ideas may be ascertained. Rather, the common factor is the belief that God's will can be discerned by means of a mode of revelation which unfolds directly the hidden things of God. To speak of apocalyptic, therefore, is to concentrate on the theme of the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity." Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 14.

<sup>14</sup>This formulation of my thesis was influenced by the work of T. J. Lang, which centers on the development of the use of mystery in early Christian thought from Paul to the second century. He insightfully states, "'The once hidden, now revealed' mystery schema reimagines time in a totalizing sense with history itself being conceived in terms of contrasting eras of concealment and revelation, both of which are knit together by an eternal divine plan." Lang, *Mystery*, 7.

As John Barclay notes, “Like other Jews, Paul does theology by thinking about Israel, both because Israel’s Scriptures constitute a primary resource for Jewish theology, and because he takes the story of Israel to be central to all God’s dealings with humanity.”<sup>15</sup> In Romans 9–11, Paul explains Israel’s current plight by reimagining her history in light of the advent of Messiah (16:25–26; cf. 3:21–22; 10:4). Specifically, Paul sees God’s prior dealings with Israel as prefigurations of her present condition and he looks forward in hope to Israel’s future restoration. Romans 11:25–27 then serves as a summary of the unveiled mystery of chapters 9–11 converging with other contemporary Jewish literature to explain God’s redemptive purposes for Israel.<sup>16</sup> Such a reading of mystery bolsters the view that Paul anticipates an eschatological restoration of ethnic Israel at the parousia of Christ (11:26b–27).

### **History of Research**

Paul’s treatise on God’s redemptive plans for Israel in Romans 9–11 has not suffered from a lack of attention. Countless commentaries, monographs, and articles have been written focusing upon this hallmark portion of Pauline literature. This complex section of Scripture is filled with exegetical difficulties to be unraveled. How scholars read these chapters rests on the meaning of the mystery in 11:25–27, particularly the identity of “all Israel.” While a consensus interpretation has hardly been reached, contemporary scholarship has advanced the following five interpretations: (1) ecclesiological redefinition; (2) believing remnant; (3) eschatological restoration; (4) two-covenant; and (5) two-step missionary pattern. The following history of research on Romans 9–11 will be organized around these five views.

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<sup>15</sup>John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 520.

<sup>16</sup>See Elizabeth Johnson, who argues that Jewish apocalyptic and wisdom traditions intersect in Rom 9–11, providing insight into God’s plans for redemptive history. E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 175.

## Ecclesiological Redefinition

The first interpretation under examination is entitled, “Ecclesiological Redefinition.” This view interprets Paul’s statement concerning the salvation “all Israel” (v. 26), as Israel redefined as the church of both Jew and Gentile. John Calvin articulates this position when he states,

I extend the word *Israel* to all the people of God, according to this meaning,—  
‘When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both.’<sup>17</sup>

While not widely accepted, Karl Barth,<sup>18</sup> N. T. Wright,<sup>19</sup> Ralph Martin<sup>20</sup> and Jason Staples<sup>21</sup> represent scholars who have held this position.

This interpretation contends that Paul in Romans 11:26 has redefined Israel much in the same way as he does elsewhere in his letters (Gal 6:16; Phil 3:2). Furthermore, in Romans itself, Paul has redefined the identity of a true Jew (Rom 2:28–29) and affirms that it is spiritual Israel who will inherit the promises of God, not Israel according to the flesh (9:6–8; cf. 1 Cor 10:18). Many NT scholars concur that Paul, indeed, does view the church as the new or true Israel.<sup>22</sup> However, very few are persuaded that Paul has such a redefinition in mind here in Romans 11:26.

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<sup>17</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 437.

<sup>18</sup>Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 412–17.

<sup>19</sup>N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 250; Wright, *The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 687–93; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1147–1258.

<sup>20</sup>Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul’s Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 133–35.

<sup>21</sup>Jason A. Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with ‘All Israel’? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011): 387–90.

<sup>22</sup>G. K. Beale, “Peace and Mercy Upon the Israel of God: The Old Testament Background of Galatians 6,16b,” *Biblica* 80, no. 2 (1999): 204–23; Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 719–27; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Identity of the ἸΣΡΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ (Israel of God) in Galatians 6:16,” *Faith and Mission* 19, no. 1 (2001): 4–18; George E. Ladd, “Israel and the Church,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1964): 206–13; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

Nevertheless, this interpretation should not be quickly dismissed. Wright has presented a formidable case in both *Climax of the Covenant* and *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* that “all Israel” is none other than the church.<sup>23</sup> For Wright, the issue of the identity of “all Israel” is wrapped up within Paul’s redefinition of the Jewish doctrine of election.<sup>24</sup> In particular, Wright contends that Romans 9–11 is all about the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30, and how with the coming of Messiah, God’s renewal of the covenant has brought an end to exile.<sup>25</sup> To substantiate this point, Wright proposes a chiasmic structure for Romans 9–11 with 10:5–13 as the center. In this way, Romans 10:6–8 expresses Paul’s rereading of Deuteronomy 30 in light of its fulfillment in the Messiah. As a result, Jesus has inaugurated the new covenant whereby the promised Spirit of Joel has come enabling people to call upon Jesus as Lord. Wright contends, “The story Paul is telling is about the covenant narrative of Israel, and about the fact that, to his own surprise and shock, this narrative has been turned inside out through the Messiah and the spirit so as to include Gentiles within it.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, all those who call upon the name of the Lord—both Jew and Gentile—equate the “all Israel” of 11:26.

On this basis Paul grounds his Gentile mission (10:14–18) and explains the Jewish obduracy to the gospel (vv. 19–21). Wright expounds, Paul “aims to show that the rejection of Israel is not an oddity but rather that which has been predicted all along within the Old Testament itself . . . and that it is organically . . . linked to the promised ingathering of Gentiles.”<sup>27</sup> According to this reading, as with Christ, Israel has been

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2006), 344; P. Chase Sears, *Heirs of Promise: The Church as the New Israel in Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

<sup>23</sup>Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 231–58; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1147–1258.

<sup>24</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1157.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 1164.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 1169.

<sup>27</sup>Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 245.

rejected so that the blessing of redemption may come to the world<sup>28</sup> and it is for this purpose that God has elected Israel.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, God has not cast aside all of Israel. He has kept for himself a remnant, among whom Paul is a member (11:1). Employing this remnant motif, Paul is optimistic that this small number of believing Israelites will grow much larger;<sup>30</sup> namely that their acceptance of Messiah will be ζῶη ἐκ νεκρῶν (v. 15). However, Wright does not interpret this statement as a reference to the resurrection, but the hope of regeneration in the age of the Spirit.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Paul hopes to “save some” (v. 14) by making his fellow Jews jealous by means of his ministry to the Gentiles. Again, this “jealousy” motif harkens back to Deuteronomy 32:21 (cf. Rom 10:19), and points to the unexpected fulfillment of God’s purposes in Messiah.<sup>32</sup>

For Wright, it is this surprising turn of events that sheds light on Paul’s use of μυστήριον in 11:25–27.<sup>33</sup> The mystery that Paul details in these verses does not reference a new event different than what Paul has already described. Rather, “the ‘mystery’ of Romans 11 . . . is the entire sequence of thought from 11:11 onwards, building on the whole argument of 9:6–11:10, and drawn together in a single statement (11:25–27) at the start of its final subsection.”<sup>34</sup> In this way, Wright interprets Paul’s quotation from Isaiah in 11:26b–27 as a reference to the inauguration of the new covenant in Christ, not the parousia.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 246. See also Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1183.

<sup>29</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1192.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1224.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 1200–1201.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 1202.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 1208.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 1233.

<sup>35</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1246–51.

While Staples agrees with Wright that 11:26b–27 speaks of the fulfillment of the new covenant, he understands Paul’s “mystery” differently. Staples contends, “Paul’s ‘mystery’ is that faithful Gentiles . . . are the returning remnant of the house of Israel, united with the faithful from the house of Judah.”<sup>36</sup> Staples focuses on the phrase τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν, seeing it as an allusion to Genesis 48:19. In this way, Paul has recast the nations in place of Ephraim, and so they represent the fulfillment of the new covenant promise that Ephraim would be reunited with Israel.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the ecclesiological redefinition position sees the heart of the mystery as an unexpected fulfillment of God’s new covenant promises. Thus, 11:25–27 is not a new revelation going beyond what Paul has already argued since chapter 9, but a climactic summary of Romans 9–11.

### **Believing Remnant**

The second position, entitled the “Believing Remnant,” asserts that “all Israel” refers to the complete number of elect Jews—the remnant—throughout history until the end of the age. While a minority view, it has gained a hearing among scholars in the last two centuries, particularly among those in the Reformed tradition.<sup>38</sup> In recent years, this view has been defended by Richard Lenski,<sup>39</sup> Colin Kruse,<sup>40</sup> and Benjamin Merkle.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with ‘All Israel,’” 380.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 386–87.

<sup>38</sup>Herman Bavinck, *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 106; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 699; William Hendriksen, *Romans*, Baker New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 381–82; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 147; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 354–61; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000), 187; Simon J. Gathercole, “Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9–11,” in *God and Israel*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 134–36.

<sup>39</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1945), 700–702.

<sup>40</sup>Kruse, *Romans*, 443.

<sup>41</sup>Ben L. Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 4 (2000): 707–22; Benjamin L. Merkle, “A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion View,” in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 161–208. Others influenced by

Merkle, who supplies the most cogent case for this view, states, “This interpretation maintains that God will always save a remnant of Jews throughout history. Israel will experience only a partial hardening until the end of time (i.e., until the fullness of the Gentiles come in).”<sup>42</sup>

There are four lines of argumentation for this position. First, the entire context of Romans 9–11 should bear upon the meaning “all Israel” in 11:26. In particular, Romans 9:6 and 10:12 ground the central assertion that only a believing remnant of Israel will be saved. Paul begins his argument by narrowing his definition of the true Israel to those according to promise, rather than mere physical lineage (9:6–7). Furthermore, Paul contends that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile and that salvation for both is by means of calling upon the name of the Lord (10:12). Therefore, on this basis, it is argued that a future special salvation of ethnic Israel would contradict what Paul has stated throughout the section.<sup>43</sup>

The second argument focuses on the nature of Paul’s questions in Romans 11. Paul asks, “Has God rejected his people?” (v. 1). Then again, he says, “Have they [Israel] stumbled in order that they should fall?” (v. 11). Based on these two questions, it appears that Paul is merely concerned with whether God has utterly cast-off Israel; and his answer is “absolutely not!” Therefore, “while often read as such, there is simply nothing here to indicate that Paul has in mind a special salvific plan for Israel and the necessary corollary to his insistence that God has not cast off his people.”<sup>44</sup>

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Merkle include the following: Greg Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 710; Christopher Zoccali, “‘And so All Israel Will Be Saved’: Competing Interpretations of Romans 11.26 in Pauline Scholarship,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30, no. 3 (2008): 303–9.

<sup>42</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 711.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 712.

<sup>44</sup>Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 305.



A third argument zeros in on the timing of Israel’s salvation. Specifically, it is noted that Paul’s primary focus is on the present, rather than the future.<sup>45</sup> Answering his question in 11:1, Paul presents himself as an example that God has not completely abandoned Israel (vv. 1–2). In 11:5, Paul reflects upon God’s preservation of a remnant in the days of Elijah (vv. 2b–4), concluding “so, therefore, also at the present time, there is a remnant according to God’s gracious election.” Furthermore, in 11:13–14 Paul explains how he hopes that “some” of Israel will be saved. It is through his apostolic ministry among the Gentiles, whereby the provocation of his fellow Jews will lead them to Christ. Therefore, “the principle that a ‘remnant’ will remain throughout every age is the basis for Paul’s hope that ‘some’ would be saved during his ministry.”<sup>46</sup> Finally, at the conclusion of Paul’s discourse on Israel, the “present” remains the focus. Paul states, “For as you [Gentiles] were once disobedient to God, but now [νῦν] have been shown mercy by means of the disobedience of these [Israel], so also these [Israel] are now [νῦν] disobedient for your mercy, so that they [Israel] also may now [νῦν] be shown mercy” (vv. 30–31). Commenting on these verses, Merkle writes, “The threefold ‘now’ (νῦν) of these two verses indicates Paul’s emphasis on the present situation of Israel.”<sup>47</sup>

The fourth argument in support of the “believing remnant” position concerns the nature of “mystery” in 11:25b–26. Zoccali notes that emphasis must first be placed upon Paul’s use of ἀχρι οὔ (v. 25b), namely that it does not communicate a temporal idea.<sup>48</sup> Merkle concurs,

This phrase [ἀχρι οὔ] is essentially terminative in its significance, implying the end of something. Yet, only the context can determine where the emphasis lies after the termination. Often the phrase is used in an eschatological context, where the termination envisioned contains a finalization aspect that makes questions

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<sup>45</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 713.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 714.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 306; Merkle, “Romans 11,” 716.

concerning the reversal of the circumstance irrelevant. In other words, what is important is not what will take place *after* the event is completed, but *that* the event is eschatologically fulfilled.

Therefore, concerning the mystery of Israel’s hardening, “Paul is not suggesting a time when the hardening will be reversed but a time when the hardening is eschatologically fulfilled.”<sup>49</sup>

Another emphasis lies upon the hardening itself. Zoccali understands the hardening in an apocalyptic sense, whereby it falls upon “those who do not accept God’s forbearance as an opportunity to repent (cf. Rom 2.1–11).”<sup>50</sup> He then likens the hardening to that of Pharaoh in 9:17–18, noting that such a hardening “is not something that occurs for a period of time only then to be removed.”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the “Believing Remnant” view sees a portion of Israel as forever hardened.

This conclusion leads to the last emphasis placed upon the mystery, namely Paul’s use of οὐτως. Interpreters of this position assert that it should be taken modally, indicating the manner by which “all Israel will be saved.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the mystery does not speak to a future event at the parousia, but “rather how Israel’s salvation is interdependent with that of the Gentiles, as 11.11–24 establish and vv. 30–32 confirm.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Eschatological Restoration**

A third view, entitled “Eschatological Restoration,” is the prevailing position held by most scholars today. While there are variations of this interpretation, it is generally held that “all Israel” refers to ethnic Israel who will be restored to her Messiah after the ingathering of the nations, and this event will occur at—or around the time of—

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<sup>49</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 716.

<sup>50</sup>Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 307.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 716.

<sup>53</sup>Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 309.

the parousia.<sup>54</sup> And so, “all Israel” (v. 26) should not be viewed as spiritual Israel, including both Jews and Gentiles; nor should “all Israel” be limited to the remnant throughout history. Rather, the “all Israel” to be saved is none other than the nation itself, which is currently experiencing a hardening and among whom only a remnant is presently being saved (11:7, 25).<sup>55</sup>

According to this view, ethnic Israel’s hardening will be lifted after the “fullness of the Gentiles enters in.” Most understand the “fullness of the Gentiles” to refer to “the full number of Gentiles who are entering the people of God through faith in Christ.”<sup>56</sup> Some, therefore, interpret *καὶ οὕτως* temporally to communicate that Israel’s salvation will occur after the full number of the Gentiles have come to faith.<sup>57</sup> Others, however, understand *καὶ οὕτως* to communicate the manner in which Israel will be

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<sup>54</sup>See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 577; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 207; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 127–45; Craig A. Blaising, “The Future of Israel as a Theological Question,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (2001): 450; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 348–55; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 691–92; Susan Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-Reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11,” *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 367–95; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 618–25; Jennifer A. Glancy, “Israel vs Israel in Romans 11:25–32,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45, no. 3–4 (1991): 191–203; Otfried Hofius, “‘All Israel Will Be Saved’: Divine Salvation and Israel’s Deliverance in Romans 9–11,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 11 (1990): 19–39; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 694–706; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 311–15; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 606–8; Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 894–900; Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 131–38; William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), 334–37; Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Church as the New Israel and the Future of Ethnic Israel in Paul,” *Studia Biblical et Theologica* 13, no. 1 (1983): 17–38; Seifrid, “Romans,” 672–78; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 170–73; James M. Hamilton Jr. and Fred G. Zaspel, “A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 97–140; Moo, *Romans*, 727–54.

<sup>55</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 738–39.

<sup>56</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 600. See also Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 680; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 622; Moo, *Romans*, 733–34. However, Munck contends that the phrase refers to the preaching of the gospel among all the Gentiles. Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 135.

<sup>57</sup>Barrett, *Romans*, 206; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 136.

saved.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, both ways result in interpreting the passage temporally. As Moo states, “This means that *houtōs*, while not having a temporal *meaning*, has a temporal *reference*: for the manner in which all Israel is saved involves a process that unfolds in definite stages.”<sup>59</sup>

The final stage, culminating in Israel’s eschatological restoration, occurs in accordance with the parousia. Evidence for this view is found in Paul’s citation of Isaiah 59:20–21 and 27:9 (Rom 11:26b–27). While those who hold the “Ecclesiological Redefinition” or “Believing Remnant” views see this passage as fulfilled with Christ’s first coming,<sup>60</sup> those of this position typically see the passage pointing to a future event.<sup>61</sup> In this way, ἡξεί (v. 26b) is a genuine future, looking forward to when “the Deliverer will come from Zion.” Moo notes, that while “the ‘redeemer’ in Isa. 59:20 is Yahweh himself, Paul probably intends to identify Christ as the redeemer.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, Paul anticipates the fulfillment of Isaiah 59:20 at the parousia of Christ. Along these same lines, Israel’s acceptance is also closely associated with the resurrection (i.e., “life from the dead;” Rom 11:15). Nevertheless, such a deliverance in no way supports a *Sonderweg* (a special way) for Israel separate from faith in Christ. Rather, Israel will experience salvation much in the same way that Paul did when he encountered the risen Lord.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 701; Moo, *Romans*, 735; Schreiner, *Romans*, 602.

<sup>59</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 735.

<sup>60</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1246–51; Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 311–12.

<sup>61</sup>Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 682; Jewett, *Romans*, 704; Käsemann, *Romans*, 314; Moo, *Romans*, 742–44; Schreiner, *Romans*, 603–5.

<sup>62</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 743.

<sup>63</sup>As Eastman says, “The medium through which this redemption takes hold of both Paul and the majority of Israel differs from the humanly mediated preaching of the Gentile mission. Paul received his gospel by a direct apocalypse of Christ (Gal 1.11–12); and he prays for and anticipates a future direct revelation of Christ to all Israel (Rom 11.26).” Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God,” 393.

While those holding the “Eschatological Restoration” position interpret 11:25–27 to anticipate a future salvation for Israel, they do not agree on the extent of this salvation.<sup>64</sup> The majority contend that Paul only envisions the whole of Israel alive at the parousia to be saved, but not each Israelite alive at that time.<sup>65</sup> However, a minority assert that Paul expresses a universal salvation for every Jew without exception.<sup>66</sup> There is also further disagreement as to whether “all Israel” should be understood diachronically, referring to the nation throughout history,<sup>67</sup> or whether it should be taken synchronically, referring to the nation as it exists at a future moment in history.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, no matter where proponents for this view land on the extent of Israel’s restoration, all see Paul’s “mystery” revealing something new concerning God’s redemptive plan for ethnic Israel. Consequently, this mystery reveals (1) that a hardening has temporarily come upon Israel; (2) this hardening will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles enters in; and (3) in this way, the whole of ethnic Israel will be saved at Christ’s parousia. Moo remarks that the novelty of it all is not that the Gentiles would join the people of God, “but wholly novel was the idea that the inauguration of the eschatological age would involve setting aside the majority of Jews while Gentiles streamed in to enjoy the blessings of salvation and that only when that stream had been exhausted would Israel as a whole experience these blessings.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Some dispensationalists speak of Israel’s “restoration” in a technical sense to speak of Israel’s return to the land, establishment of the temple, and rule over the nations. See Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 177–201; Michael J. Vlach, “A Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 21–73.

<sup>65</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 738.

<sup>66</sup>Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 140–43; Jewett, *Romans*, 702.

<sup>67</sup>Hofius, ““All Israel Will Be Saved,”” 35; Franz Mussner, “Ganz Israel wird gerettet werden (Röm 11:26),” *Kairos* 18, no. 4 (1976): 241–45; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 623.

<sup>68</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:577; Judith M. Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling Away* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 184–85; Moo, *Romans*, 738.

<sup>69</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 732.

## Two-Covenant

A fourth view is called the “Two-Covenant” position. This interpretation asserts that “all Israel will be saved” even if the nation does not place its trust in Christ. There is a *Sonderweg* or “special way” for Israel. The basis for this view is that God has made two covenants with his people. For Israel, his covenant at Sinai is irrevocable and remains the avenue by which salvation comes to Israel. It is only for the Gentiles that faith in Christ is required to receive salvation. Adherents to this view notably include Krister Stendahl, Lloyd Gaston, Stanley Stowers, and John Gager.<sup>70</sup>

Contrary to the other interpretations of Romans 9–11, these see Paul’s primary concern not with Israel’s rejection of the Messiah, but with God’s plan for the Gentiles. Stendahl articulates that Romans is about, “how his [Paul’s] Gentile mission fits into God’s total plan, and how that perspective finally brings him to the point where he sees that Christianity is on its way to becoming a Gentile church.”<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, Stendahl asserts that “simultaneously he [Paul] sees that God has mysterious and special plans for the salvation of Israel.”<sup>72</sup> That such a plan does not involve Israel placing faith in Christ is supported by the fact that after Romans 10:18 Paul does not mention Christ. And so, when Paul says, “all Israel will be saved,” he doesn’t write that “all Israel will believe in Jesus as the Christ.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 1–5; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 135–50; Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 285–316; John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 128–42.

<sup>71</sup>Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 4. So also Gaston, who states, “What is at issue between Paul and Judaism is not the Torah of Israel, but Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles.” Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 138.

<sup>72</sup>Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 4.

<sup>73</sup>Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 4.

Therefore, when Paul cites Isaiah 59:20–21 (Rom 11:26b), the “deliverer” from Zion refers to God, not the returning Christ.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the covenant mentioned in 11:27 is not the new covenant, but “the Sinai covenant, according to which God in his covenant loyalty forgives Israel’s sins.”<sup>75</sup> So, if Israel has no need of accepting Jesus as the Christ, what then does Paul mean by Israel’s stumbling (11:11) and failure (v. 12)? Proponents of this view argue that Israel’s failure was not due to their rejection of Jesus, but for not realizing the goal of the law as it relates to God’s plan to redeem the Gentiles.<sup>76</sup>

From this vantage point, the “Two-Covenant” view interprets the remnant, not as Jewish Christians, but those “Jews who like Paul are engaged in the Gentile mission.”<sup>77</sup> These are the “instruments of mercy” spoken of in 9:23. In this light, the vast majority of Israel has been hardened or blinded by God for his own redemptive purposes with Israel and the Gentiles. Nevertheless, such a blinding to God’s plan for the Gentiles does not equate a rejection of Israel (cf. 11:1). Instead, the remnant is a seed of hope that God has not abandoned them. Since the firstfruits of Israel are holy (i.e., the remnant), the whole lump (i.e., Israel) is holy and will be spared from God’s judgment.<sup>78</sup>

In sum, the mystery of Israel’s salvation is not that that nation will come to accept Christ at some later point in history. The mystery “is that the redemption of the Gentiles and the salvation of Israel are intimately intertwined.”<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, the salvation of both groups is based on two covenants. Consequently, Paul accomplishes two

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<sup>74</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 143; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 133.

<sup>75</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 143–44. Gaston seems to be open to the possibility that Paul may see Christ as the deliverer to come. He states, “If Christ is meant, then it is Christ in a different role, Christ as the agent of the ‘Sonderweg’ of Israel’s salvation.” *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>76</sup>Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 135.

<sup>77</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 142.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>79</sup>Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 140.

things in Romans 9–11. First, he repudiates the notion that God has rejected Israel; and second, he positively asserts that Israel’s salvation “while not unrelated to the redemption of the Gentiles through Christ, does not take the form of embracing Christ.”<sup>80</sup>

### **Two-Step Missionary Pattern**

The final interpretation within contemporary scholarship is the “Two-Step Missionary Pattern” view articulated by Mark Nanos.<sup>81</sup> For Nanos, “all Israel” refers to every Jew residing in Rome, both the believing remnant and those presently hardened. Once Paul arrives in Rome, he anticipates that his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles will be the cause of jealousy for stumbling Israel, effecting the restoration of every Israelite in Rome.<sup>82</sup> Nanos contends that Romans 9–11 must be read within the two-step pattern of salvation “that begins with the restoration of Israel in each new location first, before the gospel proclamation can fully incorporate gentiles into the people of God.”<sup>83</sup>

However, an anomaly has occurred in Rome. It appears that the two-step pattern is reversed, whereby the Gentiles have initially believed with Israel’s salvation following second. This anomaly explains why the Gentile Christians in Rome are tempted to think they have supplanted Israel as the people of God (cf. 11:17–21). For this reason, Paul must visit Rome to realign the church into God’s two-step pattern of salvation. In this way, “all Israel” will be restored and Paul may give himself entirely to his ministry among the Gentiles.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>81</sup>Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 239–88.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 259–61.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>84</sup>Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 244.



Therefore, the primary question that Nanos seeks to answer is, “what then are we to do with Romans 11:11–32, wherein Paul appears to have accepted that the original pattern has been reversed with gentile salvation becoming the step that will then lead to Israel’s restoration?” Nanos offers a two-fold answer drawn from Paul’s “mystery” (11:25–27). First, the division between the believing remnant of Israel and those who have been hardened is actually the beginning step of Israel’s restoration. Thus, God’s two-step pattern is still in effect, despite appearances. Second, the phrase ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ signals the beginning of Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, Nanos understands a temporal sequence of events; however, the future event is not the parousia of Christ, but the commencement of Paul’s ministry among the Gentiles in Rome.<sup>86</sup> This ministry will commence after the hardening of a part of Israel has completed its purpose.

The foundation of this mystery rests in Paul’s citation of Scripture in 11:26b–27, where the prophets foretold his ministry. Paul envisions himself as a servant for Israel’s restoration and “responsible for bringing this good news out ‘from Zion’ to the dispersed among the nations and to complete the restoration of ‘all Israel.’”<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the mystery is not that Israel will be saved, but why Israel has stumbled and how Israel will be saved. Paul’s purpose is to explain to the Gentiles that the Jews are vicariously suffering a hardening so that salvation may come to them. This hardened state will only last until the fullness of the Gentiles begins, which will serve to provoke hardened Israel and save some.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 267.

<sup>86</sup>Nanos contends that just as Paul’s use of πληρόω in 15:19 signaled the completion of his preaching ministry to bring about the obedience of faith, so here in 11:25 the cognate, πλήρωμα, carries a similar idea. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 266–67.

<sup>87</sup>Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 284.

<sup>88</sup>Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 285.

## **Methodology**

The aim of this dissertation is to provide a fresh investigation of Romans 9–11, with a view toward how the Jewish context of mystery influences Paul’s rethinking of Israel’s story around the advent of Messiah. To accomplish this goal, a comparative analysis of the relevant Jewish texts—both OT and Second Temple—and Paul’s letter to the Romans. First, this study will survey the relevant OT and Second Temple literature to ascertain the function of mystery within a Jewish apocalyptic context. Second, it will compare how Paul’s use of mystery functions in Romans, highlighting the continuities and discontinuities within the Jewish literature. Based on this analysis, this study will pursue a detailed exegesis of Romans 9–11, showing how the “once hidden, now revealed” mystery schema impacts Paul’s use of Scripture to reimagine the story of Israel around the advent of Messiah.

## **Chapter Summaries**

In chapter 2, I show the Jewish apocalyptic influence upon *μυστήριον*; particularly, that the term reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. To this end, I first delineate how the term “apocalyptic” is used. I provide a brief overview of how scholars have employed the term and distinguish it from “apocalypse” and “apocalypticism.” Second, I survey the numerous uses of “mystery” (*ἱε/μυστήριον*) within Daniel, the DSS and Pseudepigrapha to demonstrate how “mystery” functioned within a Jewish apocalyptic context. Third, I conclude by synthesizing the data and showing how it was believed that by devoting oneself to the divine mysteries, one may discern God’s unfolding pattern of redemption in history, producing hope that God’s covenantal promises to Israel would be realized.

In chapter 3, I contend that the Pauline mystery in Romans has the greatest continuity with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, revealing the hidden wisdom of God’s redemptive plan in Christ. To demonstrate this, I first show that significant

discontinuities exist between the Pauline mystery and the mystery religions. These differences make it highly unlikely that the cults were the driving impetus behind Paul's use of the term. Working from Romans 16:25–27, I then conduct a comparative analysis between the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema and the Pauline mystery in Romans. This analysis shows that the death and resurrection of Christ serves as the *paradigm* for understanding God's unfolding redemptive purposes in history and the creation.

In chapters 4 and 5, I further explore Paul's mystery motif as he concludes the argument of Romans 9–11 with mystery language (11:25–27). I will argue that Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in 11:25 elicits the same christological paradigm it carries in 16:25–27 to unveil God's hidden wisdom concerning Israel's present unbelief and future restoration. In this way, the mystery of 11:25–27 is not a new contribution to Paul's case in chapters 9–11, but rather a climatic summation of a sustained argument that God's word of promise to Israel has not and will not fail (9:6, 14; 11:1, 28–29). In order to capture the comprehensive scope of this mystery throughout Romans 9–11, I explore how it relates to Israel's (1) election, (2) hardening, (3) remnant, and (4) restoration. In doing so, I show that Paul has reimagined Israel's history around the death, resurrection, and parousia of Christ to unveil God's redemptive plan surrounding Israel's plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures.

Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion. I provide a synthesis of this study showing that Paul explains Israel's plight and future restoration as a mystery unveiled in Christ. I then suggest a couple of avenues for future studies on Paul's mystery motif and the salvation of Israel.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE JEWISH APOCALYPTIC MYSTERY SCHEMA

#### Introduction

The *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* of the nineteenth century viewed Pauline Christianity as a child of the Greco-Roman mystery religions. However, the foundations of this view began to crumble with publications by H. St. John Thackeray and Albert Schweitzer.<sup>1</sup> This shift in perspective continued as other scholars further explored Paul's relationship to Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the majority of scholars now recognize Paul as a figure of Second Temple Judaism whose theology is primarily rooted in the Jewish traditions. Therefore, this recognition raises the question, what influence might Paul's Jewish context have on his use of *μυστήριον* in Romans? To answer this question, one must discern the place of mystery in the OT and Second Temple literature. In doing so, this chapter will seek to show a Jewish apocalyptic influence upon *μυστήριον*. Particularly, I will argue that the term reflects a "once hidden, now revealed" schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God's hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton.

An exhaustive study of mystery language within the OT and Second Temple Judaism is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, an investigation of mystery in

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<sup>1</sup>H. St. John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1900); Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters a Critical History*, trans. William Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912); Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle.*, trans. William Montgomery (New York: Holt and Company, 1931).

<sup>2</sup>W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948); Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961); Frederick C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1962); W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem: The City of Paul's Youth.*, trans. George Ogg (London: Epworth Press, 1962).

Daniel, along with select texts from the DSS and Pseudepigrapha, will provide ample material to identify a coherent Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema. In later chapters, this schema will be used to conduct a comparative analysis with Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in Romans.<sup>3</sup> However, before exploring this apocalyptic mystery schema, it will be advantageous to define how the term “apocalyptic” will be used in this study.

### Defining Apocalyptic

Käsemann's pronouncement that “apocalyptic is . . . the mother of all Christian theology”<sup>4</sup> sparked new interest in the study of apocalyptic traditions of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. Now, it is nearly the scholarly consensus that Paul held an apocalyptic worldview.<sup>5</sup> However, the degree in which Pauline theology should be characterized as apocalyptic remains contested. Even what constitutes as “apocalyptic” varies and “has proved so slippery and many-sided in scholarly discourse that one is often

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<sup>3</sup>An exploration of mystery in the Apocrypha has been excluded from this study because this literature does not develop an apocalyptic use of the term. Mystery is employed in a purely secular sense, as merely something unknown (Jdt 2:2; Sir 27:16–17). The only exception to this usage is found in Wis. There, mystery is used four times (2:22; 6:22; 14:15, 23) and at best only two of these occurrences (2:22; 6:22) carry any eschatological connotations.

<sup>4</sup>Ernst Käsemann, “Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 57, no. 2 (1960): 180.

<sup>5</sup>For a mere sampling, see Jürgen Becker, “Erwägungen zur apokalyptischen Tradition in der paulinischen Theologie,” *Evangelische Theologie* 30, no. 11 (1970): 593–609; Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1972); Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Richard Bauckham, “The Rise of Apocalyptic,” *Themelios* 3, no. 2 (1978): 10–23; Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul The Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Vincent P. Branick, “Apocalyptic Paul,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1985): 664–75; E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); David E. Aune, “Apocalypticism,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 25–34; J. Louis Martyn, “The Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians,” *Interpretation* 54, no. 3 (2000): 246–66; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Jonathan A. Linebaugh, “Righteousness Revealed,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 229–360.

tempted to declare a moratorium on it altogether.”<sup>6</sup> To avoid such mayhem, a brief clarification of terms is necessary.

Scholars typically distinguish “apocalyptic” from “apocalypse” and “apocalypticism,” while recognizing conceptual overlap among the terms. “Apocalypse” denotes a genre of literature,<sup>7</sup> whereas “apocalypticism” conveys a social ideology or worldview of a historical movement.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, “apocalyptic” is a descriptive term, portraying a movement or type of literature which shares the conceptual framework, worldview, and theological motifs of apocalypticism or an apocalypse.<sup>9</sup> These definitions reflect how “apocalyptic”—and its cognates—will be used throughout this study.

Scholars also note the important relationship between apocalyptic and revelation. After all, the word group itself (*ἀποκαλύπτω; ἀποκάλυψις*) carries the idea of revealing or disclosing.<sup>10</sup> Beyond the lexical similarities, apocalyptic revelation features a unique means of disclosing content.<sup>11</sup> Whether the revelation is received through a vision, dream, or heavenly journey it is always mediated by an otherworldly being.<sup>12</sup> This mediated revelation then discloses matters in the temporal and spatial realms, reorienting

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<sup>6</sup>N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 41.

<sup>7</sup>John J. Collins defines an apocalypse as “revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendental reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world.” John J. Collins, “Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

<sup>8</sup>Aune describes such a worldview as being “centered on the expectation of God’s imminent intervention into human history in a decisive manner to save his people and punish their enemies by destroying the existing fallen cosmic order and by restoring or recreating the cosmos to its original pristine perfection.” Aune, “Apocalypticism,” 25. Collins describes apocalypticism as an ideology that “shares the conceptual structure of the apocalypses.” Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 10.

<sup>9</sup>Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 10.

<sup>10</sup>L&N 28.38

<sup>11</sup>Collins, “Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” 5–9; Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 19–20.

<sup>12</sup>E.g., 1 En.; T. Levi.; 3 Bar.; LAE; Jub.; 4 Ezra; Rev.

an individual's perspective in light of these heavenly realities.<sup>13</sup> In this way, apocalyptic “signifies *an outlook* shaped by mediated knowledge of a hidden reality . . . that is ultimately attributed to God as the source.”<sup>14</sup> This characteristic of apocalyptic revelation will become more apparent as mystery language is explored.

### Mystery in Daniel

The Aramaic noun ܡܫܝܚ is at the center of a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema. This Persian loanword is prominent in the opening chapters of Daniel (2:18, 19, 27–30, 47; 4:9 [4:6 MT]), and is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> The Hebrew word סוד is conceptually similar, appearing twenty-one times in the Hebrew Scriptures and carries the idea of secret knowledge or plans between friends (Gen 49:6; Ps 83:3 [83:4 MT]; Jer 6:11; 15:17; Ezek 13:9), or the divine council (Jer 23:18, 22; Ps 89:8 [MT]; Job 15:8; Prov 3:32).<sup>16</sup> Although the semantic range of both ܡܫܝܚ and סוד overlap, there is an important distinction between the two terms. Unlike סוד, ܡܫܝܚ “implies neither confidential consultation nor a plan thereby conceived. It is, however, at the same time the exclusive property of God and can only be revealed by Him as an act of grace to a man of his favour.”<sup>17</sup> Gladd concurs, “Mystery is not just secret communication between

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<sup>13</sup>James H. Charlesworth, “Paul, the Jewish Apocalypses, and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 87.

<sup>14</sup>Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Some Reflections on Apocalyptic Thought and Time in Literature from the Second Temple Period,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 140–41.

<sup>15</sup>Günther Bornkamm, “Μυστήριον,” in *TDNT*, 814; Raymond E. Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament: The Semitic Background of the Term “Mystery” in the NT* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 6; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 20; Samuel Thomas, *The “Mysteries” of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 4.

<sup>16</sup>See *TLOT* “סוד,” 793–95; *TWOT* 1471a.

<sup>17</sup>Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 16. See also Ina Willi-Plein, “Das Geheimnis der Apokalyptik,” *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 69–74; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 20–22.

members of a council (דוד), but eschatological revelation from God (זר).”<sup>18</sup>

This technical use of זר carries over to μυστήριον. In both the OG and Theo versions of Daniel, זר is always translated μυστήριον.<sup>19</sup> Bornkamm notes,

Μυστήριον takes on for the first time a sense which is important for the further development of the word, namely, that of an eschatological mystery, a concealed intimation of divinely ordained future events whose disclosure and interpretation is reserved for God alone.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, by examining זר/μυστήριον in Daniel, a “once hidden, now revealed” mystery schema emerges whereby God’s eschatological wisdom is disclosed.

### **Mystery as Hidden Revelation**

In Daniel 2 mystery takes shape as the hidden revelation of God. This chapter opens with Nebuchadnezzar greatly disturbed by his dreams (v. 1). As a result, he calls for his Babylonian wise men, not only to recount the dream, but also to give its interpretation (vv. 2–6).<sup>21</sup> Yet, these diviners are unable to meet his demands. They exclaim that such a task can only be accomplished by the gods who do not dwell among humanity (v. 11). Therefore, in a fit fury, Nebuchadnezzar sentences all the wise men of Babylon to be executed (v. 12). Thus, Daniel and his companions pray for God’s mercy

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<sup>18</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 54.

<sup>19</sup>It should also be noted that on occasion דוד is translated μυστήριον (Job 15:8 [Theo, Sym]; Ps 25:14 [Theo, *Quinta*] Prov 11:13 [Sym]; 20:19 [Theo]). This anomaly is likely due to the fact that דוד refers to an intimate or secret fellowship between friends (or the divine council) planning to take action (see Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 15). Therefore, μυστήριον serves as a fitting term to connote the privacy of the council.

<sup>20</sup>Bornkamm, “Μυστήριον,” 814–15.

<sup>21</sup>The wise men of Babylon were mantic, “whose function was to divine secrets of the future by various methods including the interpretation of dreams, omens, mysterious oracles, and the stars” (Bauckham, “The Rise of Apocalyptic,” 13). Contra Andrew E. Steinmann, this wisdom is not the same as proverbial wisdom. Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 42. Proverbial wisdom primarily focuses on everyday life, whereas mantic wisdom discerns the future through the interpretation of signs. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 49. See also John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 56; James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 74–75.



“concerning this mystery” (עֲלֵי-רִזְהָ דְנִגְהָ / ὑπέρ τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου, v. 18).<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, God graciously answers Daniel’s prayer by revealing (הִלֵּג/ἀποκαλύπτω) the mystery in a vision at night (v. 19). In this chapter, הִלֵּג/ἀποκαλύπτω is used seven times to emphasize God’s revelation of a hidden mystery (vv. 19, 22, 28, 29, 30, 47).<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the revelation of this mystery is the disclosure of God’s hidden wisdom. The theological center of Daniel 2 rests in verses 20–23, where Daniel blesses God with a prayer of thanksgiving.<sup>24</sup> The relationship between mystery (רִזְהָ/μυστήριον) and wisdom (חִכְמָה/σοφία) becomes apparent within this hymn of praise.<sup>25</sup> Daniel declares that “wisdom and might” belong to God (v. 20). Since wisdom belongs to God (v. 20b), he alone “gives wisdom” (בְּהַבֵּי חִכְמָה/διδούς σοφίαν, v. 21b) and “reveals” (אֵלֵּג/ἀποκαλύπτει) the “deep” (בְּמִיָּעַב/βαθέα) and “hidden” (בְּרִזְהָ/ἀπόκρυφα) things (v. 22). In this case, the hidden wisdom of God concerns the establishment and removal of four successive kingdoms (vv. 39–43) before the founding of God’s eternal kingdom (v. 44). Due to its hidden nature, the mystery can only be unveiled by God himself.

Therefore, Daniel concurs with the Babylonian wise men that “no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery” (v. 27). Such a

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<sup>22</sup>Bauckham insightfully states, “Daniel is the representative of the God of Israel among the magicians and astrologers of the Babylonian court, but he represents him *in the practice of mantic wisdom*.” Bauckham, “The Rise of Apocalyptic,” 13.

<sup>23</sup>In the LXX ἀποκαλύπτω is essentially the equivalent for הִלֵּג (*TDNT* “ἀποκαλύπτω,” 576). This parallel essentially holds in both the OG and Theo versions of Dan where הִלֵּג is translated with ἀποκαλύπτω. The only exception occurs in 2:19 where the OG translates it with ἐκφαίνω. Bockmuehl notes, “It is particularly Theodotion’s version of Daniel which (unlike LXX) makes frequent use of ἀποκαλύπτω in the sense of ‘apocalyptic’ (visionary) disclosure of transcendental realities; this meaning of the word is also common in the New Testament.” Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 101.

<sup>24</sup>W. Sibley Towner, “Poetic Passages of Daniel 1–6,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1969): 322–23; James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 152–53; G. T. M. Prinsloo, “Two Poems in a Sea of Prose: The Content and Context of Daniel 2.20–23 and 6.27–28,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 18, no. 59 (1993): 100; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 126; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 28.

<sup>25</sup>One must not overlook how the Babylonian “wise” men (2:18) are set up as a foil to highlight the wisdom of God revealed to Daniel (vv. 1-11, 30, 48). Collins notes, “Daniel 2 pointedly contrasts the Chaldean wise men (and implicitly their gods) with Daniel and his god.” Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 36.

task is humanly impossible. Nevertheless, “there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries (יִזְיִן גְּלֵא בְּשֵׁמִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָם/ἔστιν θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀποκαλύπτων μυστήρια)” (v. 28). Nebuchadnezzar also reaches this conclusion by declaring the supremacy of Daniel’s God as the one who “reveals mysteries” (יִזְיִן גְּלֵא/ἀποκαλύπτων μυστήρια, v. 47).

The remaining occurrence of mystery is found in Daniel 4:9 [4:6 MT]. Much like Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar receives a dream which his Babylonian wise men are unable to interpret. Again, Daniel is summoned “because the spirit of the holy gods is in [him]” (דָּבַר קְדִישׁוֹן בְּךָ/ὅτι πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἁγίου ἐν σοί, 4:18 [4:15 MT]). What becomes apparent is that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream or vision is a “decree of the Most High” (אֵי הֵאֱלֵיָּהּ וְגִזְרָתָהּ/σύγκριμα ὑψίστου ἐστίν, v. 24 [v. 21 MT]). This decree is not only revealed through Daniel, but also to the king via a voice from heaven (vv. 31–32 [vv. 28–29 MT]). Therefore, even though גְּלֵא/ἀποκαλύπτω is not used in Daniel 4, the mystery is still presented as the revelation of God’s hidden wisdom.

This use of mystery establishes the context for subsequent revelations in Daniel.<sup>26</sup> However, unlike the mysteries of Daniel 2 and 4, later revelations are not limited to dreams, but also include cryptic writing on a wall (5:5) and visitations from angelic beings (Dan 7–12). In this way, each mystery in Daniel is initially hidden or concealed within a cryptic message (i.e., dream, symbolic vision, undecipherable writing, or Scripture). Therefore, characteristic of these mysteries is their need for authoritative interpretation.

### **Mystery as Interpreted Revelation**

In Daniel, the mysteries of God each bear a distinguishing characteristic of apocalyptic revelation by following a two-fold pattern of symbol and interpretation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 33.

<sup>27</sup>Gladd notes, “A distinctive apocalyptic mark of Daniel is the nature of twofold revelation in contrast to other places in the OT where the prophets directly receive God’s revelation.” Ibid. See also

Inseparable from these mysteries is the term פִּשְׁרָא, which is used thirty-one times in Daniel.<sup>28</sup> This Aramaic term has Akkadian origins specifically linked to dream interpretation. Collins notes the term was used for “(1) reporting the dream to another person, (2) the interpretation by discerning the message of the deity, and (3) the process of dispelling the evil consequences of a dream.”<sup>29</sup> This usage of פִּשְׁרָא overlaps with the dream interpretation practiced by Daniel. He is presented as one “skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding and learning” (1:4), particularly gifted by God to understand “all visions and dreams” (v. 17). In this way, פִּשְׁרָא provides an essential connection between the manner of revelation in chapters 1–6 and that found in 7–12.<sup>30</sup> As Collins states, “God’s messages are concealed in codes, whether visions, dreams, or Scriptures. There is need of a wise interpreter to understand the mysteries.”<sup>31</sup>

In Daniel 2, the mystery is explicitly tied to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation (פִּשְׁרָא; v. 18, 27–28). This connection is evident as Daniel prays to God “concerning this mystery” (עַל־רִזְזָה דְנִינָה / ὑπερ τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου; v. 18).<sup>32</sup> The demonstrative pronoun (דְנִינָה/τούτου) directs the reader to the preceding verses (vv. 1–16) which give greater specificity to the dimensions of the mystery.

As the dream is revealed (vv. 31–35), the mystery is initially encoded with the symbolic imagery of a giant statue made from various materials (e.g., gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay; vv. 32–33). This statue is then smashed to pieces by a pebble

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Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 75–76.

<sup>28</sup>Beale rightly notes the inseparable connection between רִזְזָה and פִּשְׁרָא: “The two words are so integrally related . . . that one cannot properly be understood without a study of the other. G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 12. For each occurrence of פִּשְׁרָא see Dan 2:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 16, 24, 25, 26, 30, 36, 45; 4:3, 4, 6, 15, 16, 21; 5:7, 8, 12, 15, 16, 17, 26; 7:16.

<sup>29</sup>John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 10.

<sup>30</sup>Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 78.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

which grows into a great mountain filling the earth (vv. 34–35). After unveiling the dream, Daniel proceeds to give its interpretation (פִּשְׁרָא), explaining that the imagery from the dream is symbolic, corresponding to historical events (vv. 36–44). Therefore, God’s initial revelation is encoded with symbol and subsequently requires further revelation to understand its meaning.

This pattern of apocalyptic revelation necessitates discontinuity between the symbol and the interpretation. Yet, there remains a level of continuity between the two revelations. For instance, some contend that the imagery of the statue borrows from an Ancient Near Eastern motif of successive kingdoms.<sup>32</sup> If so, Nebuchadnezzar would have some idea as to its subject matter, while not privy to its meaning. Regardless, there are several other points of continuity. First, as the materials lessen in quality, so the kingdoms to which these materials correspond, lessen in their splendor.<sup>33</sup> Second, the stone not cut from human hands (v. 34) suggests heavenly origins and corresponds to the eternal kingdom (v. 44). Third, the metals are crushed and blown away with the chaff, while the little stone grows into a great mountain. This reversal underscores God’s sovereignty and might over the kingdoms of this world despite current appearances. It also illustrates that these symbols find some continuity with their subsequent interpretation.

In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar receives a dream or vision (vv. 1–14 [MT]), which also requires interpretation (v. 4 [MT]). Both elements are again identified as a

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<sup>32</sup>For an brief survey of possible origins, see Collins, *Daniel*, 162–65. Collins favors the view that the common source was Persian. However, Steinmann contends “We should keep in mind that there is no compelling evidence that such a motif was known in Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar’s day.” Steinmann, *Daniel*, 135.

<sup>33</sup>Steinmann states, “Daniel does not state why or in what way it is inferior. The message implied by the kinds of metals is that each is of inferior value to the preceding one. Since subsequent kingdoms, including the Persians, Greeks, and Romans, ruled over larger territory than Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian Empire, ‘inferior’ must not be determined by geopolitical reach.” Steinmann, *Daniel*, 136. See also Collins, *Daniel*, 165.

mystery (זר, 4:6 [MT]).<sup>34</sup> The dream contains symbolism, namely a great tree which reaches the heavens providing shade and nourishment for the beasts and the birds (vv. 8–9 [MT]). This magnificent tree is chopped down by the decree of the watchers only to leave a stump (vv. 10–14 [MT]). The ensuing interpretation also maintains a level of continuity with the symbolic message. Trees were common metaphors for persons and kingdoms in the ANE.<sup>35</sup> In this way, Daniel explains to Nebuchadnezzar that the tree corresponds to the king (vv. 17, 19 [MT]).

Daniel 5 also follows this two-fold pattern of symbol and interpretation. However, in this narrative the symbol is not a dream or vision, but a cryptic message written on a wall (v. 5). Belshazzar overwhelmed with fear cries out to his diviners to decipher the writing and give its interpretation (פִּשְׁרֵהּ, v. 7). Nevertheless, they were incapable of doing either one (v. 8). Much like chapter 2, only Daniel can unveil the message (symbol) and its interpretation (פִּשְׁרֵהּ, v. 12, 26). In verses 25–28, Daniel recounts this two-fold revelation: “This is the writing inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN . . . . This is the interpretation of the matter [פִּשְׁרֵהּ-מִלְתָּא].” While the term “mystery” (זר/μυστήριον) is not used in this passage, the two-fold pattern of revelation recalls the revealed mysteries of chapters 2 and 4.<sup>36</sup> In this case, the immediate interpretation of this mystery concerns Belshazzar’s sudden doom and the giving of the kingdom to the Medes and Persians.

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<sup>34</sup>Contra, Beale, *Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic*, 14–15. Gladd rightly responds, “[Beale’s] position does not take into account the parallel structure of the dreams in chs. 2 and 4 along with the overall revelatory nature of dreams and visions in the book of Daniel. It seems that the simple disclosure of God’s wisdom to Nebuchadnezzar . . . is a rehearsal of 2:20–23 . . . and therefore a mystery.” Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 35n92.

<sup>35</sup>This symbol is used throughout the OT (2 Kgs 14:9–10; Pss 1:3; 37:35–36; 52:10 (ET 52:8); 92:13–16 (ET 92:12–15); Ezek 17:1–4), particularly in Ezek 31. See also Kirsten Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOT 65 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), 144–53; Collins, *Daniel*, 223; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 233.

<sup>36</sup>See F. F. Bruce, “The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community,” in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black*, ed. E. Earle Ellis, Max E. Wilcox, and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), 225–26; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 36.

Daniel 7 marks a transition in the book which resembles other Jewish apocalyptic literature (e.g., *The Book of Watchers*). In chapters 7 and 8, Daniel receives an otherworldly vision whose interpretation is mediated through a heavenly being. The vision of chapter 7 is laced with symbolic imagery of four beasts rising out of the sea (7:3). Furthermore, Daniel finds himself in the heavenly throne room before the Ancient of Days (v. 9) who will establish the everlasting reign of “one like a son of man” (vv. 13–14). Like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, Daniel is at a loss as to what this mysterious revelation means. Therefore, he approaches one of the heavenly beings who makes known “the interpretation of the matter” (וּפְשָׁר מְלִיאָה, v. 16). This mystery concerns four kingdoms (vv. 17, 23–26; cf., 2:36–45) which will be overthrown, and the “saints of the Most High” will receive the eternal kingdom of God (vv. 18, 27).<sup>37</sup> In this way, the two-fold pattern continues with a symbolic message given through a dream or vision (vv. 1–14), followed by divine interpretation (vv. 15–28). Similarly, in chapter 8, Daniel receives another vision (vv. 1–14), likened to the beasts in chapter 7. In response, Daniel again seeks understanding, and a heavenly being—in this case Gabriel—provides its interpretation (vv. 15–26).

Observing the imagery of chapters 7–12, Collins provides insight further illuminating the relationship between symbol and interpretation. In these visions, he detects several mythical features from the Ancient Near East, features found in other apocalyptic writings (e.g., *Animal Apoc.* in 1 En.). In chapter 7, the vision pictures a great sea in chaos, churned up by the four winds of heaven (7:2). This imagery appears elsewhere in the OT “both as the abode of mythical chaos monsters and as an embodiment of chaos in its own right” (cf. Job 26; Pss 74:13–17; 89:9–11).<sup>38</sup> The vision

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<sup>37</sup>Many Daniel scholars agree that the four beasts of Dan 7 correspond to the four kingdoms of Dan 2. See Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 104; David W Gooding, “The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and Its Implications,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981): 60; Gladd, *Revealing the Mystery*, 36; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 57.

<sup>38</sup>Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 96.

also contains four ferocious beasts “who are variants of Leviathan and Rahab.”<sup>39</sup> Finally, the imagery of the “Ancient of Days” and “one like a son of man” parallels Ugaritic and Canaanite myth.<sup>40</sup> Observing the use of such imagery, Collins concludes,

These features are mythological, in the sense that they refer to superhuman beings and powers, and are derived from ancient Near Eastern myths. The mythic elements are not isolated metaphors. Rather . . . they constitute a pattern, or a system which forms the framework of the message of the visions.<sup>41</sup>

If Collin’s observations are correct, these ancient myths provide a *symbolic framework* which is applied through interpretation (פְּשָׁר, 7:16) to a new historical situation. In other words, the interpretation of the mystery reorients the symbolic revelation within *patterns* of continuity.

This manner of interpretation fits with the revelation received in Daniel 9. However, this mystery is distinct in that Daniel does not receive a dream or vision that requires interpretation. Rather, he reads Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning Israel’s seventy years of captivity (Dan 9:2; cf. Jer 25:11–12), and it is this prophecy that is given further interpretation through the angel Gabriel (Dan 9:20–27). Accordingly, the two-fold pattern of symbol and interpretation remains consistent. Only now, Scripture itself is the hidden mystery which must be interpreted.

The chapter begins with Daniel meditating upon “the word of YHWH to Jeremiah the prophet” (v. 2). In doing so, Daniel perceives an initial fulfillment of this prophecy which foretold of Israel’s seventy years in Babylonian captivity. The seventy years are now complete, and thus Daniel prays to YHWH asking him not to forget his covenant promises to restore Israel back into the land (vv. 3–19). While Daniel was

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<sup>39</sup>Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 99.

<sup>40</sup>Collins states, “The imagery of the ‘Ancient of Days’ and ‘one like a son of man’ finds its closest parallels in the Ugaritic references to Baal, rider of the clouds, and El, father of years. The conferral of kingship on the ‘one like a son of man’ most probably derives from a Canaanite myth of the enthronement of Baal.” *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

praying, Gabriel appears. Daniel notes that this Gabriel is the same individual who appeared in the first vision of chapter 7 (vv. 20–21), likely providing a link with the visions of chapters 7–8. In continuity with those chapters, Gabriel provides “insight and understanding” (לְהַשְׁכִּילֶנָּה בִּינָה, 9:22; cf. 1:4, 17) through a vision (v. 23).

The interpretation of Jeremiah’s seventy years comes in 9:24–27. In this way, the seventy years are reconfigured to correspond to seventy weeks of years which will culminate in “everlasting righteousness” (v. 24).<sup>42</sup> Significantly, this interpretation draws upon an already established motif in the OT, namely the year of Jubilee, and reorients it for a new situation. Hamilton observes this connection saying, “The 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24–27 indicate that just as liberty was proclaimed in Israel in the year of Jubilee, at the ultimate tenfold Jubilee the camp will go free, the land inheritance will be enjoyed and clan fellowship renewed.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore, Scripture itself is cast as a hidden mystery which requires further divine revelation.

Chapters 10–12 encompass the final vision in Daniel, with 10:1 serving as an introductory summary of the content to be revealed. Three times the content of the vision (דְּבַר) is referred to as a “divine message.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, this message elaborates on the three previous visions found in chapters 7–9, placing them within the context of a “great war” (וְצַבָּא גְדוֹלָה) which occurs both on earth and in the heavens (10:1; cf. v. 20, 21; 11:2–12:1). The two-fold pattern of symbol and interpretation remains implicit within this

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<sup>42</sup>For various interpretations of Daniel’s seventy weeks, see Collins, *Daniel*, 348–60; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 452–65; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 531–64; James M. Hamilton Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 32 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 105–34.

<sup>43</sup>Hamilton, *Clouds of Heaven*, 126.

<sup>44</sup>Steinmann, commenting on the phrase דְּבַר נְגִילָה לְדָנִיֵּאל, notes, “Literally, ‘a word was revealed to Daniel.’” דְּבַר in the Prophets and the historical books often refers to a ‘word of God . . . a divine communication’, here translated as ‘divine message.’ The message in chapters 10–12 is partly visionary (seen) and partly verbal (heard), so it can be described both as an auditory ‘word’ here and as a ‘vision’ (מְרֵאָה) later in 10:1. Similarly, Gabriel described the divine revelation he would impart in 9:24–27 as both a ‘word’ (דְּבַר, 9:23) and a ‘vision’ (מְרֵאָה, 9:23).” Steinmann, *Daniel*, 488.



apocalyptic revelation. As with the previous mysteries (Dan 7–9), Daniel receives a vision by means of a heavenly intermediary (10:5–21). This angel explains to Daniel that he will tell him “the inscription in the writing of truth” (הַרְשִׁימִים בְּכַתָּב אֱמֶת, v. 21), a phrase that may conjure up images of the writing on the wall in chapter 5 (vv. 24–25). If so, this would suggest that the angel is fulfilling an interpretive role, rather than merely delivering direct revelation.<sup>45</sup> Regardless what the “inscription in the writing of truth” refers, it is a hidden message which now must be unveiled.<sup>46</sup>

### Mystery as Eschatological Revelation

To this point, it has been argued that mystery in Daniel is the divine revelation of God’s hidden wisdom. This revelation is mediated through dreams, visions, writings, and even the Scriptures, but it remains concealed until an authoritative interpretation is given. Therefore, mystery is rightly understood as previously hidden wisdom of God that has now been revealed. However, mystery is not merely the revealed wisdom of God. This revelation is explicitly eschatological in nature.<sup>47</sup>

In 2:28, Daniel explains to Nebuchadnezzar, “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will come to pass in the last days [אֲמַיִתִּי תִּיְהִי אֲחֵרִית / ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (OG and Theo)].” Daniel further elaborates on the eschatological character of mystery explaining that the king’s dream concerns “what will come to pass in the future [מָה דֵּי לְהוּא אֲחֵרִי דְנָה / ὅσα δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (OG)]”<sup>48</sup> and that the one who reveals mysteries has

<sup>45</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 37.

<sup>46</sup>Some commentators see the “book of truth” comparative to the heavenly tablets revealed to Enoch (1 En. 93:2). In this way, the book of truth would refer to the annals of history. See John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 293; Collins, *Daniel*, 376.

<sup>47</sup>Beale, *Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic*, 17–19.

<sup>48</sup>The OG interprets this phrase eschatologically, whereas the Theo gives a more literal translation of the MT (τί δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα).

made known what will be [מֵהַיּוֹם לְהוֹאֵ / ἅ δὲ γενέσθαι]” (v. 29). The phrase “the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵית יוֹמֵי־אֵ)” is eschatologically charged, frequently used in the OT to refer to a future time of trouble (Deut 4:30; Ezek 38:8, 16), of restoration (Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1), and a coming ruler (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14).<sup>49</sup> In Daniel 2, the phrase is applied to four consecutive kingdoms which will ultimately give way to the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom (v. 44). Daniel summarizes this mystery saying, “The great God has made known to the king what will come to pass in the future [מֵהַיּוֹם לְהוֹאֵ אַחֲרָי / τὰ ἐσόμενα ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (OG)]” (v. 45).

Daniel 2 not only establishes a relationship between mystery and God’s eschatological wisdom, but it anticipates the eschatological message reiterated throughout the book. The kingdom of God will triumph over the kingdoms of this world. In chapter 4, God removes the kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar (v. 31) and restores it back to him (v. 36). Initially, this mystery does not seem to carry an eschatological emphasis. However, when Nebuchadnezzar returns to his senses, he declares the authority of the Most High affirming the eternal reign of God (v. 31 [MT]). In this way, the revelation of this mystery is as a reiteration—or initial fulfillment—of the mystery in Daniel 2.<sup>50</sup>

In chapter 5, Belshazzar is informed that the days of his kingdom have come to an end (v. 26). Concluding the narrative, Belshazzar is killed and Darius receives the kingdom (v. 30). Again, this revelation gives further insight into the mystery of Daniel 2, whereby God’s eschatological plan to establish his eternal kingdom continues to unfold (2:39). In chapter 7, the kingdoms of this world will be destroyed and given over to the people of God. While the phrase “last days,” or the like, is not mentioned, eschatological features remain. As stated above, the four beasts of Daniel 7 correspond to the four

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<sup>49</sup>For a survey of the eschatological nature of the phrase “last days” in the OT, see John T. Willis, “The Expression be’ acharith hayyamin in the Old Testament,” *Restoration Quarterly* 22 (1979): 54–71; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 88–128.

<sup>50</sup>Rightly Beale, *Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic*, 19.

kingdoms of Daniel 2, and will ultimately give way to God’s eternal kingdom (7:18, 22, 27). Furthermore, a peculiar phrase, “a time, times, and half a time [ עַד־עֵדָן וְעַד־נְיָן וּפְלֶגָה ]” occurs in 7:25 to denote the limits of the fourth beast’s reign of terror. While the exact meaning of this phrase is difficult to decipher, the consummation of God’s kingdom marks the end of this period (7:26–27).

In chapter 8, Daniel receives another vision (vv. 1–14), this time concerning two beasts. This mystery is cast in eschatological language as Gabriel provides an interpretation (vv. 15–26). These beasts represent two kingdoms, Medo-Persia and Greece (vv. 20–21), along with the rise and fall of a “little horn,” probably in reference to Antiochus IV (vv. 9–12; 23–25).<sup>51</sup> These corresponding events are said to concern “the time of the end [לְעֵת־קֶץ/εἰς καιροῦ πέρας (Theo)]” (v. 17), and “what will be at the latter end of wrath [בְּאַחֲרֵית הַזֶּעַם/ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῆς ὀργῆς], for it refers to the appointed time of the end [לְמוֹעַד־קֶץ/εἰς καιροῦ πέρας (Theo)]” (v. 19).

Daniel 9 concerns an eschatological time line (i.e., seventy weeks) decreed “to finish the transgression,” “put an end to sin,” “atone for iniquity,” “bring in everlasting righteousness,” “seal both vision and prophecy,” and “anoint a most holy” (v. 24). While the details of this mystery are debated, the content is a further development of the eschatological events of the previous visions. Similarly, chapters 10–12 elaborate on the visions of chapters 7–9, explicitly acknowledging their eschatological nature. In 10:14, an angelic being explains that the following vision concerns “what is to happen to your people in the last days [בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים/ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν].” The revelation of this mystery concerns the rise and fall of the second and third kingdoms of chapters 2, 7, and 8.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, this vision is repeatedly said to pertain “to the time of the end” (11:27, 35, 40; 12:1, 4, 6, 9, 13), focusing on the rise and fall of nations, the establishment of

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<sup>51</sup>For the identification of the “little horn” with Antiochus IV, see Steinmann, *Daniel*, 401–3.

<sup>52</sup>Hamilton, *Clouds of Heaven*, 98.

God's eternal kingdom, along with the vindication of his people through a resurrection "to everlasting life" (12:2). Therefore, the vision Daniel 10–12 is eschatological as with the other mysteries of Daniel.

### **Conclusion**

This examination of "mystery" has shown that the term is used in a technical sense which makes its presence felt throughout the book of Daniel. Keeping true to its apocalyptic character, mystery centers on divine revelation. Furthermore, this revelation is eschatological unveiling what will take place in "the latter days" (2:28) and "the time of the end" (12:4). From the first mystery to the last, these revelations expound upon God's sovereign plan to judge the kingdoms of this world, restore Israel as his covenant people, and establish his eternal kingdom.

Not only is mystery in Daniel eschatological, but it is also sapiential. Mystery concerns the hidden eschatological wisdom of God. As with other apocalyptic literature, God's hidden wisdom is primarily mediated by an otherworldly being or through a heavenly journey. However, in Daniel, God's wisdom is mediated either through an individual (i.e., Daniel) or an angel. Nevertheless, each revealed mystery follows a two-fold formula consisting of a symbol and interpretation. This manner of revelation takes shape primarily in Daniel 2, and the subsequent revealed mysteries of Daniel follow suit. Therefore, in Daniel, mystery is the apocalyptic revelation of God's previously hidden—but now made known—wisdom concerning the establishment of his eternal kingdom in the last days.

### **Mystery at Qumran**

In Daniel, the revelation of God's eschatological wisdom was encoded through dreams, visions, writings, and Scripture. Consequently, a wise interpreter was needed to unveil these mysteries. This use of mystery influenced later Jewish thought, particularly

that of the Qumran community.<sup>53</sup> Collins notes, “The existence of the Qumran Community was to a large extent based on the premise that they had found such a wise interpreter [of God’s mysteries] in the ‘Teacher of Righteousness.’” (1QpHab 7:4; cf. 1QS 8:11–12; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 1:21; 12:11–13).<sup>54</sup>

In the extant DSS, “mystery” (רַ) is used some one hundred and forty times, and bears significance for the theological perspective of the Yahad.<sup>55</sup> “Mystery” (רַ) is typically found in construct, coupled with other terms which may denote a broader application of the divine mysteries.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, “mystery” is always active, either accomplishing something or someone responding to it.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, divine revelation remains the distinguishing feature of “mystery” language in the DSS. This revelatory component is apparent when considering the many verbal associations with mystery language. Mystery is often used alongside verbs of “revealing,” “knowing,” “understanding,” and “concealing.”<sup>58</sup> What a mystery makes known or hides is ultimately determined in context. However, “mystery” (רַ) still shares the three characteristics it bore in Daniel, namely (1) hidden revelation; (2) interpreted revelation; and (3)

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<sup>53</sup>Beale notes several links between the use of mystery in Daniel and that of Qumran (Beale, *Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic*, 23–32). See also D. Deden, “Le ‘Mystère’ Paulinien,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 13 (1936): 405–42; Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament*, 22–30; Bruce, “The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community,” 221–35; Maurya A. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretation of Biblical Books* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979), 231–59; Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 47–51; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 13; Thomas, *Mysteries*, 129.

<sup>54</sup>Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 78.

<sup>55</sup>Thomas carefully notes, “While we cannot make too much of the frequency of a given word—the evidence is fragmentary and therefore potentially misleading, some words are simply more common and useful than others, etc.—at the very least we can say that the word רַ is an important term that relates to ‘the theological and metaphysical outlook of the [Yahad],’ which itself is clearly linked in some important ways to the writings of *1 Enoch*, the book of Daniel, and other relevant texts” (Thomas, *Mysteries*, 130). See also Dimant who categorizes the distinctive terminology of the Qumran community. Devorah Dimant, “The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance,” in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1995), 27–28.

<sup>56</sup>Examples include רַז נהיה אל; רַזי אל; or רַזי פלא.

<sup>57</sup>Thomas, *Mysteries*, 128.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

eschatological revelation. These characteristics will be illustrated by examining various mysteries referenced in the DSS.<sup>59</sup>

### **Mysteries of Wonder**

Among the DSS, **רז** is often found in construct with some form of **פלא**. In the OT, **פלא** speaks of a “wonder, miracle, or marvelous thing.”<sup>60</sup> It usually describes God’s acts of deliverance for his people (Jer 21:2; Mic 7:15; Pss 77:12; 78:12; 106:7, 33; Neh 9:17).<sup>61</sup> At Qumran **פלא** is primarily found among the *Hodayot*, *Songs of the Sabbath*, and other liturgical texts. Here too it speaks of God’s activity on behalf of his people, including the act of creation. In this way, the psalmist of the *Hodayot* praises God saying, “I give you thanks, Lord, according to the greatness of your strength and the abundance of your wonders [נפלאותיך] from eternity and for eternity” (1QH<sup>a</sup> 6:23). In 4QTanhumim, prayer is offered for God to recall his words of consolation in Isaiah (40:1–5) and “perform your marvel [פלאכה], do your people justice” (4Q176 1–2 I 1). Therefore, God’s wonders refer both to his act of creation and deliverance. As a result, when **פלא** is paired with **רז** it may not merely serve as a modifier, but the object of the mystery, an actual wonder of God.<sup>62</sup>

As such, the mystery of wonder is revelatory, giving understanding to the hidden meaning of God’s wonders in the past. An example of the revelatory nature of this

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<sup>59</sup>Unless otherwise noted all translations of the DSS come from F. García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols. (Boston: Brill, 1998).

<sup>60</sup>*TWOT*, 1768.

<sup>61</sup>“פלא,” *TLOT*, 983. See also Thomas, who similarly argues that **פלא** concerns God’s activity on behalf of Israel. Thomas, *Mysteries*, 136–42.

<sup>62</sup>See Thomas, who contends, “There are several possibilities for understanding how this term functions. It is often translated as ‘wonderful mysteries,’ a translation that captures neither the variability in usage nor the fact that there are several grammatical possibilities for understanding the phrase. ‘Wonderful mysteries’ is analogous to the substantive + attributive adjective formation, but this translation—while perhaps warranted grammatically—does not always represent the best semantic possibility for the phrase. A more straightforward reading of the construct-genitive might be ‘mysteries of wonder,’ wherein **פלא** (in a few different grammatical forms) is taken to be not simply a modifier of **רז** but is a thing in and of itself—it is a ‘wonder.’” Thomas, *Mysteries*, 136.

phrase is contained in the *Damascus Document*.<sup>63</sup> This text begins by recounting the history of Israel's repeated failures to uphold God's covenant stipulations (CD 1:1–3:11). Nevertheless, throughout Israel's history God has preserved a remnant with whom he has kept his covenant. The means of this preservation are God's "mysteries of wonder."

But with those who remained steadfast in God's precepts, with those who were left from among them, God established his covenant with Israel for ever, revealing to them hidden matters in which all Israel had gone astray: *Blank* his holy sabbaths and his glorious feasts, his just stipulations and his truthful paths, and the wishes of his will which man must do in order to live by them. *Blank* He disclosed (these matters) to them and they dug a well of plentiful water; and whoever spurns them shall not live. But they had defiled themselves with human sin and unclean paths, and they had said: "For this is ours." But God, in his wonderful mysteries [ברזי פלאו], atoned for their iniquity and pardoned their sin. And he built for them a safe home in Israel, such as there has not been since ancient times, not even till now. Those who remained steadfast in it will acquire eternal life, and all the glory of Adam is for them. (CD 3:12–20)

Here God's "mysteries of wonder" refer to God's act of atonement for sin and ultimately building a safe home in Israel. The content of these "mysteries of wonder" were made known to the Teacher of Righteous who now opens the eyes of the present generation to "understand God's deeds" so that they may not be led astray like Israel in ancient times (2:14–17; cf. 1:1–2, 10–13). Thomas states, "The 'mysteries of wonder' might here refer not only to the enactment of some miraculous feat of physical deliverance, but to the provision of additional revelation which itself was salvific insofar as it allowed for the continuation of the covenant in the face of ongoing iniquity."<sup>64</sup> If so, God's "mysteries of wonder" which preserved the remnant of old are now revealed to the Qumran Community so that they may "acquire eternal life" (3:20). In sum, the "mysteries of wonder" give understanding to past events—in this case God's provision for the remnant of old—reimagining them around the Yahad's present circumstances in order to give hope of God's future deliverance. In this way, "mysteries of wonder" are hidden

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<sup>63</sup>See also 1QH<sup>a</sup> 10:13; 12:27; 4Q401 14 II 6-8; 4Q403 1 II 27.

<sup>64</sup>Thomas, *Mysteries*, 147.

revelations (i.e., past wonders), mediated by the Teacher of Righteousness, which reveals the eschatological plan of redemption.

### **Mystery That is To Be**

The phrase, “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה), while not prolific, is found among several important Scrolls (e.g., *Community Rule*; *Mysteries*, and *4QInstruction*).<sup>65</sup> The *Book of Mysteries*<sup>66</sup> is particularly insightful for constructing an understanding of this phrase. *Mysteries* seems to be a polemical document representing an “attempt to uphold the special position of Israelite culture and religion against Hellenistic and other pagan beliefs, in particular astrology.”<sup>67</sup>

*Mysteries* begins with a rebuke of those who claim to be wise, but do not know the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה):

[... all] their wisd[om]. And they do not know the mystery that is to be (רז נהיה), nor understand ancient matters. And they do not know what is going to happen to them; and they will not save their souls from the mystery that is to be (רז נהיה; 1Q27 1 I, 3–4).

As the citation above indicates, these so-called wise individuals will lose their lives for not rightly discerning the former things, and the things yet to come. They do not perceive the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה), a temporal term referring to God’s redemptive purposes throughout history, from the beginning of creation to the eschaton.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>רז נהיה has garnered considerable discussion. Matthew Goff’s translation has been adopted for this study. For a thorough treatment of the phrase and its translation, see Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 30–34. See also Daniel J. Harrington, “The Rāz Nihyeh in a Qumran Wisdom Text (1Q26, 4Q415–418, 423),” *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996): 549–53.

<sup>66</sup>Otherwise known as 1Q27. Also, at least three other texts seem to be a part of this collection, 4Q299, 4Q300, and 4Q301. See Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 55; Eibert Tigchelaar, “Your Wisdom and Your Folly the Case of 1–4QMysteries,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. García Martínez (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2003), 70–73.

<sup>67</sup>Tigchelaar, “The Case of 1–4QMysteries,” 88.

<sup>68</sup>Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 34.



Elsewhere in *Mysteries*, magicians<sup>69</sup> are taunted for their inability to interpret “the parable and speak the riddle before it is discussed” (4Q300 1 II, 1). Any attempt to do so will unmask their foolishness, because the “eternal mysteries” (ברזי עד) have been “sealed up (חתום) from [them]” (4Q300 1 II, 2). This passage recalls Daniel 2, where the magicians before Nebuchadnezzar were unable to unravel the mystery of his dream.<sup>70</sup> In the same way, these magicians “skilled in sin” (4Q300 1 II, 1) are like those in the past, unable to discern the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה), and therefore, will also be judged with the wicked when the world is transformed and righteousness is revealed (1Q27 1 I 6–7).

*Mysteries* is an example of the blending of Jewish sapiential and apocalyptic traditions.<sup>71</sup> Specifically, the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) refers to God’s plan of redemption spanning throughout history and into the eschaton. As Schiffman contends,

The mysteries texts . . . open before us a new genre of wisdom literature. Hidden secrets spell out the future based on the proper understanding of the past. But these secrets are available only to a select group of people who are endowed with an ability to interpret the signs. What we have here is a wedding of wisdom and prophecy, not only a new literary genre, but further testimony to the religious creativity of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>72</sup>

In other words, it is only through divine revelation that one may obtain the hidden wisdom of God and discern his eschatological plans. This concept of mystery becomes more evident in *4QInstruction*.

Composed around the second century BC, *4QInstruction*—commonly referred to as *Sapiential Work A*—is the longest and most important sapiential text in the extant

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<sup>69</sup>For a discussion on the identity of these magicians, see Tigchelaar, “The Case of 1-4QMysteries,” 83–84.

<sup>70</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 58; Thomas, *Mysteries*, 225–28.

<sup>71</sup>Matthew J. Goff, *Discerning Wisdom: The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 70.

<sup>72</sup>Lawrence H. Schiffman, “4QMysteries: A Preliminary Edition and Translation,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 235.

DSS.<sup>73</sup> It serves as a pedagogical text written to the “understanding one” (מבין) to meditate upon the “mystery that is to be” (רו נהיה).<sup>74</sup> As with *Mysteries*, here the “mystery that is to be” (רו נהיה) takes a prominent role and appeals to both wisdom and supernatural revelation. However, though portions of *4QInstruction* resemble traditional sapiential thought (e.g., Proverbs or Ben Sira), “in this text wisdom is acquired through contemplation of revealed mysteries rather than from knowledge the addressee can acquire on his own.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, the “mystery that is to be” (רו נהיה) is esoteric wisdom like that of 1 Enoch, a type that is often dismissed in sapiential literature (e.g., Ben Sira 3:21–24; 34:5). Therefore, *4QInstruction* is closer to that of apocalypticism.<sup>76</sup>

A thorough analysis of this document is beyond the scope of this project, but a brief survey of key passages will further illumine an understanding of the “mystery that is to be.” In *4QInstruction* the “mystery that is to be” (רו נהיה) is comprehensive. Goff identifies several themes that are influenced by the “mystery that is to be” (רו נהיה): (1) temporal dominion; (2) eschatology; (3) creation; (4) determinism; (5) Torah; (6) instruction for daily life; and (7) ethical dualism.<sup>77</sup>

First, the “mystery that is to be” (רו נהיה) refers to God’s dominion over the history of the world. It speaks to God’s plan of redemption, spanning over all of history: past, present, and future.<sup>78</sup> This theme is articulated in 4Q418 123 II, 2–4, “Concerning

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<sup>73</sup>See Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 1; F. García Martínez, “Wisdom at Qumran: Worldly or Heavenly?,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. F. García Martínez (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>74</sup>Goff notes that רו נהיה is used some 20 times and “normally signifies something that should be studied, fronted, with the *bet* preposition and accompanied by an imperative that encourages contemplation, as in for example, 4Q417 1 I 6–7: “[ . . . day and night meditate upon this mystery that] is to be (ברו נהיה) and study (it) constantly. And then you will know truth and iniquity, wisdom [and folly].” Matthew J. Goff, *4QInstruction* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 14.

<sup>75</sup>Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 51.

<sup>76</sup>See Goff, who provides a helpful discussion on the continuities and discontinuities of traditional wisdom and apocalyptic literature within *4QInstruction*. *Ibid.*, 42–53.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>78</sup>See Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 54–61. Goff contends that in the Hebrew Bible the Niphal נהיה primarily denotes the past tense (e.g., Deut 4:32; 27:9; Judg 20:3; Prov 13:19). However, in

the entry of years and the exit of periods [ . . . ] everything which happened [הנהיה] in it, why it was [היה], and what will be [יהיה] in it [ . . . ] its period which God uncovered to the ear of those who understand the [mystery that is to be] (רז נהיה).” This passage begins with a merism spanning from the beginning to the end of time. The latter lines give a further explanation of the events within a full scope of history. Therefore, history itself is hidden revelation that requires interpretation in order to understand God’s future plans.

Second, the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) pertains to the eschatological realities of salvation and judgment. In 4Q417 1 I 10–11 the “understanding one” (מביין) is told to “[Consider the mystery] that is to be (רז נהיה) and grasp the birth-times of salvation (מולדי ישע), and know who will inherit glory and t[oi]l.” The curious phrase “birth-times of salvation” (מולדי ישע) is significant. It is less likely a reference to tribulation (e.g., messianic woes), but rather to the birth-signs of the elect.<sup>79</sup> In other words, “In this text מולד signifies a deterministic understanding of human birth—the birth of a particular individual is part of a greater divine plan according to which history unfolds.”<sup>80</sup> Though there is some speculation that inquiry into one’s birth speaks of astronomical knowledge, such conclusions are not certain. Nevertheless, by studying the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) one can know whom God has allotted to share in the “eternal joy” (4Q417 1 I 12).

Third, if the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) concerns God’s dominion and plan over all history, such a plan must also relate to the creation. Not surprisingly then, a creational theme is discerned in 4Q417 2 I 6–9:<sup>81</sup>

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Second Temple Judaism it begins to “refer to either the future or the entire scope of the historical order” (54). An example of this usage can be found in 4Q417 2 I 3–4.

<sup>79</sup>Contra Torleif Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Early Second Century BCE: The Evidence of 4QInstruction,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years After Their Discovery 1947–1997*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 233. Rather, Goff, *4QInstruction*, 199.

<sup>80</sup>Goff, *4QInstruction*, 199.

<sup>81</sup>Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” 235; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 61; Goff,

[Day and night meditate upon the mystery that is to be (רז נהיה)], and seek continuously. And then you will know truth and injustice, wisdom . . . Then you will know (the difference) between [good] and [evil in their] work[s], for the God of knowledge is the foundation of truth, and through the mystery that is to be (רז נהיה) he expounded its basis. Its works . . . [with all wis]dom, and with all [intelli]gence he formed it.

Here the “understanding one” (מבין) is instructed to continuously contemplate the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה). As a result, he will acquire knowledge of wisdom and folly. Such knowledge is obtainable because God is the foundation of truth, and by means of the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) he formed the created world. Just a few lines later the “understanding one” (מבין) is ordered to “consider . . . the mystery that is to be (רז נהיה), and know [the . . . ] of every living being, and its way of walking that is appointed for [its] deeds” (lines 18–19). The point seems to be that, “God endowed the world with an overarching framework by means of the mystery that is to be.”<sup>82</sup> As a result, access to the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) allows one to understand the wisdom of God in creation.

Fourth, the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) carries deterministic connotations. Looking again at 4Q417 2 I 18–19, one observes the theme of determinism as God has established the ways of “every living being, and its way of walking that is appointed for [its] deeds.” Elsewhere, God “has given each of them [i.e., the elect] their inheritance (נחלתו)” (4Q418 81 3). Not only has God allotted the inheritance of the elect, but also “of [ever]y [living being]” (line 20). Inheritance (נחלת) refers to one’s allotment in life. For the elect this allotment is among the “sons of Adam” (line 3), whereas the inheritance of the wicked is “not to be regarded innocent” (4Q417 2 I 24).

Fifth, the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) is a source of wisdom, which like Torah is to be meditated upon “day and night” (4Q417 2 I 6; cf. Ps 1:2). In accordance to this mystery, one is to honor their parents “for the sake of your life and the length of your

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*Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 61–66.

<sup>82</sup>Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 62.

days” (4Q416 2 III 18–19). Lange sees this mystery as conceptually similar to wisdom in Ben Sira 24, being identified with Torah.<sup>83</sup> Whereas, Elgvin contends that רז נהיה replaces Torah as a source of wisdom. In 4Q423 III 1, there is a clear citation of Leviticus 26:20, a text focused on keeping Torah. However, 4Q423 III 1–2 replaces Torah with the רז נהיה.<sup>84</sup> While Elgvin’s view is plausible, this portion of 4QInstruction is fragmentary. Thus, it is difficult to make such an emphatic conclusion that the רז נהיה has replaced Torah. What can be stated is that there is a close relationship between Torah and the רז נהיה. Perhaps, as with 1QpHab, mystery is the proper interpretation or understanding of the Law.

Sixth, the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) also pertains to practical matters of life, such as marriage, poverty, and filial relationships (cf. 4Q414 2 III 8–10, 17–19, 20–21). These practical matters are also commonplace to the biblical sapiential tradition (e.g., Prov 19:14; 23:22; 28:6). The blending of sapiential instruction and apocalyptic epistemology makes the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) truly comprehensive. Therefore, the “understanding one” (מבין) must “investigate,” “consider,” “observe,” and “know” (lines 14–15) this mystery to “live in accordance with creation’s design of the cosmos and of history.”<sup>85</sup>

Finally, the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) concerns ethical principles that shape one’s life. These principles are often presented dualistically. For example, in 4Q416 2 III 14, one is exhorted to “investigate the mystery that is to be (רז נהיה), and consider all paths of truth, and observe closely all the roots of injustice.” In line 15, the “paths of truth” are paralleled with knowing what is “sweet for a man” and “injustice” with what is “bitter.” Again, by meditating on the רז נהיה, one is able to distinguish between good and evil (4Q417 2 I 6–8).

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<sup>83</sup>Armin Lange, *Weisheit und Pradestination: Weisheitliche Urordnung und Pradestination in den Textfunden von Qumran*, STDJ 18 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1995), 90.

<sup>84</sup>Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” 237.

<sup>85</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 61.

In sum, this survey of *4QInstruction* has shown that the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) entails hidden revelation of “the entire determined plan of God over the created realm.”<sup>86</sup> As Elgvin states, “[The mystery that is to be] is a comprehensive word for God’s mysterious plans for creation and history, His plan for man and for redemption of the elect. It is ‘salvation history in a wider meaning.’”<sup>87</sup> By giving oneself to the study of the “mystery that is to be” (רז נהיה) one may know their inheritance of glory and how they are to live in accordance to this revealed knowledge. In other words, mystery is hidden wisdom of God, interpreted to understand God’s eschatological plans.

### **Mysteries of Knowledge**

Frequently mystery is combined with words of knowledge. Examples include: “mysteries of knowledge (רזי דעת; 1QS 4:6), “mysteries of understanding” (רזי שכל; 1QS 4:18), “mystery of wisdom” (רז חכמת; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 17:23), “mysteries of thought” (רזי מחשבת; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 5:17), and “mysteries of prudence” (רזי ערמח; 4Q491c 11 I 3–4).<sup>88</sup> While each of these phrases carries its own nuance, the common denominator is that they concern hidden knowledge to which the Yahad has special access.

Surveying the *Hodayot* highlights the relationship between God’s mysteries and possession of hidden knowledge. In 1QH<sup>a</sup> 9:9–12 the text reads,

You have stretched out the heavens for your glory. Everything [which it contains] you have [es]tablished according to your will, and powerful spirits, according to their laws, before they became h[oly] angels [ . . . ] eternal spirits in their realms: luminaries according to their mysteries (לרזיהם), stars according to [their] circuits, [all the stormy winds] according to their roles.

The hymnist goes on to explain not only that the luminaries function according to their mysteries—or divine laws—but so does lightning and thunder, the sea and the deep, and

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<sup>86</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 60.

<sup>87</sup>Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” 235.

<sup>88</sup>For an extensive treatment of these phrases, see Thomas, *Mysteries*, 160–75.

everything in them (lines 12–14). In other words, knowledge of this mystery concerns the order of creation for the glory of God. However, this knowledge cannot be attained through mere human speculation. The hymnist states, “These things I know (ידעתִי) through your knowledge (מבינתכה), for you opened my ears to [mysteries of wonder] (לרזי פלא) although I am a creature of clay” (line 21). Therefore, the creation is a mystery, that conceals the hidden wisdom of God and requires further interpretive revelation.

Knowledge of God’s mysteries not only reveal the order of the cosmos, but God’s eschatological purposes for the world. For instance, 1QH<sup>a</sup> 5:17–19 reveals God’s mystery to transform the cosmos into a new creation. The passage states, “What was there from of old and creating new things, demolishing ancient things and [erec]ting what would exist for ever. For you [have established them long ago] and you will exist for ever and ever. [ . . . ] In the mysteries of your insight (וברזי שכלכה) [you] have apportioned all these things, to make your glory known.” According to the “mystery of insight,” God will first destroy the cosmos and then recreate it as an eternal dwelling. This new creation language perhaps derives from Isaiah and even Daniel.<sup>89</sup>

Another passage pictures the Qumran community as God’s hidden trees who will one day grow into an everlasting plantation. The text states,

I give [you] thanks, [Lord,] because you have set me at the source of streams in a dry land, at the spring of water in a parched land, in a garden watered by channels [ . . . ] . . . a plantation of cypresses and elms together with cedar, for your glory. Trees of life in the secret source [במעין רז], hidden among all the trees at the water, which shall make a shoot grow in the everlasting plantation, . . . However, he who causes the holy shoot to grow in the true plantation hides, not considered, nor known, its sealed mystery [חותם רז]. But you, [O G]od, you protect its fruit with the mystery of powerful heroes [ברז גבורי כוח], and spirits of holiness, so that the flame of the searing fire [will] not [reach] the spring of life. (1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:4–12).

The allegorical nature of this hymn make interpretation difficult. Nevertheless, it seems that the hymnist gives thanks to God for placing him at the source of streams, likely

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<sup>89</sup>See Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 63; Svend Holm-Nielsen, *Hodayot: Psalms from Qumran* (Aarhus, Denmark: Universitetsforlaget, 1960), 215.

God's law (Ps 1). Along with the hymnist, God has planted many trees for his own glory. These trees represent Israel as a whole. Yet there are some trees (i.e., the elect, the Qumran community) who have special access to the "secret source" (במעין רז) whose identity is hidden from the rest. As Brown notes, "These seem to be the elect ones among the Israelites who draw upon the correct interpretation of the Law."<sup>90</sup> Although this true plantation is hidden and experiences persecution, God preserves it.

Holm-Nielsen suggests, "The illustration would thus simply say that the members of the community, whose secret destiny is hidden from mankind, and who themselves keep the secret of their revealed purpose, are under God's care."<sup>91</sup> In other words, it appears that the hymnist describes an Israel within Israel, who have access to the hidden mysteries of God. And this sealed up revelation concerns their ultimate redemption to be God's true plantation for his glory.

Furthermore, this theme of hidden knowledge is expressed again when the speaker explains that "in the mystery of your wisdom (ברז חכמתכה) you have rebuked me, you have hidden the truth till the period of [ . . . till] its ordained time" (1QH<sup>a</sup> 17:23–24). In this case, God's mystery concerns hidden knowledge of future matters, matters of "happiness and joy," "healing," "a crown of glory," and "salvation unto eternity" (lines 24–29).

### **Mysteries of God**

In the Scrolls, mystery is also used in a general way to recount God's hidden knowledge or will. Nevertheless, as Thomas notes, "The mysteries of God' are effectual, they are active and real, and are not merely things about God that the human mind does

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<sup>90</sup>Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament*, 26.

<sup>91</sup>Holm-Nielsen, *Hodayot*, 151.



not comprehend.”<sup>92</sup> For instance, the “mysteries of God” (רזי אל) are called upon to “destroy wickedness” (1QM 3:9). Elsewhere, they exercise sovereign control over the “Angel of Darkness” (1QS 3:20-23). Furthermore, in *Pesher Habakkuk* the “mysteries of God” complete the prophetic word, which concerns the eschatological destiny of the elect (1QpHab 7:1–8).

*Pesher Habakkuk* is quite important for reconstructing the interpretive practices of the Qumran community and its relationship to “mystery” (רז). Although רז only appears three times in this Scroll, two of these appearances occur together in 1QpHab 7:1–8, an illuminating passage.

And God told Habakkuk to write what was going to happen to the last generation, but he did not let him know the consummation of the era. And as for what he says: “So that may run the one who reads it.” Its interpretation [פשרו] concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets [כול רזי דברי עבדיו הנבאים]. For the vision has an appointed time, it will have an end and not fail. Its interpretation: the final age will be extended and go beyond all that the prophets say, because the mysteries of God are wonderful [רזי אל להפלה].

Similar to Daniel’s experience (Dan 9), the Teacher of Righteousness has received further divine revelation to complete the prophetic word of Habakkuk.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, God has revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness all his mysteries contained in the words of the prophets. Therefore, the Teacher of Righteousness claims that a more thorough revelation has come, a revelation previously hidden to the prophets, but now revealed. This revealed word refers to God’s “mysteries” (רז), which illumine the previous revelation given to the prophets. In this way, “the OT texts are themselves mysteries, awaiting a final interpretation.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Thomas, *Mysteries*, 183.

<sup>93</sup>Gladd states, “Revelation in the book of Daniel is primarily visionary (e.g., Dan 2, 4), although the enigmatic ‘writing on the wall’ (5:7–28) and the Jeremiah prophecy (9:2) still require interpretation . . . . The *pešer* technique at Qumran similarly reflects the interpretation of Jer 25:11–12 and 29:10 in Dan 9:24–27, though the actual word ‘interpretation’ is not used but implied.” Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 75. See also Horgan, *Pesherim*, 255–56.

<sup>94</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 77.

This final interpretation by the Teacher of Righteousness pertains to the eschatological destiny of the elect. By aligning themselves with this figure (1QpHab 2:1–4; 8:1–3), the Qumran community was considered, “to be the people of the New Covenant, the true remnant of Israel living in the end-time . . . the guardians of the purity and authenticity of the true priesthood and of the correct interpretation of Scripture, an interpretation revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness.”<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, those who “do not believe the words of the Teacher of Righteousness” (2:2), Habakkuk speaks of their impending judgment. Therefore, as a mystery, Habakkuk is reimagined around the present circumstances of the Qumran community, giving insight into the coming eschatological judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous.

## **Conclusion**

This survey of the DSS has explored the revelatory nature of “mystery” at Qumran. Particularly, this revelation bears the apocalyptic characteristics of hiddenness, interpretation, and eschatology. However, unlike Daniel and other apocalyptic literature, God’s mysteries are not unveiled through an otherworldly being or heavenly journey. Rather, they are mediated through the Teacher of Righteous in whom the streams of God’s wisdom flow (1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:4). Therefore, through this authorized interpreter, the mysteries of the cosmos, history, and the Scriptures are uncovered.

Specifically, they reveal that God’s ways in the past are recapitulated in the present, giving insight to the future (1Q27 1 I, 3–4). Consequently, a proper understanding of creation unveils God’s hidden wisdom concerning justice and the future inheritance of the elect within a new creation (4Q417 2 I 6–9, 24; 4Q418 81 3; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 5:17–19). God’s ways with Israel of old are prefigurations of his present dealings with the elect, giving hope for eschatological deliverance (CD 3:12–20). Even the Scriptures

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<sup>95</sup>Horgan, *Peshirim*, 2.

themselves conceal God’s mysteries and pertain to the present generation of the elect (1QpHab 7:10–14). Therefore, in the DSS, mysteries continue to reflect a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton.

### **Mystery in the Pseudepigrapha**

The Pseudepigrapha presents a wide range of Jewish traditions spanning from the sixth century BC to second century AD. Despite the eclectic nature of this literature, many of these works share common apocalyptic themes. This commonality appears in the use of mystery. Therefore, it is prudent to survey the use of mystery language within this literature to ascertain a coherent Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema.

#### **Mystery as Hidden Revelation**

In the Pseudepigrapha, mystery is primarily hidden revelation from God. Keeping with its apocalyptic nature, this revelation may come through an angelic intermediary (3 Bar. 1:4–6), a dream (Apoc. Moses 3:12), or a heavenly journey (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1:7; 1 En. 14:9–16:3; T. Levi. 3:1–4:6). In the Apoc. Moses, God communicates a mystery to Adam through Michael the archangel. It reads, “And God said to Michael the archangel, ‘Say to Adam, “the mystery [τὸ μυστήριον] which you know do not report to your son Cain, for he is a son of wrath””’ (3:2).<sup>96</sup> This mystery corresponds to Eve’s dream where God revealed the impending murder of Abel by Cain (2:2).

Mysteries also are mediated through heavenly journeys. This mediation is evident in T. Levi. where Levi is called up to the third heaven in the presence of the Lord.<sup>97</sup> Levi is then guided by an angelic being who explains, “You shall be [the Lord’s]

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<sup>96</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the Pseudepigrapha come from James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>97</sup>There is much discussion whether *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* qualify as Jewish

priest and you shall tell forth his mysteries [μυστήρια] to men” (2:10). Through this mode of revelation, Levi is privy to mysteries of which the rest of humanity is unaware. As a result, “the sons of men . . . keep sinning and provoke the anger of the most high” (3:10). In other documents, the revelations from similar heavenly journeys are also equated with the mysteries of God (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1:2–5; 3 Bar. 1:6; 1 En. 1:1–2; 9:6; 16:3).

In the T. Jud., Judah recounts his sin with Tamar, which resulted in him revealing “words spoken in a mystery [τοὺς ἐν μυστηρίῳ λόγους]” words “that were from the Lord [ὅτι παρὰ Κυρίου ἦν]” (12:6). This mystery is later equated with “the mysteries of Jacob [μυστήρια Ἰακώβ]” (16:4). What are the “mysteries of Jacob?” They are synonymous with “the commandments of God [ἐντολῶν Θεοῦ]” (v. 4), a phrase used elsewhere in T. 12 Patr., referring to Torah (T. Levi. 14:4, 6–7; T. Jud. 13:1, 7; 14:6; 16:3; 18:6; 23:5; T. Iss. 4:5; 5:1; T. Zeb. 5:1; 10:2). Gladd asserts, these mysteries “may entail some esoteric teaching concerning the nature of Torah.”<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, it is apparent that mystery maintains the characteristic of hidden revelation.

### **Mystery as Interpreted Revelation**

Mystery not only retains an emphasis on hidden revelation, but also the need for an authorized interpreter. A reoccurring narrative found in the apocalypses is the illicit revelation of mysteries. This narrative is especially prominent in the *Book of Watchers*, where fallen angles have taken human wives for themselves and “revealed mysteries [ἀνακαλύπτειν τὰ μυστήρια] to their wives and children” (8:3, my translation).<sup>99</sup> Enoch is

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literature and should be classified as second-century Christian documents. See Susan Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (London: SPCK, 2014), 94–95. Nevertheless, Robert A. Kugler contends, “Its heavy reliance on quasi-testamentary material known from earlier Jewish works and traditions such as the *Aramaic Levi Document* and Hebrew traditions relating to Judah, Naphtali, and perhaps Joseph, virtually ensures that it was at one time either in parts or as a whole one or several Jewish compositions of testamentary character.” Robert A. Kugler, “Testaments,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1296.

<sup>98</sup>Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 87.

<sup>99</sup>The Aramaic is similar: “And all began to reveal [secrets (לגליה רזין)] to their wives . . .]” (4Q202 3:5). Another parallel statement is made in 9:6 that they “revealed eternal secrets [τὰ μυστήρια τοῦ

called upon to intercede on their behalf and explain what they have revealed is worthless and not the mysteries of God. Enoch asserts,

You were in heaven, and not every mystery [πᾶν μυστήριον] was revealed to you and you learned a mystery [μυστήριον] that belonged to God, and this you made known to your wives in the hardness of your heart, and by this mystery [ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τούτῳ] women and men multiplied evil upon the earth (16:3, my translation).

These fallen angels were not authorized to reveal these mysteries and incorrectly applied them to humanity.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, as Bockmuehl summarizes, “Such secrets are evil and ‘worthless’ inasmuch as they do not advance the lordship of God in creation, history, and salvation.”<sup>101</sup>

These unauthorized mysteries are contrasted with the mysteries revealed to Enoch. As Collins states, “The understanding of the sin of the Watchers as improper revelation provides the obvious counterpart of the proper revelation of Enoch in the rest of the book.”<sup>102</sup> In other words, Enoch is presented as a divinely authorized recipient of heavenly mysteries. In true apocalyptic form Enoch states, “A holy vision from heaven, which the angels showed me . . . I heard and understood everything from them” (1:2, translation mine). Enoch then recounts a cosmological vision of the created order (1:3–5:10) which reveals the mighty power of God over the universe. Enoch declares that the wicked have not rightly observed God’s creation and so have disobeyed his commands because of their hardness of heart (5:4). This wickedness is due to the fallen angels who have led humanity astray with unauthorized mysteries (9:6). Enoch then explains how God’s response to this wickedness is to judge the world with a flood (10:2).

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αἰῶνος] which are performed in heaven.”

<sup>100</sup>George W. E. Nickelsburg, *I Enoch*, vol. 1, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 274.

<sup>101</sup>Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 40.

<sup>102</sup>Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 41. See also Nickelsburg, *I Enoch*, 1:199. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 40; Goff, *Discerning Wisdom*, 84–85; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 91–92.

The rest of the *Book of Watchers* recounts Enoch's heavenly vision. This vision begins in the throne room of God (14:9–16:3) and continues with a journey to the “foundations of the earth” (18:1), where he is shown a “prison house” for the stars and powers of heaven (18:14–19:3). He then is taken to the abode of the dead, where the bounded souls await the final judgment (21:1–22:14). The rest of the vision takes Enoch around the earth to see “mountains” (24:1–3; 26:1–6), “fragrant trees” (24:4–25:7), an “accursed valley” (27:1–5), and to the four corners of the earth (chaps. 28–36). This entire journey is presented as an authorized mystery, and as such, it provides insight into constructing a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema. Throughout Enoch's visionary journey, he continually seeks explanation of the revelations he receives (21:9–10; 22:6–7; 23:3–4; 25:1–3; 27:1–2). In this way, Enoch's vision is presented as a mystery properly interpreted.

Similarly, 3 Bar. presents Baruch as an authorized recipient of God's mysteries. This apocalypse begins with an angel appearing to Baruch who laments Israel's exile into Babylon. Baruch asks, “Why did you not spare your city Jerusalem?” The angel explains that he will show Baruch “all the things of God” and “greater mysteries than these” [μυστήρια τούτων μείζονα] (1:4, 6). The comparative phrase suggests that the exile of Israel was itself a mystery and the subsequent visions are even greater mysteries. In this way, Baruch's entire vision is cast as an interpreted mystery (2:6), not only of Israel's exile (1:1–7), but also the tower of Babel (2:7–3:8), the tree of evil in the garden of Eden (4:1–17), the sun and moon (6:1–9:7), and the angels (11:1–16:8). These are interpreted mysteries which Baruch is now authorized to share with humanity (17:1).

### **Mystery as Eschatological Revelation**

This survey has argued that God's hidden mysteries have been unveiled through an authorized interpreter. However, what is the content of these mysteries? Often, they are authorized interpretations of past events or figures, which reveal God's hidden

eschatological plans to redeem his people and judge the wicked (1 En. 1:2, 7; T. Levi. 2:10; 3:9–10; T. Jud. 23:1–5; 25:1–5; Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1:24; 2:26–32; 5:20–28; 7:12–13; 3 Bar. 16:4–8).

This mystery schema is illustrated in 3 Bar. as past events from Israel's history are expanded (e.g., the garden, Babel, and creation) to explain Israel's plight of Babylonian captivity and serve as comfort for God's suffering people. Ultimately, these mysteries are eschatological looking forward to the revelation of God's glory in all the earth, when the righteous will find rest and the wicked will experience eternal torture (16:4). Baruch as the authorized recipient of these mysteries is to make them known among all humanity (17:1).

Similarly, T. Levi. reflects on the life of Levi (Gen 34) as a mystery announcing God's eschatological plan to redeem Israel (2:10). This mystery is unveiled in the following ways. First, Levi's life and actions are reimagined as an eschatological mystery. For example, the act of revenge against the sin of Hamor appears to be proleptic of the coming day of judgment upon sinful humanity (2:2; 4:1; 5:1–7). Second, Levi receives a vision concerning the priesthood descended from him that will be a "sign of the glory of the Lord who is coming" (8:11). Reflecting on this vision, Levi states, "I understood that this was like the first dream" (v. 18). This vision concerning the priesthood is also an eschatological mystery. Finally, Levi reflects on the "writings of Enoch that in the end-time" Israel will fall into great sin (14:1). This period will span seventy weeks (16:1–17:11), leading to the destruction of the temple (15:1). However, at the end of this period the Lord will raise a new priest (18:1) who will redeem Israel to her lost glory (vv. 1–14).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>While this passage contains a clear Christian interpolation, it still illustrates how mystery was used in this literature.

At times these mysteries are associated with an eschatological redeemer or Messiah (T. Levi. 2:10; 18:2; 4 Ezra 7:28; 2 Bar. 29:3). This association is especially true with 1 En. where the mystery is tied to the Son of Man (46:2).<sup>104</sup> Accordingly, the Son of Man “will open all the hidden storerooms . . . remove the kings and the mighty ones . . . loosen the reins of the strong and crush the teeth of sinners” (vv. 3–4). This figure is a mystery himself, hidden before time, but now made known (38:2; 48:2–7; 49:2; 52:2–4; 62:6–7; 69:27–29). At his revelation “when the secrets of the Righteous One are revealed, he shall judge the sinners” (38:2; cf. 49:3). Furthermore, not only does the Messiah reveal the coming eschatological judgment, but “from his mouth shall come out all secrets of wisdom” (51:3) and the earth will experience redemption (vv. 4–5).<sup>105</sup> In sum, the Messiah “figures prominently in relation to the eschatological mysteries, which though presently concealed, are already existent in heaven and await their imminent manifestation.”<sup>106</sup>

## Conclusion

This overview reinforces the argument that mystery is the apocalyptic revelation of God’s hidden plans of eschatological redemption. The hidden nature of these mysteries is exemplified as revelation is mediated through dreams, angelic intermediaries, and heavenly journeys. As hidden revelation, God’s mysteries require further inquiry or interpretation. This feature is especially highlighted in 1 En. where the authorized revelations given to Enoch are contrasted with the illicit mysteries of the watchers (8:3; 16:3). Interpretation is also required in 3 Bar. as Baruch is shown the mysteries of God via a heavenly journey. Each journey explores further into God’s

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<sup>104</sup>Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 37–38.

<sup>105</sup>This connection between the Messiah and mystery is particularly important since Paul will identify the revelation of Jesus Christ as a mystery (Rom 16:25–27).

<sup>106</sup>Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 38.



mysteries (5:3) until Baruch gains understanding and can disclose them to humanity (17:1). Finally, these mysteries are eschatological pertaining to the redemption of God's people, the judgment of the wicked, and the restoration of the earth. Significantly, past events or historical figures are reimagined as prefigurations of eschatological realities. In this way, hope of eschatological deliverance is offered to God's people in light of their current plight.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that mystery in the OT and Second Temple literature is apocalyptic reflecting a "once hidden, now revealed" schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God's hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. This technical use of the term is evident in the book of Daniel as God's mysteries reveal the coming kingdom, the eschatological judgment of the wicked, and the redemption of the righteous. Whether a mystery was concealed in a dream, a vision, or the Scripture, each was revealed by means of a two-fold formula consisting of a symbol and interpretation. In this way, the interpretation of the mystery reorients the symbolic revelation to be applied in a new historical situation (e.g., Dan 9:20–27).

This apocalyptic mystery schema is also prominent with the DSS. In these writings, the mysteries of God are mediated through the Teacher of Righteousness who reveals the eschatological wisdom of God concealed in the cosmos, history, and Scripture. Consistently it was found that God's acts in the past are recapitulated in the present, giving insight to the future (1Q27 1 I, 3–4). In this way, the one who devotes himself to God's mysteries will gain wisdom and understand his eschatological destiny. Similarly, the mysteries in the Pseudepigrapha were unveiled through apocalyptic revelation. However, these mysteries were mediated through dreams, angelic intermediaries, and heavenly journeys. By reimagining past events and historical figures, the mysteries were prefigurations of eschatological realities. As such, the unveiling of

God's mysteries gave hope to God's people in light of their present crisis.

Having recognized a consistent Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, the foundation is laid to compare it with Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in Romans. If Paul employs a similar mystery schema, new insight may be gained to understand God's mysterious plan for the salvation of "all Israel" (Rom 11:25–27). To this end, the following chapter will consist of a comparative analysis identifying the continuities and discontinuities of the Pauline mystery within a Jewish apocalyptic context. It will then be demonstrated that a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema undergirds Paul's mystery motif in Romans. For Paul, the mystery concerns the hidden wisdom of God's redemptive plan revealed through the advent of Christ (1:16–17; 16:25–27). As a mystery itself, the death and resurrection of Christ serves as the paradigm for how God's covenantal promises to Israel are being fulfilled.

CHAPTER 3  
THE MYSTERY SCHEMA OF ROMANS

**Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a survey of mystery in the OT and Second Temple literature. While this literature is diverse in its genre, purpose, and context, it revealed a consistent apocalyptic conception of mystery. It reflected a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. As Matthew Goff conveys, mystery “denotes knowledge of God’s wisdom, a comprehensive, deterministic divine scheme, which guides the unfolding of history and creation.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, devotion to the divine mysteries avails knowledge of God’s unfolding pattern of redemption in history, producing hope that God’s covenantal promises to Israel would be realized.

As a Jew himself, the apostle Paul also longed for the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to Israel (Rom 1:1–4; 9:4–5; 10:1; 11:1–2; cf. Acts 26:6). Expressing this hope in Romans, Paul uses the term mystery (*μυστήριον*) to explain how these promises find their fulfillment in Christ (11:25; 16:25). However, the question remains, was he indebted to the Jewish apocalyptic schema or did he adopt the concept from the Greco-Roman mystery cults? In this chapter, I contend that the Pauline mystery in Romans has the greatest continuity with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, revealing the hidden wisdom of God’s redemptive plans in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew J. Goff, “Heavenly Mysteries and Otherworldly Journeys: Interpreting 1 and 2 Corinthians in Relation to Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 136.

To demonstrate this assertion, I will first show that significant discontinuities exist between the Pauline mystery and the mystery religions. These differences make it highly unlikely that the cults were the driving impetus behind Paul's use of the term. Working from Romans 16:25–27, I will then conduct a comparative analysis between the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema and the Pauline mystery of Romans. According to Paul, the death and resurrection of Christ serves as the *paradigm* for understanding God's unfolding redemptive purposes in history and the creation. In conclusion, I will draw out how the Pauline mystery provides an illuminating framework for interpreting the mystery of God's redemptive plan to save "all Israel" in Romans 9–11.

### **Discontinuities with the Mystery Cults**

Any attempt at providing an overview of the Greco-Roman mystery cults is ambitious and must acknowledge the severe limitations of such an endeavor.<sup>2</sup> By nature, the mystery religions were secretive and thus prevent an exhaustive systematizing of their beliefs. Furthermore, what is known is dependent upon second-hand knowledge, much of which is after the first century. As a result, scholars are forced to rely on works of art, letters, and other inscriptions in order to decipher a coherent picture. Even then one only has a portrayal of a mystery religion as it pertains to a particular locale or region. As Wedderburn has convincingly argued, the mystery cults were widespread and had no standard theology in the first century.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, any substantive treatment of the mystery cults is ultimately speculative. Nevertheless, what is known about the more prominent cults in the Greco-Roman culture is significantly different from the Pauline

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<sup>2</sup>For an overview of the Greco-Roman mystery cults, see Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978); Marvin W. Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries: A Source Book* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against Its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 90–163; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 139–48.

mystery.<sup>4</sup>

For starters, the mystery religions purposely sought to maintain secrecy. Distinct from the official Greco-Roman religions—whereby public worship was expressed to the local gods of the state—engagement in a mystery cult was largely a private matter. These cults, “were secret religious groups composed of individuals who decided, through personal choice, to be initiated into the profound realities of one deity or another.”<sup>5</sup> Paul, on the other hand, aims to make the mystery known to all people through public proclamation (1:5; 1:13–15; 10:13–17; 15:18–21; 16:25–26). Second, the content of the mysteries is distinct in nature. The pagan mysteries did not aim to dispense knowledge, but primarily an experience with the divine.<sup>6</sup> Often parallels are cited perceiving that just as initiates of the Eleusinian mysteries experienced a ceremonial rite of death and resurrection, so Pauline Christianity does the same with the rite of baptism (Rom 6:1–4).<sup>7</sup> However, such a comparison is overly simplistic, confusing conceptual

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<sup>4</sup>The most prominent cults in the Greco-Roman culture were the mysteries of Eleusinian, Andanian, and the Dionysus. Meyer describes the Eleusinian mysteries saying, “The most prominent of the Greek mysteries, were observed at Eleusis, near Athens. The Eleusinian mysteries incorporated rituals like those of the old agricultural religion of Eleusis, which commemorated the life cycle and the transformation of grain, but the Eleusinian mysteries applied these agricultural interests to the life cycle and transformation of people. The sacred mythic account (*hieros logos*) used in the Eleusinian mysteries most likely rehearsed the dramatic story of Demeter, the Grain Mother, and her dying and rising daughter Kore, the Maiden.” Marvin W. Meyer, “Mysteries,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 721–22.

The Andanian mysteries were celebrated at Andania in southwest Peloponnesus. These mysteries were devoted to Demeter, Hermes, Apollo Karneios, Hagna, and the Great Gods. These mysteries were governed by a document called “The Rule of the Andanian Mysteries.” However, the secret rites of initiation are cryptic preventing any understanding of their practice. *Ibid.*, 722.

Unlike other cults, the Dionysus mysteries spread throughout the Roman Empire. Dionysus was the son of Zeus and it was believed that he imparted knowledge of sexuality, wine, and food. The combination of these three resulted in such debauchery that even the Roman senate adopted restrictions on its practices. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries*, 4.

<sup>6</sup>See Aristotle’s comments as recorded by Synesius (*Dio 7*), “Men being initiated have not a lesson to learn, but an experience to undergo and a condition into which they must be brought, while they are becoming fit (for revelation).” Augustine Fitzgerald, trans., *The Letters of Synesius of Cyrene* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

<sup>7</sup>Meyer makes this association, “For Paul and other early Christians, baptism could be understood as a death experience that anticipated the experience of resurrection and new life . . . . Early Christian believers also shared in a sacred meal, the Eucharist, with the elements bread and wine linked to the death of Christ. Thus early Christians could articulate their salvation to be an experience of dying and

parallels with actual connections.<sup>8</sup> Again Wedderburn's conclusions prove helpful:

We must not forget that the mysteries were only a part, albeit an important and influential one, of Graeco-Roman religion. Even the cults that had mysteries usually also had public rites too. Moreover some patterns which we can detect in the mysteries, like that of initiation viewed as a dying and coming to life again, were not peculiar to them, but were more widespread both in Graeco-Roman religion and in rites of passage in other settings and other ages . . . . Dying and coming to life again may be a widespread idea, then, but not dying and rising with the past death and resurrection of a deity. Even if many (but not all) of the mysteries did worship a hero or deity who was thought to have died and to have come to life again in some form or other, we have found no evidence that the initiates in any of their rites believed that in their initiations they were experiencing in themselves the death and resurrection of their deity, let alone that this idea was common to all or many of them.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Paul never uses *μυστήριον* when referring to the rites of baptism or the Lord's Supper. Rather, mystery is always concerned with revealed knowledge (Rom 11:25; 16:25–27; 1 Cor 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9, 16). This conception of *μυστήριον* finds continuity with the OT mysteries in Daniel and those of Second Temple Judaism over against the mystery religions.

There is a third distinction between the Pauline mystery and the cults. Mystery in Paul entails a temporal component, revealing particular aspects of redemptive history.<sup>10</sup> In this case, the Pauline mystery reveals the breaking-in of the eschatological

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rising with Christ . . . . Paul's discussion of the Christian mystery of dying and rising involves a comparison, calling to mind the Eleusinian mysteries, with the planting and sprouting of seed (1 Cor 15:36–38).” Meyer, “Mysteries,” 723–24. Similar arguments were put forth by the History of Religion school, see Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970); Percy Gardner, *The Religious Experience of Saint Paul* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911); Alfred Loisy, *Les Mystères Païens et Le Mystère Chrétien* (Paris: Nourry, 1914).

<sup>8</sup>Wright correctly states, “There are some parallels between these movements [Greco-Roman Mysteries] and the one that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, with its own regulated community. Parallels, but probably not actual links. Parallel circumstances produce similar results without any borrowing necessarily taking place. Something similar could be said about the message of Paul, which generated a new form of association, claiming a transformed life in the present and a transformed hope for the future. The differences remain striking, though the similarities are not to be underestimated.” N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 264.

<sup>9</sup>Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 294.

<sup>10</sup>Rightly, G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 312.

deliverance of God through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom 1:16–17; 3:21). This salvation was hidden in ages past—even among the believing community—but now in the present age has been revealed (16:25–26). This age of eschatological revelation is equivalent to the “latter days” anticipated by Daniel and Second Temple literature (Dan 2:28; 12:4; 1QpHab 7:1; *Apoc. Ab.* 23:2; 4 *Ezra* 7:84, 95; 14:22). The Greco-Roman mystery religions do not share this temporal component, but rather focus on personal experience and ritual.

While these discontinuities strongly discourage seeing any Pauline dependence upon the mystery cults, one should not dismiss the possibility of any relationship existing among them. The mystery religions were wide-spread, even in the first century AD, and flourished in the Hellenistic world in which early Christians found themselves.<sup>11</sup> Paul would hardly be unaware of these pagan cults and certainly would have come in contact with individuals under their influence during his missionary journeys. Therefore, it is within the realm of possibility that Paul employed the mystery motif as a subtle polemic.<sup>12</sup> For instance, the Pauline mystery may maintain Semitic origins consistent with Jewish apocalypticism, while playing off the Greco-Roman conception of mystery.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Paul could contrast the pagan mysteries with God’s true mysteries. Whatever the case, it is beyond the scope of this study to trace down this possible connection. However, what can be affirmed is that even if a subtle relationship with the Greek mysteries exists, the Pauline mystery finds the greatest continuity within a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema.

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<sup>11</sup>Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 98–113.

<sup>12</sup>Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 316–18.

<sup>13</sup>Harvey seems to follow this reasoning when he states, “It may not be correct to seek to decide whether a word has this sense or that. It may carry something of both. Even if all the instances of *μυστήριον* can be explained in term of *raz*, it does not follow that the writer did not intend, and the reader did not pick up, some echo of the Greek mystery metaphor.” A. E. Harvey, “The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 31, no. 2 (1980): 331.

### Mystery Schema of Romans 16:25–27

The doxology of Romans 16:25–27 serves as a fitting conclusion to the letter. However, since the majority of scholars view it as a late addition, attention must be given to its authenticity.<sup>14</sup> First, it must be acknowledged that 16:25–27 has a complicated textual history. Among some of the Western witnesses the verses are omitted all together (F, G, 629, Heir<sup>mss</sup>); while in other manuscript traditions it appears in different locations.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, various attempts have been made to explain the different manuscript traditions. For instance, Lake suggested that Romans was first written as a circular letter consisting of chapters 1–14; whereas chapters 15–16 were only added when it was sent to Rome.<sup>16</sup> However, this theory is unlikely, since it doesn't account for the close relationship between chapters 14 and 15. As others have noted, it doesn't appear that chapter 14 ever existed apart from the beginning of 15.<sup>17</sup> Lightfoot argued that chapters 1–16 were original to Romans, but that chapters 15–16 were deleted to form a circular letter.<sup>18</sup> Yet, Lightfoot's theory suffers from the same problem of adequately explaining the sharp break between chapters 14 and 15. To this end, Manson suggests that chapters 1–15 consisted of the letter to the Romans; whereas chapter 16 was added to

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<sup>14</sup>The majority of scholars question the authenticity of vv. 25–27 considering it a late addition, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 808–9; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 262; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 462; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 912; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 753; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 998–1003; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 422.

<sup>15</sup>The doxology appears only after 14:23 in Ψ 0209<sup>vid</sup> ℳ<sup>vid</sup> sy<sup>h</sup>; Or<sup>lat mss</sup>, only after 15:23 in P<sup>46</sup>, found after 14:23 and 15:23 in 1506, and after 14:23 and 16:23 in A P 33. 104. 2805 *pc*.

<sup>16</sup>Kirsopp Lake, "The Epistle to the Romans," in *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Rivingtons, 1914), 324–413.

<sup>17</sup>Rightly, William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), xci; Harry Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism*, Studies and Documents 42 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 84; D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 400.

<sup>18</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, "The Structure and Destination of the Epistle to the Romans," in *Biblical Essays* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 287–320.



be sent to Ephesus.<sup>19</sup> Yet, Manson’s proposal has no textual support for a full fifteen-chapter version of Romans. Perhaps the best explanation for the varied textual traditions is the Marcion theory that he cut off the last two chapters because of his disdain for the OT citations in chapter 15.<sup>20</sup>

Second, some contend that the content of the doxology is non-Pauline (i.e., *μυστηρίου; χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου; γραφῶν προφητικῶν; and τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ*) resembling the language of the so-called post-Pauline letters of Ephesians and the Pastorals.<sup>21</sup> However, these parallels may actually point to the authenticity of these verses and the Pauline authorship of those letters.<sup>22</sup> For instance the paranesis of Romans 12–15 has remarkable parallels with those in Ephesian 4–5 and Colossians 3.<sup>23</sup> Also, Paul’s use of *μυστήριον* in Romans 16:25 is not vastly different than its occurrence in 11:25, highlighting the inclusion of the Gentiles (cf. Eph 3:5–6; Col 3:26–27).<sup>24</sup>

Third, some have noted how the doxology is unique compared to the other Pauline epistles. Yet, this is not enough reason to doubt its authenticity, because there are

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<sup>19</sup>W. T. Manson, “St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans—and Others,” in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3–15.

<sup>20</sup>Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 400.

<sup>21</sup>See J. K. Elliott, “The Language and Style of the Concluding Doxology to the Epistle to the Romans,” *ZNW* 72 (1981): 124–30; Barrett, *Romans*, 262; Jewett, *Romans*, 999; T. J. Lang, *Mystery and the Making of a Christian Historical Consciousness: From Paul to the Second Century* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 110–14.

<sup>22</sup>Rightly Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 952n341.

<sup>23</sup>These parallels include: (1) a call to live in light of God’s mercy in Christ (Rom 12:1–2; Eph 4:1–5; Col 3:1–4); (2) a call to properly use God’s gifts of grace (Rom 12:3–8; Eph 3:7–16); (3) a call to put on love (Rom 12:9–21; 13:8–10; Eph 5:1–2; Col 3:12–15); (4) a call to put off evil (Rom 12:9, 21; 13:11–14; Eph 4:17–22; 5:3–16; Col 3:5–9); (5) a call to put on Christ and be renewed in the mind (Rom 12:1–2; Eph 4:23–32; 6:10–18; Col 3:10–16); (6) a call to unity and mutual submission (Rom 14–15; Eph 5:21–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1).

<sup>24</sup>Contra Lang, *Mystery*, 67, 69–109. I will show the continuities between Romans 16:25 and 11:25 in the next chapter. For an exhaustive treatment of Paul’s use of mystery in 1 Corinthians, see Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

several unique features to this letter.<sup>25</sup> Besides, the doxology includes central themes found in the introduction (1:1–7), providing an *inclusio* for the entire letter.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, it even finds numerous continuities with Romans 15, which raises serious doubts that it was a late addition.<sup>27</sup> Beyond all this, there remains strong external evidence which supports its position at the end of the letter (P<sup>61</sup>, s, A, B, C, D, 81, 365, 630, 1739, 2464, *al*, a, b, vg, sy<sup>p</sup>, co, Or<sup>lat mss</sup>, Ambst).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, while there are weighty difficulties to consider, the challenges to the integrity of 16:25–27 are not substantial enough to overturn the view that they are original to Paul.<sup>29</sup>

By recognizing the veracity of 16:25–27, the doxology serves as a suitable summation of the prominent themes of Paul’s gospel.<sup>30</sup> In this way, Paul characterizes his gospel and the contents of the letter as an apocalyptic mystery concerning Jesus Christ (v. 26). Furthermore, even a cursory examination of the Pauline mystery in verses 25–27 reveals striking similarities with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema. Particularly, it shares the characteristics of (1) hiddenness, (2) interpretation, and (3) eschatology.

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<sup>25</sup>Contra Gamble, *The Textual History*, 123.

<sup>26</sup>Rightly Larry W. Hurtado, “The Doxology at the End of Romans,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honor of Bruce M. Metzger*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1981), 185–99; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 432–36; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 262–68.

<sup>27</sup>Hurtado, “The Doxology at the End of Romans,” 197–98. See also Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1994), 141–44.

<sup>28</sup>For this reason, the NA<sup>28</sup> includes these verses in the traditional place at the end of the epistle. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 476.

<sup>29</sup>Rightly Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 587; Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1085–86; Moo, *Romans*, 952–53n341; Eckhard Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*, vol. 2, *Historisch Theologische Auslegung* (Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2016), 925–28; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 244–46; Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 215–30; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 784–85.

<sup>30</sup>Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 222–30.

While many have noticed these parallels, not all agree on what exactly the mystery entails. Some contend that the mystery is merely the content of the gospel, excluding the call of the Gentiles;<sup>31</sup> whereas others understand the gospel of Christ as fundamental to the mystery, but with clear implications for the salvation of the Gentiles.<sup>32</sup> This latter view is on target rightly perceiving the relationship between Paul's gospel and the obedience of faith among the nations; however, not enough consideration has been given to the function of mystery in disclosing God's actual *plan* of salvation in Christ for the nations. To this end, Beale and Gladd suggest that the mystery of Romans concerns "the order in which people groups participate in the end-time kingdom."<sup>33</sup> Specifically, the Roman mystery reveals a "Gentile first, then Israel order of restoration" hidden in Deuteronomy 29–30.<sup>34</sup>

Beale and Gladd have proposed an intriguing thesis, rightly emphasizing that the mystery reveals God's unfolding plan of redemption for the nations. Yet, by narrowly defining the mystery of Romans as the reversal of the "Jew first, then Gentile" pattern of salvation (1:16) they have effectively deemphasized the central component of the mystery: the Christ event. It is this apocalyptic revelation which serves as the *paradigm* for discerning God's redemptive plan for the nations (including Israel) and the creation. This conception of the Pauline mystery in Romans is substantiated as the characteristics of hiddenness, interpretation, and eschatology are explored in 16:25–27.

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<sup>31</sup>Joseph Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and Its Parallels at Qumran," in *Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis*, ed. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 142–43.

<sup>32</sup>Raymond E. Brown, *Mystery in the New Testament: The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the NT* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 51–52; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 917; Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 207–8; Barrett, *Romans*, 262; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 755; Byrne, *Romans*, 462–63; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:810; Kruse, *Romans*, 589; Schreiner, *Romans*, 786.

<sup>33</sup>Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 84.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

## Mystery as Hidden Revelation

In the closing doxology, Paul highlights God’s ability to “strengthen” the saints in Rome in accordance (*κατά*) with his gospel, the “proclamation (*κήρυγμα*) of Jesus Christ” (v. 25a).<sup>35</sup> Paul further identifies his gospel to be in accordance (*κατά*) with “the revelation (*ἀποκάλυψιν*) of the mystery (*μυστηρίου*) hidden for long ages past.” In doing so, he equates the gospel of Christ with mystery. He views the advent of Christ as an apocalyptic event whereby God’s hidden wisdom is “now manifested” (*φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν*, v. 26a).<sup>36</sup> Therefore, like some of his Jewish contemporaries, Paul perceives that the full meaning of Scripture was sealed up until it’s proper time (e.g., Dan 12:4, 9; Isa 29:11–12; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:11). However, Paul believes that the time has now arrived in Christ, and God’s hidden redemptive plans have been unearthed from the OT Scripture.

The apocalyptic nature of Paul’s gospel is consistent with his own testimony where he states that he “did not receive it from men, nor was he taught it, but he received it through the revelation [*ἀποκαλύψεως*] of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:12). It was on the Damascus road that Paul saw the risen Christ and the gospel was disclosed to him (Acts 9:3–19). Consequently, Paul’s worldview was “shaped by mediated knowledge of a hidden reality . . . that is ultimately attributed to God as the source.”<sup>37</sup> This revelation of Christ reoriented his outlook on life; how he reads the Jewish Scriptures, perceives the people of God, understands sin, and comprehends the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. These things and more were completely recalibrated around the person and work

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<sup>35</sup>The *καί* in v. 25 is expegetical. See Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 914; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Röm 6–11*, vol. 2, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Zurich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 149; Schreiner, *Romans*, 785.

<sup>36</sup>As with Dan 2, Paul maintains a relationship between mystery and God’s wisdom (Rom 16:27; cf. 11:33–35). In Dan, God’s hidden wisdom concerns the establishment and removal of four successive kingdoms (vv. 39–43) before the founding of God’s eternal kingdom (v. 44). Here in Rom, Paul now understands God’s hidden wisdom for establishing his eternal kingdom to be revealed in Christ. That Paul relates mystery and wisdom further suggests that the Christ event reveals the pattern of events associated with God’s kingdom purposes.

<sup>37</sup>Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Some Reflections on Apocalyptic Thought and Time in Literature from the Second Temple Period,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 140–41.

of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Paul can characterize his gospel as an apocalyptic mystery whereby God “revealed” (ἀποκαλύψαι) Christ to him (cf. Gal 1:16). As Bird aptly states,

Even when Paul became a Christ-believer, he remained entrenched in Jewish apocalypticism and believed that, through the invasion of the gospel, God had brought about the long-awaited climax to Israel’s history, and through this climax, God is recapturing the world for himself.<sup>38</sup>

This apocalyptic worldview appears throughout Romans as Paul employs the motifs of two ages (8:18; 12:2; 16:25–26), spatial and ethical dualism (5:17–21; 6:12–14, 20–23; 7:5–6; 8:38–39), determinism (8:28–30; 9:6–24), pessimism of the present world (1:18–2:16; 3:9–18), a future new creation (8:18–25), and the coming of the Christ (1:3; 11:26–27).<sup>39</sup> For Paul, the apocalyptic announcement of what God has done in Christ has been revealed in the preaching of the gospel, a “mystery hidden for long ages past” (16:25).

Therefore, if Romans is Paul’s explanation of the gospel, then the letter itself is an unveiling of the hidden mystery of Christ. This identification between the gospel and mystery is confirmed by the various parallels between 16:25–27 and 1:1–17. The first parallel is seen in the opening of the letter where Paul states that his gospel “concerns [God’s] son . . . Jesus Christ our Lord” (vv. 3–4; cf. 16:25). While in these opening verses Paul does not specifically identify the gospel as an apocalyptic mystery, apocalyptic themes remain.<sup>40</sup> For example, he employs the flesh-Spirit antithesis, a common theme in Paul, signaling a contrast in ages (Rom 7:5–6; 8:2–3; Gal 3:3; 4:29; 5:16–18, 19–24; 6:8).<sup>41</sup> When God sent his Son to earth, Jesus lived as the descendent of

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<sup>38</sup>Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 166.

<sup>39</sup>For a helpful overview of apocalyptic themes in Paul see Frederick J. Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 307–54. See also E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 124–31; N. T. Wright, *The Paul Debate* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 41–64; James H. Charlesworth, “Paul, the Jewish Apocalypses, and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 83–105.

<sup>40</sup>Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 328–29.

<sup>41</sup>See Schreiner who rightly remarks, “It is probable that the flesh-Spirit antithesis should be

David according to the flesh. That is, he lived in the old age under the powers of the law, sin, and death (5:12–13; 6:12–14; 8:1–4). However, when he was raised, he was appointed (ὀρισθέντος) the messianic king in power by the Spirit inaugurating the new age.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Paul’s gospel concerns this apocalyptic event where Christ has defeated the powers of the present age and ushered in those of the new age (5:18–21).

Second, as Paul stated in 16:26, the gospel is for “all nations . . . to bring about the obedience of faith;” so also in 1:5, Paul says he’s been set apart for the gospel “for the obedience of faith among all the nations.” A third parallel is found in 1:11 where Paul expresses his longing to preach the gospel in order to strengthen (στηρίζω) the believers in Rome (cf. 16:25). Finally, the apocalyptic tones of Paul’s gospel ring clear in 1:16–17 stating that in the gospel “the righteousness of God is revealed (ἀποκαλύπτεται, v. 17).”<sup>43</sup> Since the gospel is the revelation of a hidden mystery (16:25), whatever is meant by “the righteousness of God” was not fully known prior to the advent of Christ. Therefore, it is necessary to explore in what sense the “righteousness of God” was a mystery “hidden for long ages past . . . but now revealed” in the gospel (16:25–26).

**The saving righteousness of God.** How one understands the “righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ)” is hotly debated and a full treatment of the phrase is certainly beyond the scope of this project.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, it is necessary to devote some space to

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interpreted in redemptive historical terms, the former being the product of the old age and the latter a gift of the new age inaugurated by Jesus Christ.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 47. See also Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 64–68; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 559–650.

<sup>42</sup>Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:65; Käsemann, *Romans*, 12; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 15–16; Byrne, *Romans*, 45; Jewett, *Romans*, 99; Schreiner, *Romans*, 46.

<sup>43</sup>The word, ἀποκαλύπτεται, is a progressive present signifying that it is through the ongoing proclamation of the gospel that the righteousness of God is being revealed. Furthermore, the passive form is a divine passive denoting that it is God’s righteousness which is in view. Rightly, Schreiner, *Romans*, 66.

<sup>44</sup>For a helpful survey of this phrase, see Peter Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus*, FRLANT 82 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 11–73; George E. Ladd, “Righteousness in Romans,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (1976): 6–17; Sam K. Williams,

explain how I understand Paul’s use of the phrase. In 1:16–17, Paul begins by stating that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation” (v. 16). He goes on to explain that the basis (γὰρ) upon which the gospel has saving power is that “in it the righteousness of God is revealed (ἀποκαλύπτεται)” (v. 17). Paul’s use of ἀποκαλύπτω signals an eschatological event which has invaded history (Rom 1:18; 8:18; Gal 3:23).<sup>45</sup> Therefore, broadly speaking, “the righteousness of God” must in some sense refer to God’s eschatological act of salvation which has invaded the present.<sup>46</sup>

In the OT, the righteousness of God often refers to God’s acts of deliverance on behalf of his people (Judg 5:11; 1 Sam 12:7; Ps 143:1–3; Isa 51:5–8; Jer 22:3; Mic 6:5).<sup>47</sup> This usage is found in Daniel 9 where Daniel seeks the Lord for deliverance from

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“The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 2 (1980): 241–90; Marion L. Soards, “The Righteousness of God in the Writings of the Apostle Paul,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15, no. 3 (1985): 104–9; Hellmut Brunner, “Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes,” *Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte* 39, no. 3 (1987): 210–25; Richard K. Moore, “Issues Involved in the Interpretation of Dikaiosynē Theou in the Pauline Corpus,” *Colloquium* 23, no. 2 (1991): 59–70; Karen L. Onesti and T. Brauch Manfred, “Righteousness, Righteousness of God,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 827–37; Longenecker, *Romans*, 168–76; Michael F. Bird, *Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2007), 6–39; Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 9–60; Mark A. Seifrid, “Paul’s Use of Righteousness Language Against Its Hellenistic Background,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 39–74; Moo, *Romans*, 82–100.

<sup>45</sup>As Käsemann explains, “[Paul] does not understand history as a continuous evolutionary process but as the contrast of the two realms of Adam and Christ. Pauline theology unfolds this contrast extensively as the struggle between death and life, sin and salvation, law and gospel. The basis is the apocalyptic scheme of the two successive aeons which is transferred to the present. Apparently Paul viewed his own time as the hour of the Messiah’s birth-pangs, in which the new creation emerges from the old world through the Christian proclamation. Spirits, powers and dominions part eschatologically at the crossroads of the gospel. We thus arrive at the dialectic of ‘once’ and ‘now,’ which absorbed into anthropology in the form of ‘already saved’ and ‘still tempted.’ In the antithesis of spirit and flesh this dialectic determines the cosmos until the Parousia of Christ.” Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 67. See also Albrecht Oepke, “Ἀποκαλύπτω, Ἀποκάλυψις,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 583; Käsemann, *Romans*, 30; Douglas A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 2 (1994): 275–77; Jonathan A. Linebaugh, “Righteousness Revealed,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 229–30; Schreiner, *Romans*, 66.

<sup>46</sup>While I identify God’s righteousness as a saving activity, this is not to deny its forensic nature. As Bird notes, righteousness has a “forensic-eschatological force” associated with it (Bird, *Saving Righteousness of God*, 39). See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 203–5.

<sup>47</sup>Rightly Schreiner, *Paul*, 197–98; Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000),

Babylonian captivity. In his prayer, Daniel asks God to respond “according to all [his] righteous acts” (v. 16). As I argued in chapter 2, Daniel’s prayer is answered via the angel Gabriel who interprets the mystery of Israel’s seventy years of captivity (Jer 25:11–12). Daniel learns that in accordance with God’s previous “acts of righteousness” there will be an eschatological act of God “to finish the transgression,” “put an end to sin,” “atone for iniquity,” “bring in everlasting righteousness,” “seal both vision and prophecy” and “anoint a most holy” (Dan 9:24).

Again, the relationship between God’s righteousness and the salvation of his people is vividly portrayed in Psalm 97:1–3 (LXX):

Sing to the Lord a new song, because the Lord did wonderful things. His right hand and his holy arm have saved for himself. The Lord made known his salvation before the nations. He disclosed his righteousness [ἀπεκάλυψεν τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ]. He remembered his mercy [ἐλέους] to Jacob and his truthfulness [ἀληθείας] to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation [σωτήριον] of our God.

Here the disclosure of God’s righteousness is an act of salvation, whereby he will deliver his people from their enemies. This definitive act is something that even “all the ends of the earth” will see (v. 3). Not only will the whole earth witness the salvation of God, but they will rejoice “because he comes to judge the earth . . . in righteousness” (v. 9).

Therefore, in the context of Psalm 97, God’s righteousness is saving on behalf of the entire earth.

However, a number of scholars understand God’s righteousness as “covenant faithfulness.”<sup>48</sup> These scholars are correct to see that God’s righteousness is in relationship to his covenant with Israel, for even in Psalm 97 God’s righteousness is

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37–45; Bird, *Saving Righteousness of God*, 35–39.

<sup>48</sup>Hermann Cremer, *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhange ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloch, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1900), 23; Richard B. Hays, “Psalm 143 and the Logic of Romans 3,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 1 (1980): 107–15; Käsemann, *Romans*, 79; Williams, “Righteousness of God”; R. David Kaylor, *Paul’s Covenant Community: Jew and Gentile in Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 30–31; Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 53; Stephen Westerholm, *Preface to the Study of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 9–19, 41–49; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 340–46; Jewett, *Romans*, 247; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 795–804.



connected to his covenant mercy and faithfulness (v. 3). Yet, it's quite another thing to say, "the righteousness of God *is* covenant faithfulness." As Schreiner aptly states,

Surely God's righteousness expresses his faithfulness to his covenant, and yet this is not the same thing as saying that God's righteousness *is his faithfulness to the covenant*. God's righteousness surely fulfills his covenantal promises, but it does not follow from this that we should define righteousness as covenantal faithfulness.<sup>49</sup>

Looking again at Psalm 97, God's saving act of righteousness is said to be "for himself" (v. 2). In other words, in God's righteousness he will decisively act to vindicate his name and bring salvation to his people. And this salvation will be seen in all the earth (v. 3). Seifrid notes the creational context of God's judging righteousness (vv. 3, 4, 7–9): "The fidelity which God displays toward Israel is only one manifestation of the saving righteousness which he exercises as ruler of all."<sup>50</sup>

The same idea is conveyed in Isaiah 11:3–5, where God's righteous ruler arrives to save Israel:

And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

As Isaiah recounts, God's saving acts for the poor and the meek correspond with his retribution against the wicked (v. 4). The tension between these two is resolved in the act itself whereby God sets the world right, while at the same time mercifully saves.<sup>51</sup>

Returning to Roman 1:16–17, the righteousness of God is also concerned with salvation for his people. As Paul affirms, the gospel "is the power of God for salvation

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<sup>49</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 199. See also Irons who provides an exegetical analysis of key Pauline passages (Rom 3:1–8, 21–26; 2 Cor 5:21) used to support the thesis that "the righteousness of God" means "God's covenant faithfulness." He concludes that there is no internal evidence to support taking *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* to mean God's covenant faithfulness. Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 273–96.

<sup>50</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 40.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

for everyone who believes” (v. 16). Since this gospel is the proclamation of Christ (1:3–4; 15:19; 16:25), and in it the righteousness of God is revealed, then the righteousness of God is his saving act in Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom 4:24–25; 8:34; 10:9).<sup>52</sup>

It is precisely this act of God in the death and resurrection of Christ that constitutes the hidden mystery. Whereas in the OT, God’s righteousness is anticipated to be revealed before the eyes of the whole earth (Ps 97:3 [LXX]), Paul contends that the “righteousness of God” is temporarily hidden, only to be revealed in the gospel by faith (v. 17; cf. 16:26).<sup>53</sup> Therefore, only through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ can one see God’s salvation which has invaded the present time. In other words, through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, God’s end-time verdict of justification is pronounced (3:26; 4:25). His wise plan of redemption has been unveiled (16:27; cf. Dan 2:20–23).

Much of the Jewish literature merely viewed God’s mysteries in relation to the elect of Israel (Dan 7:18, 27; 9:16, 20–27; 1 En. 1:2, 7–8; T. Levi. 2:10; T. Jud 23:1–5; 4Q417 1 I 10–11; 4Q418 81 3; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:4–12; 1QpHab 7:1–8, 10–14; CD 3:12–20), yet the proclamation of the mystery of Christ is “for everyone who will believe” (1:16), both Jew and Gentile. While the OT anticipated the salvation of the nations (Gen 12:3; Isa 19:18–25; 49:6; Dan 7:14, 27), the means by which God would accomplish this was not readily apparent. However, in the gospel, God’s promises to bless the nations are fulfilled, so that salvation is provided for all people (1:16; cf. 1:5, 13; 3:29; 4:17–24; 9:24, 30; 11:11–13, 25; 15:9–12, 18, 27; 16:26). Therefore, at one level, the hidden mystery of the gospel is that God’s saving righteousness has come through the death and

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<sup>52</sup>Contra Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 296–311. Irons rejects any notion that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ refers to God’s saving activity. Rather, he merely understands it forensically as the gift of God’s righteousness. Irons wrongly sets these two ideas against each other. It is in the saving act of God through Christ’s death and resurrection that he has brought justification (i.e., the gift of righteousness) to his people. Therefore, the saving act of God in Christ results in God’s vindication over his enemies and believers are incorporated into this vindication through faith in Christ whereby they receive the end-time verdict of righteousness. In this way, the act of righteousness leads to justification for all who believe (Rom 5:18).

<sup>53</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 45. See also Käsemann who states, “The revelation of God’s righteousness . . . takes place always only in the sphere of faith.” Käsemann, *Romans*, 31.

resurrection of Christ for all peoples, being revealed by faith (1:16–17; 3:21–26). On another level, it reveals the paradigm of God’s redemptive plan: salvation comes through judgment.

**The retributive righteousness of God.** Not only does the gospel reveal God’s saving righteousness, but also his retributive righteousness.<sup>54</sup> Both of these elements converge in Romans 3:21–26.<sup>55</sup> Paul explains that “now (νυν) the righteousness of God has appeared apart from the law” (v. 21).<sup>56</sup> Paul’s use of νυν signals a new eschatological reality in light of the advent of Christ whereby God’s saving righteousness has been manifested.<sup>57</sup> Paul highlights the hidden character of this revelation when he states that God’s saving righteous was not made known in the law, but rather “through faith in

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<sup>54</sup>However, many deny any notion that God’s righteousness has a retributive component. See Werner G. Kümmel, “Paresis and Endeixis: A Contribution to the Understanding of the Pauline Doctrine of Justification,” *Journal for Theology and the Church* 3 (1967): 1–13; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3:21–26*, JSNTSup 65 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 156–76; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 601–714. Most who deny a retributive sense of God’s righteousness consider God’s saving righteousness as covenantal. Building this understanding of God’s righteousness from Romans 3:21–26, the phrase “πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ” (v. 22) is taken as a subjective genitive whereby God’s saving righteousness is manifested through Christ’s faithfulness. See Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 173–75; Campbell, *Rhetoric of Righteousness*, 58–69.

<sup>55</sup>Seifrid rightly notes how Romans 3:21–26 details a fuller expression of God’s righteousness mentioned in 1:17, where God’s saving righteousness implies also his retributive righteousness against his enemies (Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 65). See also C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1975), 208–18; John Piper, “The Demonstration of the Righteousness of God in Romans 3:25,26,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 7 (1980): 2–32; Simon J. Gathercole, “Justified by Faith,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 177–81; Benjamin J. Ribbens, “Forensic-Retributive Justification in Romans 3:21–26: Paul’s Doctrine of Justification in Dialogue with Hebrews,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2012): 548–67; Linebaugh, “Righteousness Revealed,” 227–30; Moo, *Romans*, 258–61; Schreiner, *Romans*, 203–7.

<sup>56</sup>Commenting on 3:21 Seifrid remarks, “Although Paul again recalls Psalm 98 . . . by repeating his announcement that the ‘righteousness of God has been manifested’, he now has in view a gift given to the human being, rather than an act of God” (Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 64). While I agree that 3:21ff teaches a forensic component to justification—Paul fleshes it out in vv. 22–24—it does not follow that he no longer has in view “an act of God.” It is precisely God’s act of righteousness in “putting forth Christ as a ἱλαστήριον, which serves as the grounds of God’s gracious justification of sinners by faith (v. 25).

<sup>57</sup>See Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:184; Käsemann, *Romans*, 92; Longenecker, *Romans*, 400; Schreiner, *Romans*, 188. Note also the intensive use of the perfect πεφάνερωται. The past event of Christ’s death and resurrection has ushered in a new state of reality.

Christ” (v. 22).<sup>58</sup> As a result of God’s saving activity in Christ, Paul asserts that sinners are justified by God’s grace (vv. 23–24a).

However, God’s graciousness in justifying sinners raises an implicit question. How can God remain just, if he forgives sinners? In verses 25–26, Paul answers this question by explaining how God’s saving righteousness has come through “the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) which is in Christ Jesus” (v. 24b).<sup>59</sup> Paul maintains that God upholds his justice by putting Christ forth as a ἱλαστήριον for sins.<sup>60</sup> Here in these verses

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<sup>58</sup>Many scholars now interpret πίστewς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as “Christ’s faithfulness” taking the genitive as subjective, see George E. Howard, “On the Faith of Christ,” *Harvard Theological Review* 60, no. 4 (1967): 459–65; George E. Howard, “Faith of Christ,” *The Expository Times* 85, no. 7 (1974): 212–14; Donald W. B. Robinson, “Faith of Jesus Christ: A New Testament Debate,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 29, no. 3 (1970): 71–81; Williams, “Righteousness of God,” 241–90; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 170–74; Luke Timothy Johnson, “Rom 3:21–26 and The Faith of Jesus,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (1982): 77–90; Douglas A. Campbell, “The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 57–72; Morna D. Hooker, “Another Look at Πίστις Χριστοῦ,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69, no. 1 (2016): 46–62; Longenecker, *Romans*, 409–13. Seifrid, however, opts to see the genitive construction as qualitative, whereby the “expression . . . describes Christ as the author and source of faith . . . . In this case, the genitive defines the unique character of faith as the work of God in Christ that creates us anew.” Mark A. Seifrid, “The Faith of Christ,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 129–46. Despite the attractiveness of Seifrid’s view, there remains good reasons for taking the genitive as objective, see James D. G. Dunn, “Once More, Pistis Christou,” in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, vol. 30 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991), 730–44; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:188; Byrne, *Romans*, 124–30; Eckhard Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 1–5*, vol. 1, Historisch Theologische Auslegung (Witten, Germany: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2016), 382–84; Moo, *Romans*, 243–46; Schreiner, *Romans*, 190–94.

<sup>59</sup>Scholars debate whether ἀπολύτρωσις carries the idea of “paying a price” or merely of “deliverance” without a price being paid. Schreiner rightly notes two reasons to see it as including the notion of ransom or paying a price in Romans 3:24. First, Paul states that sinners have been justified freely, namely they haven’t had to pay anything to receive God’s saving righteousness. This assumes that God paid the price on their behalf. Second, the sacrificial context indicates that the price was paid through the sacrifice of Christ. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 197–98.

<sup>60</sup>The amount of material written on Paul’s use of ἱλαστήριον is mammoth. Discussions abound on how it should be translated, either as “expiation,” see C. H. Dodd, “ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, its Cognates, Derivatives, and Synonyms, in the Septuagint,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1931): 352–60; Friedrich Büchsel and Herrmann Johannes, “Ἰλαστήριον,” in *TDNT*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 319–23; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 349–50; or “propitiation,” Leon Morris, “Meaning of Hilasterion in Romans 3:25,” *New Testament Studies* 2, no. 1 (1955): 33–43; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:215–16; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 186–93; Moo, *Romans*, 252–57; Schreiner, *Romans*, 198–203. While I leave the term untranslated, I prefer “propitiation” because of Paul’s emphasis in Romans 1–3 on God’s wrath abiding on sinful humanity. Beyond the issue of translation, there remains questions of interpretation namely whether ἱλαστήριον refers to: (1) the mercy seat, see Büchsel and Johannes, “Ἰλαστήριον,” 320–22; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:190–92; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 350; Daniel P. Bailey, “Jesus as the Mercy Seat: The Semantics and Theology of Paul’s Use of Hilasterion in Romans 3:25,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 51 (2000): 155–58.; (2) the means of propitiation, see Morris, “Meaning of Hilasterion,” 33–43; (3) propitiatory sacrifice, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:216–17; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 117; or (4) the martyr narratives of the Maccabees, see Jarvis J. Williams, *Christ Died for Our Sins: Representation and Substitution in Romans and Their Jewish Martyrological Background* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 116–30. I follow the

Paul shifts his use of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ to speak of a retributive or judging righteous centered on Christ as the redeeming ἱλαστήριον.<sup>61</sup> Paul employs three purpose statements, each signaled by the εἰς preposition to explain why God put Christ forth as the ἱλαστήριον satisfying his wrath. First was to demonstrate (ἔνδειξιν) his judging righteousness “because of the passing over (πάρεσιν) of previously committed sins in his forbearance” (v. 25b-26a).<sup>62</sup> Paul’s point is that in the past God did not fully punish sin, but was patient giving opportunity for repentance (2:4).<sup>63</sup> Therefore, God did not turn a blind eye to sin, rather “he could tolerate the sin of human beings only because he looked forward to the death of his Son as an atonement for sin.”<sup>64</sup> Second, and parallel to the first, God has also demonstrated his judging righteousness at the present time (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ)—the time of fulfillment—whereby he forgives sinners who trust in Christ (v. 26b). Finally, Paul concludes by asserting that both God’s judging righteousness and his saving righteousness are demonstrated in the Christ event (v. 26c). The cross reveals God’s retributive righteousness showing that he does not tolerate sin, even while redeeming sinners who place their faith in Jesus (Rom 3:21–26).

This interpretation is consistent with the revelation of God’s righteousness in Romans 1:16–18.<sup>65</sup> Here Paul establishes a logical connection between God’s saving

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traditional view which sees a cultic background for ἱλαστήριον correlating Christ’s death with the mercy seat and the Day of Atonement (cf. Heb 9:5).

<sup>61</sup>Rightly Ribbens, “Forensic-Retributive Justification,” 565–66.

<sup>62</sup>There is disagreement over the definitions of ἔνδειξις and πάρεσις. Against the traditional or Anselmic view, Kümmel contends that ἔνδειξις should be translated as “demonstration” or “showing” rather than proof; and that πάρεσις should be translated as “forgiveness,” “not passing over” (Kümmel, “Paresis and Endeixis,” 1–13). However, Piper has cogently demonstrated that even if Kümmel’s definitions are correct, the traditional view is not overthrown. See John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 140–47. The crux of the issue rests on how one understands the preposition διά before the accusative phrase τὴν πάρεσιν. While διά plus the accusative can be taken instrumentally, it’s rare. Therefore, the more common causal sense should not be rejected.

<sup>63</sup>Rightly Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 278; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 144; Schreiner, *Romans*, 206.

<sup>64</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 207.

<sup>65</sup>Commenting on this passage Bockmuehl states, “God’s revelation of His righteousness in

righteousness and his retributive righteousness by linking verses 17 and 18 with a causative γάρ.<sup>66</sup> As Schreiner aptly states, “The coming of the gospel reveals that the moral deterioration of human society is a result of God’s judgment.”<sup>67</sup> And this judgment is directly related to the breaking-in of the new age inaugurated by Christ.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, as Paul explains in 2:5 those who do not repent of their sin are “storing up wrath . . . on the day of wrath and the revelation (ἀποκαλύψεως) of the righteous judgment of God.” Through faith in the gospel—the revelation of the hidden mystery of God—one gains a true grasp on reality. All are “ungodly” and “unrighteous” (1:18; 3:9–20), everyone who does evil will be judged (2:10; 3:5–6), and shockingly for the Jew, the law will not be able to save them (2:17–25; 3:37–28).

Why is this the case? Because, as the gospel has revealed, all are under the dominion of sin (3:23). Thus, God’s righteous act of deliverance in the cross and resurrection of Christ is a deliverance from the powers of this age. In Romans 5, Paul explains that the whole world is under sin because sin came into the world through Adam (5:1). As a result, death spread to all humanity (5:1) and all who are united to Adam, both Jew and Gentile, are under the reign of death (v. 17) facing condemnation (v. 16, 18). However, the cross reveals God’s retributive righteousness by signally the eschatological defeat of his enemies: Satan, sin, and death (5:12–21; 6:7–14, 16, 20–23; 7:8–11; 8:38–39; 16:20).<sup>69</sup> As in the OT, God’s act of deliverance naturally includes the defeat of his

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Christ has now in our time (νυνί, 3:21) inaugurated the time of eschatological judgement and redemption, both of which are currently being disclosed in the proclamation of the gospel.” Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 141.

<sup>66</sup>Likely causal noting God’s eschatological wrath is imminent thus provided the need for God’s saving righteousness. Rightly Byrne, *Romans*, 65; Jewett, *Romans*, 151–52; Schreiner, *Romans*, 92.

<sup>67</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 92.

<sup>68</sup>Moo rightly states, “The inauguration of the last days means that the final, climatic wrath of God is already making itself felt.” Moo, *Romans*, 112–13.

<sup>69</sup>Martinus C. de Boer recognizes that Paul adapts the cosmological and forensic patterns of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology whereby “sin and death are no longer simply matters of human behavior or experience, but are also conceptualized as evil cosmological powers that oppress and victimize humans.” Martinus C. de Boer, “Apocalyptic as God’s Eschatological Activity in Paul’s Theology,” in *Paul and the*

enemies (Isa 11:3–5). The expectation was that God’s coming to redeem Israel and overthrow their enemies would occur in one climatic event (Gen 49:9–10; Num 24:1–24; Dan 7:13–27). Yet, what was unforeseen was that this act of righteousness would come in the death and resurrection of the Christ (3:21–22).

Furthermore, the gospel also reveals that the law is an instrument of death having been hijacked by sin (5:20; 7:8–11). On this basis, Paul can say, “the law brings wrath” (4:15). This revelation forced a radical reorientation toward the law (4:13–15; 10:4). As opposed to the Judaism of Paul’s day, attempts at keeping the law for righteousness are futile (cf. CD 3:12–20, 1QS 1:1–26; 4 *Ezra* 7:75–90). For Paul, the law could not remedy sin, rather it increased it (Rom 5:20). Sin’s grip upon humanity is so tight that encountering the law produces all kinds of sin (7:8). In this way, pursuing righteousness by means of the law would not bring life, but death (7:9–10). Consequently, “both Jews and Greeks are under sin” (3:9), “the whole world is guilty before God” (v. 19) and in enmity with him (5:10; 8:7–8).

Nevertheless, as the gospel reveals, God has triumphed over these cosmic powers through Christ. Paul specifically states, “one man’s righteous act (*δικαιώματος*) resulted in justification (*δικαίωσιν*) that leads to life for all humanity” (5:18). It is in light of the Christ event that “now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law” (3:21). Specifically, Christ’s atoning death “demonstrates God’s righteousness” at “the present time” (v. 25, 26).<sup>70</sup> In other words, God’s mysteries of redemption were sealed up—kept secret (16:25)—until the appointed time, namely the Christ event. Therefore, it is at the cross where the tension between God’s saving righteousness and his retributive righteousness are resolved. God simultaneously executes his righteous

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*Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 57.

<sup>70</sup>Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 133.

judgment upon sin and graciously saves sinners “who have faith in Christ” (3:26).<sup>71</sup>

As a result, those who are united to Christ in his death and resurrection are freed from sin, death, and the law (6:1–14; 7:4–6). As sin entered the world through Adam, so now righteousness reigns over sin (5:21; 6:12–13, 18). As death spread to humanity through sin, so life has come to all through righteousness (5:18, 21; 6:8–11, 20–23). Where sin abounded by hijacking the law (7:11), so grace abounded over sin (5:20).

**Conclusion.** The Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. Specifically, past events or historical figures were reimagined as prefigurations of eschatological realities. Here in Romans, Paul identifies the gospel as a mystery revealed which reorients one’s perspective of reality around the apocalyptic event of Christ (1:16–17; 16:25–27). Hidden in the OT were prefigurations of God’s righteousness, whereby he would decisively save his people and judge his enemies for the sake of his name. Yet now, through faith in Christ, these hidden realities have been made known (5:1–5). Through faith, God’s end-time verdict of justification has been announced in Christ. As a result, everyone who believes this gospel is declared righteous in him (3:22–24). In the same way, the defeat of the powers of the age is not something that can be ascertained by the senses; rather, it is by faith in Christ whereby one becomes privy to such heavenly realities (6:5–11; 7:4–6; 8:1–2, 24–25; 31–39).

Therefore, Paul’s perception of these heavenly realities and fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel are intricately bound up in the cross and resurrection of Jesus

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<sup>71</sup>Paul summarizes the revelation of God’s righteousness in Christ as both retributive (i.e., a just punishment for sin; 26a) and saving (i.e., granting righteousness to sinners; v. 26b). Rightly, Ribbens, “Forensic-Retributive Justification,” 566; Schreiner, *Romans*, 187–207.



Christ. And as a mystery, this event unveils the paradigm for discerning God’s unfolding redemptive plan among the nations—both Jew and Gentile—and the creation, namely salvation through judgment. Moreover, the gospel of Christ also serves as the paradigm for interpreting the OT Scripture.

### **Mystery as Interpreted Revelation**

In Romans, Paul contends that the proclamation of the gospel announces that the long-awaited promises of the OT have been fulfilled in the advent of Christ. Yet, at the same time he states that the hidden mystery of the gospel “is made known (*γνωρισθέντος*) through the prophetic Scriptures” (16:26). If the prophetic Scriptures refer to the OT, how can that which was produced in the age of silence now make known the mystery of Christ? Some who see 16:25–27 as a late addition contend that “the prophetic Scriptures” refer to Paul’s other writings or Christian Scriptures in general.<sup>72</sup> However, even if a later editor added this passage, it was written to mirror the introduction of the letter which states that the gospel was promised beforehand in the OT (1:2).<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, throughout Romans, the OT is referenced and alluded to in support of Paul’s explanation of the gospel (1:17; 3:4, 9–18; 4:1–12; 9:25–29, 33; 10:18–21; 11:1–10, 26–27; 14:11; 15:8–13).<sup>74</sup>

Others view the apocalyptic character of Paul’s gospel as an eschatological invasion, discontinuous with the OT promises and narrative.<sup>75</sup> However, this too is unsatisfactory since, again, Paul says his gospel was “promised beforehand” (1:2), “just

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<sup>72</sup>Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:150; Käsemann, *Romans*, 426; Byrne, *Romans*, 462.

<sup>73</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 787.

<sup>74</sup>Rightly Lang, though he sides with the majority of scholars by seeing the doxology as post-Pauline. Lang, *Mystery*, 115.

<sup>75</sup>Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul The Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 136; J. Louis Martyn, “The Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians,” *Interpretation* 54, no. 3 (2000): 246–66.

as it was written” (1:17) and “testified to” (3:21) in the OT. Though Paul realizes that he came to his Christian understanding of the gospel on the Damascus road, he maintains that what he discovers about Christ in the Scripture is really there. Thus, on the one hand, the gospel of Christ is rightly understood as the fulfillment of OT promises. While on the other hand, Paul maintains that aspects of this gospel were unforeseen, only to be revealed at the advent of Christ.<sup>76</sup> In this way, Paul can say that the mystery of Christ was hidden but now “made known through the prophetic writings” (16:26).<sup>77</sup> Therefore, Paul’s use of mystery is consistent with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema whereby initial revelation is encoded in symbol, requiring subsequent revelation. Yet, the subsequent revelation is not completely discontinuous with the initial revelation (see Dan 2:18, 27–28; 4:1–14; 9:20–27; 1QpHab 7:1–14; 3 Bar. 1:4–6; 2:6).

In Romans, Paul understands the OT as God’s initial cryptic revelation; yet the gospel of Christ serves as the necessary interpretative key to unveil its fulfillment (16:25).<sup>78</sup> Figures and events in Israel’s history are reimagined in light of Christ’s death

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<sup>76</sup>Carson rightly identifies the tension between promise/fulfillment and hidden/revealed in the gospel of Christ. However, he appears to separate mystery from promise and fulfillment when he says, “Paul holds that several elements in the gospel, even the gospel itself, were hidden in the past, and have only been revealed with the coming of Christ. They constitute a *μυστήριον*, something that neither Jews nor Greeks had foreseen, and if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 397. While I have little concern with Carson’s comments, I would slightly nuance his articulation of mystery recognizing that even the elements of promise/fulfillment should be classified as mystery. In other words, mystery does not necessarily mean complete hiddenness, but itself contains a tension of continuity and discontinuity.

<sup>77</sup>In response to the radical discontinuity proposed by some apocalyptic interpreters, Richard Hays seeks to maintain this tension by proposing a model of retrospective-continuity. Paul then reads backwards (i.e., retrospectively) in light of the eschatological invasion of the Christ event, yet in continuity with the narrative of Israel. He states, “I contend that Paul’s understanding of the new age in Christ leads him not to a *rejection* of Israel’s sacred history but to a *retrospective hermeneutical transformation* of Israel’s story in light of the story of God’s startling redemptive actions . . . [This] requires a dramatic rereading of Israel’s story, but what is required is precisely a rereading, not a repudiation.” Richard B. Hays, “Apocalyptic Poiesis,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul’s Letter*, ed. Mark W. Elliot et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 204. While I’m mostly convinced of Hays’s hermeneutical model, I agree with Wright’s corrective “that Paul saw scripture as story and as prophecy, *not* in the abstract sense of mere typological prefiguration between one event and another, according to which in principle the two events could stand in any chronological relation to each other, but in the sense of a very specific story functioning in a very specific way.” N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 264.

<sup>78</sup>Rightly Seifrid who remarks, “According to his announcement in Rom 16:25–27, Paul

and resurrection, unveiling numerous prefigurations of the gospel. Consequently, those who are outside of Christ read the OT Scripture with a veil over their eyes unable to see that it speaks of him (2 Cor 3:14). This hermeneutical phenomenon does not suggest that Paul read into the OT what was never there; rather, he understood the Scriptures to be prophetic pointing forward to the great day of Israel's redemption. Now that this redemption has come in the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul retroactively sees how Israel's story had been advancing to this climatic event.

These two interpretive elements appear as Paul grounds his gospel in the prophetic Scripture of Habakkuk in 1:16–17.<sup>79</sup> While God's saving righteousness for his people was a hidden mystery, Paul's citation of Habakkuk 2:4 explains that it was anticipated in the OT and now received by faith.<sup>80</sup> It appears that Paul summarizes the whole message of Habakkuk in this citation. The oracle begins with Habakkuk's lament

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understands the proclamation of Jesus Christ to be the message and interpretive key to the whole of Scripture." Mark A. Seifrid, "The Gospel as The Revelation of Mystery: The Witness of the Scriptures to Christ in Romans," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 3 (2007): 96.

<sup>79</sup>There is much discussion concerning the textual differences between Paul and the text of Habakkuk. For an overview of the textual tradition, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Habakkuk 2:3-4 and the New Testament," in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 236–45. I follow those who see Paul's quotation in substantial agreement with the MT deliberately applying this passage to one's individual faith for eschatological life. Rightly, Moo, *Romans*, 80n252; Schreiner, *Romans*, 79–82. However, even if the MT speaks of "God faithfulness," Seifrid notes, "The 'faithfulness' of which Habakkuk writes is the faithfulness of the Lord to fulfill the promise of salvation given in the 'vision' (3:1–15). To live by that faithfulness is to believe the astounding word of the Lord (1:5). To remain 'puffed up' in pride will bring judgment and disaster (2:4–5). The LXX therefore preserves the sense of the Hebrew text, even if it reads the pronoun differently. On the assumption that as usual the LXX is the basis of Paul's citation, his omission of the first-person pronoun reflects the sense of its rendering, even if he shifts attention to the call to believe. To 'live by my [i.e., the Lord's] faithfulness' is to live by faith." Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 610. Either way then, Paul emphasizes the call to faith put forth in Habakkuk. Contra, C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1953), 51; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 118–19; Campbell, "Romans 1:17," 281–85; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 279–81.

<sup>80</sup>Reflecting on Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4, Watson states, "The relation of this scriptural citation to its antecedent (the statement about the righteousness of God) is often misunderstood. Far from being a secondary confirmation of a freestanding dogmatic assertion, the citation from Habakkuk 2:4 actually *generates* its antecedent." Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 43. Watson is correct that Paul's gospel of justification by faith is not a "freestanding dogmatic assertion," but a message promised beforehand in the Scripture (1:2). Yet, in Romans 1:16–17, Paul is concerned with more than merely establishing "an initial correlation of 'righteousness' and 'faith'" (ibid., 49). There is a newness to the revelation of the righteousness of God in the Christ event which brings power and effects faith in the hearer. Rightly, Seifrid, "The Faith of Christ," 138–39.

that there is no justice in Judah and that the righteous are overrun by the wicked. It appears that God has turned a blind eye to their iniquity (1:1–4). However, the word of the Lord brings an unbelievable message (1:5): he is going to bring judgment upon Judah through Babylon (vv. 6–11). As the Lord predicted, this word is unconscionable to Habakkuk (1:12–2:1). Nevertheless, he will wait for the Lord’s response. This response explains that the completion of the vision “awaits its appointed time” (2:3), but “the righteous will live by his faithfulness” (v. 4). In other words, Habakkuk is told that salvation comes through faithfulness to God knowing that his ways are just (vv. 6–20). The oracle ends with Habakkuk praising God, trusting that in wrath God shows mercy (3:3). In judgment the Lord brings salvation (vv. 17–19).

Paul sees the Christ event prefigured in Habakkuk. God’s ways in the past have been recapitulated in the present. God has done an unbelievable act whereby salvation has come through judgment.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, Paul sees the prophecy of Habakkuk fulfilled in Christ.<sup>82</sup> In line with the Qumran community (1QpHab 7:1–14), Paul understands the “appointed time” for the completion of Habakkuk’s vision has come (Hab 2:3). Only for Paul the fulfillment is not in the Qumran community and Teacher of Righteousness, but in Christ and his church. Qumran interpreted Habakkuk’s prophecy as a call to faithfulness to God’s law (1QpHab 7:10–12) and loyalty to the Teacher of Righteousness.<sup>83</sup> Paul, on the other hand, uses Habakkuk 2:4 to highlight the oracle’s call to faith in the word of the Lord that salvation comes via judgment. Now, in light of the

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<sup>81</sup>Rightly Bockmuehl, “The quotation of Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17 . . . introduces a complex of thought which closely affiliates Paul’s gospel with Messianic ideas of vindication and judgment—thus forming a natural connection of v. 17 and 18.” Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 140.

<sup>82</sup>Contra Watson who says, “[Habakkuk 2:4] speaks simply of a righteous status and identifies the means (i.e. faith) by which this righteous status can be attained.” Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 49.

<sup>83</sup>James A. Sanders, “Habakkuk in Qumran, Paul, and the Old Testament,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 100.

revelation of Christ, this call to faith finds its fulfillment in the gospel (Rom 1:16).<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, with Christ as the hermeneutical key for interpreting the OT, there is both continuity and discontinuity with the OT and its fuller meaning revealed in the gospel.<sup>85</sup> There is discontinuity in that the fulfillment of Israel's Scripture is unexpected and unforeseen, coming through a crucified Messiah. Nevertheless, there remains a level of continuity in that God's ways in the past serve as typological patterns recapitulated in the present. Also, these narrative patterns are prophetic looking forward to a climactic expression of God's promises in his Messiah. Such patterns and prophetic expressions emerge in Romans 16:25–27 when two components of the mystery are explored: (1) the mystery of Christ, and (2) the mystery of the nations (16:25–27).

**Mystery of Christ.** The apocalyptic revelation of Christ completely reoriented Paul's perspective of reality. As argued above, the proclamation of Jesus as the Christ is the revealed mystery (Rom 16:25). Therefore, there is ultimately only one mystery—namely, Christ—yet this mystery has numerous implications.<sup>86</sup> In other words, Paul moves from the broad to the specific.<sup>87</sup> The broad mystery is Christ in whom all things are fulfilled and patterned after. And this mystery explains how God's specific purposes for the nations (even Israel) are carried out in Christ (11:25–26; 16:25–27). Most fundamental to Paul's new orientation was that this one he once persecuted he now calls Lord (Rom 1:4, 7; 4:24; 5:1, 11, 21; 6:23; 7:25; 8:39; 10:9, 12, 13; 13:14; 14:6–9; 15:6, 30; 16:20; cf. Acts 9:5). Therefore, the identity of Christ is central to the Pauline mystery

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<sup>84</sup>Sanders remarks, "The real difference between Paul's exegesis of Hab 2.4 and Qumran's is Paul's application of the passage to Christ's atoning death. This, then, is the distinction between Qumran's 'fidelity to the Teacher of Righteousness' and Paul's 'righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ . . . whom God put forward as an expiation . . .' (Rom. 3.22, 25)." Sanders, "Habakkuk in Qumran," 112–13.

<sup>85</sup>Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment," 398–425.

<sup>86</sup>Rightly, Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mysterion: Meaning and Content* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1977), 118; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 148.

<sup>87</sup>Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 148.

and that this gospel was indeed promised beforehand in the OT (Rom 1:1b–2; 16:25–26). The mystery of Christ then explains how the gospel is both hidden in and continuous with God’s prophetic word.

For instance, in Romans 1:1–7 and 16:25–27, many scholars have noted an allusion to Psalm 2 which Paul interprets in light of the advent of Christ.<sup>88</sup> The allusion is initially signaled as Paul speaks of Jesus’ appointment (τοῦ ὀρισθέντος) as the Davidic Son of God (1:4; cf. 16:25).<sup>89</sup> This emphasis corresponds with Psalm 2:7 where the son of David—God’s anointed (v. 2; cf. 18:50)—is decreed as the begotten Son of God.<sup>90</sup> This allusion is further strengthened by noting the conceptual link between the “obedience of faith among all the nations” (Rom 1:5; 16:26) and that the nations will be given as an inheritance to the Son (Ps 2:8).

Considering Psalm 2 as a whole, the Psalmist anticipates an eschatological confrontation between the “kings of the earth”—who represent the nations—and “YHWH and his anointed” (v. 2). However, these kings are no match because YHWH will set his “King on Zion” (v. 6) decreeing that, “You are my Son; today I have begotten

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<sup>88</sup>Don B. Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans Part I: The Meaning of Ὑπακοή Πίστεως (Rom 1:5; 16:26),” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52, no. 2 (1990): 203; Jewett, *Romans*, 104; J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 41–42; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 95–97; Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism.*, 3rd ed. (New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 112; Longenecker, *Romans*, 63; Moo, *Romans*, 45–46.

<sup>89</sup>The phrase τοῦ ὀρισθέντος is often rendered “the one who was declared to be Son of God” (e.g., RSV, NASB, NEB). Understood this way, Jesus, who is eternally God’s Son, is shown to be the Son of God by the power of the resurrection. See Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 62. However, the verb (ὀρίζω) does not mean “to declare” or “to show.” Throughout the NT it always carries the meaning, “fix,” “determine,” or “appoint” (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb 4:7; rightly Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:61). Therefore, one should translate the phrase, “the one who was appointed.” As Beasley-Murray contends, “It is not enough to say that ὀρίζειν means ‘to give a clearer definition to what is already there.’ Jesus was not just declared to be the Son of God: he was actually instituted Son of God . . . Christ’s sonship here is to be understood in functional rather than ontological terms. For that reason we prefer to speak of his enthronement rather than his adoption.” Paul Beasley-Murray, “Romans 1:3f: An Early Confession of Faith in the Lordship of Jesus,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980): 152. See also Leslie C. Allen, “The Old Testament Background of (Προ)ὀρίζειν in the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 17, no. 1 (1970): 104–8; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 13; Barrett, *Romans*, 20; Jewett, *Romans*, 104; Moo, *Romans*, 46; Schreiner, *Romans*, 46.

<sup>90</sup>Allen, “The Old Testament Background of (Προ)ὀρίζειν in the New Testament,” 104–8; Christopher G. Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David: Paul’s Messianic Exegesis in Romans 1:3–4,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 4 (2000): 676; Schreiner, *Romans*, 46.

you . . . I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession” (vv. 7–8). Consequently, the enthronement of the Davidic king will result in the subjugation of the nations to the Son of God. However, those who do not “serve him [YHWH] with fear” (v. 11), the Son “will rule with a rod of iron” and “like a potter’s vessel” he will crush them (v. 9).

As Paul reflects on this Psalm, he makes an important connection between Jesus as the Christ (1:1; 16:25) and Israel’s king, David (1:3).<sup>91</sup> Paul asserts that Jesus is the promised “seed (σπέρματος) of David according to the flesh” (v. 3).<sup>92</sup> Jesus’s physical lineage from David confirms God’s promises through the OT prophets concerning a righteous king who would rule over Israel and the nations (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 11:1–5, 10; Jer 23:5–6; 33:14; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25).<sup>93</sup> In fact, both pre-Christian and early

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<sup>91</sup>The parallelism in Romans 1:3–4 and the unique vocabulary employed (i.e., σπέρματος Δαβίδ, ὀρίζω, πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης) may suggest that Paul borrowed or adapted an earlier tradition, see Beasley-Murray, “Romans 1”; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 229–30; Longenecker, *Romans*, 63–65; Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish Hellenistic Religion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2007), 59–60; Matthew W. Bates, “A Christology of Incarnation and Enthronement: Romans 1:3–4 as Unified, Nonadoptionist, and Nonconciliatory,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (2015): 107–27. Nevertheless, Moo is correct to assert, “we should be cautious about drawing exegetical conclusions from this necessarily uncertain hypothesis. The meaning of these verses, then, is to be determined against the background of Paul and his letters, not against a necessarily hypothetical traditions-history” (Moo, *Romans*, 43–44). Similarly, Poythress who questions the hypothesis that Paul is dependent upon an earlier tradition: Vern S. Poythress, “Is Romans 1:3–4 A Pauline Confession After All,” *The Expository Times* 87, no. 6 (1976): 180–83.

<sup>92</sup>The phrase τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, is not derogatory as Dunn suggests, see James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus — Flesh and Spirit: An Exposition of Romans 1:3–4,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 24, no. 1 (1973): 49. Contra Dunn, Schreiner states, “Dunn correctly detects a note of weakness in that Christ was descended from David, but he wrongly concludes that this is also a pejorative comment. Instead, Jesus had to take on flesh and enter into the old age in order to inaugurate the new age that is characterized by the Holy Spirit. The contrast between the flesh and the Spirit is quite similar conceptually to Paul’s remarks about the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in Phil. 2:6–11. Paul does not disdain the humiliation of Christ” (Schreiner, *Romans*, 47–48). See also Bates who states, “[Rom 1:3] assumes the preexistence of the Son of God but does not dwell on this, concentrating instead on the Son’s transition to the weak, frail, decaying state of fully embodied human existence within the messianic line of David. Thus, it is evident that Rom 1:3 is not denigrating Jesus’ Davidic ancestry as such.” Bates, “Christology,” 122–23.

<sup>93</sup>Rightly, Gentry and Wellum who state, “As the divine, son, the Davidic king was to effect the divine instruction or torah in the nation as a whole and was, as a result, a mediator of the Mosaic Torah. However, since the god whom the Davidic king represented was not limited to a local region or territory, but was the creator God and Sovereign of the whole world, the rule of the Davidic king would have repercussions for all the nations, not just for Israel.” Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 400. See also Beasley-Murray, “Romans 1,” 151.

Christian traditions combined Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 to make this association (4QFlor 1:10–13, 18–19; *Pss. Sol.* 17:4, 23; Heb 1:5).<sup>94</sup> In other words, Paul viewed Nathan and David among the prophets to whom the promise of the Messiah was made. As Whitsett insightfully notes, “The exegetical tradition Paul takes up in Rom 1:3–4 associates the only two texts in the LXX in which the oracular voice of God calls the Davidic king/Messiah υἱός.”<sup>95</sup> Therefore, by appealing to the themes of sonship and seed, Paul is able to show that God’s promise to David is fulfilled in “Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 1:4; cf. Pss 18:50; 89:4; Jer 33:22). And as the Davidic son of God, Jesus is identified as the true seed of Israel in whom God’s people are blessed.<sup>96</sup>

However, Paul explains that the fulfillment of God’s promise has come in an unforeseen manner. Jesus’s appointment (τοῦ ὀρισθέντος) as the Davidic son of God occurred at his “resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).<sup>97</sup> In essence, he reimagines Psalm 2 around the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. Paul’s interpretation of this Psalm is consistent with how it is interpreted elsewhere in the NT. Reflecting on Jesus’s crucifixion, Luke associates “Herod and Pontius Pilate” “the Gentiles” and “Israel” with the “kings of the earth” and “rulers” who “gathered against . . . his anointed” (Acts 4:25–27; cf. Ps 2:2). In the same way, Paul retrospectively reads this Psalm as looking forward to the cross and resurrection of Jesus. In doing so, Jesus is

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<sup>94</sup>Whitsett notes, “[Romans] 1:3–4 presents a conflation of 2 Sam 7:12–14 and Ps 2:7[8], whose allusive character suggests that his audience will already have considered these texts in juxtaposition—as had pre-Christian Jewish interpreters of scripture” (Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David,” 674). Johnson also contends, “The evidence, which ranges from exilic to post-temple Judaism, suggests that the son of God is often from the seed of David, conversely, being the seed of David is a sine qua non for an individual’s installation as the son of God.” Nathan C. Johnson, “Romans 1:3–4: Beyond Antithetical Parallelism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 2 (2017): 476.

<sup>95</sup>Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David,” 674.

<sup>96</sup>Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background*, *Analecta Biblica* 83 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 62; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 392–423; P. Chase Sears, *Heirs of Promise: The Church as the New Israel in Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 12–33.

<sup>97</sup>The phrase ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν should be taken temporally. Rightly Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 246; Byrne, *Romans*, 45; Schreiner, *Romans*, 48.



shown to be the true anointed, the true “seed of David” (σπέρματος Δαυὶδ, Rom 1:3) through whom the “promises given to the patriarchs” are fulfilled (cf. Rom 15:8–9).<sup>98</sup>

Jesus’s sonship also functions on another plane. Not only does it identify him as the son of David and true Israel, but also as the divine Son of God.<sup>99</sup> And as the divine Son, Jesus bears the title of “Lord” (κύριος, v. 4; 10:13; 14:11).<sup>100</sup> Clearly in Psalm 2 the Lord is the God of Israel (YHWH; Ps 2:2, 7, 11) who will come to establish his kingdom through the Davidic king. Yet Paul, reorients this prophecy around the death and resurrection of Jesus revealing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God in power, the Lord (Rom 1:4). That Paul applies the name YHWH (κύριος in LXX) to Jesus is a significant development regarding the identity of the Messiah.<sup>101</sup> There does not appear to be any semi-divine status attributed to a coming Messiah in the pre-Christian Jewish world.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Whitsett cogently states the relationship between Jesus as the seed of David (Rom 1:3) and the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16): “The promises made to one are made to the other, because they are the same person, the Messiah. Jeremiah 33:22 already documents the fusion of these traditions when it applies the promises made to Abraham to the seed of David.” Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David,” 672.

<sup>99</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 45. See also Hurtado who notes, “The one consistent syntactical feature in all these references to Jesus’ divine sonship is the use of the definite article. This suggests that Paul was concerned to attribute to Jesus a unique kind of sonship, and not merely to include him in a class of those . . . who can be referred to as ‘sons/children of God.’ Paul’s consistent use of the definite article seems intended to make a strong distinction between the use of divine-sonship rhetoric for others and what he intends to assert as true of Jesus.” Larry W. Hurtado, “Jesus’ Divine Sonship in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans,” in *Romans and the People of God*, ed. N. T. Wright and Sven Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 222.

<sup>100</sup>Hurtado presents three major points about Paul’s use of divine-sonship language: “(1) Divine-sonship rhetoric is clearly intended . . . as honorific of Jesus; (2) the rhetoric carries a strongly theocentric force that emphasizes God’s involvement in Jesus; (3) divine-sonship rhetoric is also used to link the salvation of the elect with the status of Jesus.” Hurtado, “Divine Sonship,” 223.

<sup>101</sup>David Capes notes, “The use of κύριος to translate the divine name (יהוה) in the LXX and other contemporary Jewish writings indicated that this term had a firm place within first century Jewish religious life. Paul used it primarily as a christological title in declarations of religious devotion and worship to Jesus. In many cases he employed it to apply to Christ concepts and functions which Yahweh is expected to fulfill according to the Old Testament. Paul’s application of Yahweh texts to Christ, therefore, has significant christological implications. It implies that he considered Jesus to be more than man. It suggests that he believed that Christ was in some sense Yahweh himself, manifest as the Messiah.” David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul’s Christology*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 164.

<sup>102</sup>See Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 13–17. Contra Hengel, *The Son of God*, 48–51; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 41–96. However, even though Hurtado and Hengel are likely correct that post-exilic Judaism viewed God as having divine agents, Capes contends that divine agency is not enough to explain the radical newness of applying YHWH texts to Jesus: “It was thus possible for Jews within Palestine to apply Old Testament passages originally referring to God to a redeemer figure. But one significant difference remains; Christian exegetes applied to Christ scripture

Rather as Wright remarks,

[Paul] regarded the Messiah as ‘divine’ . . . not because ‘everyone knew’ (or some people supposed) that the Messiah would be ‘divine’, but because of Jesus himself. The person of Jesus himself, and the events of his death, resurrection and exaltation, indicated so firmly that he was to be discerned as the personal presence of Israel’s returning God that it was natural to look back at the messianic categories, particularly the striking phrase ‘son of God’, and to discern within such phraseology hints both of a previously unsuspected identity and of a richly appropriate way of expressing it. In particular, Paul saw in Jesus the shocking and explosive vision of *Israel’s God returning at last, as he had always promised*.<sup>103</sup>

If Paul applied the divine name to Jesus, how does such a conception find continuity with Jewish monotheism? Richard Bauckham suggests that Paul’s high christology is possible by including Jesus within the divine identity of God.<sup>104</sup> By using this category, Bauckham highlights that “for Jewish monotheistic belief, what was important was *who* the one God is, rather than what divinity is.”<sup>105</sup> In this way, Second Temple Judaism distinguished the one true God who alone is to be worshiped as the (1) sole creator of all things and (2) the sole ruler of all things.<sup>106</sup> It was this one true God, whom Israel anticipated to make his name known to all when he comes to fulfill his promises to Israel. Therefore, Paul’s allusion to Psalm 2 reveals a “christological monotheism” whereby Jesus is included in the unique identity of Israel’s God.<sup>107</sup> In other words, even the identity of YHWH is a mystery now revealed in Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Consequently, Israel’s eschatological expectations of

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texts which originally referred to יהוה not אלהים. Given the rather broad use of אלהים in Jewish writings, it is not surprising that Jewish exegetes would attribute אלהים texts to redeemer figures who acts as God’s agent. On the other hand, given the contemporary view of the divine name in Jewish life, it is amazing that Jewish-Christian exegetes in Palestine would attribute Yahweh texts to Jesus, a man recently crucified. Such a development appears to be unprecedented in Jewish life. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 167.

<sup>103</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 698.

<sup>104</sup>Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 182.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>106</sup>Bauckham demonstrates that these two identification of YHWH are prolific in the Second Temple literature. Ibid., 183n1.

<sup>107</sup>I’ve borrowed the phrase “christological monotheism” from Bauckham to expresses how Paul reappropriated the theological framework of Jewish monotheism around the revelation of Jesus. Ibid., 184.

YHWH's coming reign have found their meaning and fulfillment in the Christ event. Nevertheless, while certainly surprising, Paul's christological interpretation of Psalm 2 remains in continuity with the OT and Jewish understanding of the one true God.<sup>108</sup>

This christological interpretation of the OT is also apparent elsewhere in Romans as Paul includes Jesus within the divine identity. For example, in Romans 10:9–13, Paul applies the divine name to Jesus by reinterpreting Isaiah 28:16 (LXX) and Joel 3:5 (LXX).<sup>109</sup> In doing so, he maintains a strong monotheism stating, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord over all” (Rom 10:12). It should be noted that Paul makes a similar affirmation in 3:29–30 grounding God's universal rule in the Shema, stating that “God is one” (v. 30; cf. Deut 6:1).<sup>110</sup> Yet, even while sustaining a confession of Jewish monotheism, Paul identifies Jesus as the “the Lord,” in whom one must call upon in order to be saved (10:9, 13; Joel 3:5).

Paul first establishes this “christological monotheism” in Romans 10:11 with a citation of Isaiah 28:16 (LXX), a passage he's already recalled in Romans 9:33. Paul's purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus is not only the Isaianic “stone of stumbling” (9:33) but also the “Lord” (10:9). In Isaiah 28, the prophet foretells of a coming judgment upon Israel whereby the “Lord God” will “set a choice stone into the foundations of Zion” (v. 16a). Nevertheless, “the one who believes upon him/it [ἀντῶ] will not be put to shame” (v. 16b).

Before exploring Paul's use of this Scripture, the question must be answered, who or what is the stone of stumbling?<sup>111</sup> Paul's initial citation of Isaiah 28:14 in Roman

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<sup>108</sup>Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 399; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, x.

<sup>109</sup>See Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 116–23.

<sup>110</sup>See Rowe who connects the phrase ὁ ἀντὸς κύριος (Rom 10:12), with the Shema (Deut 6:4) and the eschatological expectations of the Lord's universal rule in Zech 14. C. Kavin Rowe, “Romans 10:13: What is the Name of the Lord?,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 22, no. 2 (2000): 147–49.

<sup>111</sup>By itself it is unclear who or what the “stone” represents in Isa 28:16. Goldingay identifies several possibilities: “[The stone] has been identified with the law, the temple, the monarchy, the city, the saving work of Yahweh, the people's relationship with Yahweh, the true believing community, Zion itself,

9:33 is conflated with Isaiah 8:14, which also shares the stone imagery.<sup>112</sup> In this way, the stone of stumbling in Isaiah 8:14 defines the stone upon which one must believe in 28:16.<sup>113</sup> Wagner convincingly demonstrates that “the most obvious link between Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 is . . . the prominent image of God as ‘stone’ and the promise that the one who trusts in him will be vindicated.”<sup>114</sup> He supports this assertion with the following associations: (1) the stone imagery itself; (2) the wording *ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ* which only is paralleled in 8:17 (*πεποιθὼς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτῷ*); and (3) thematic parallels which describe those who do not rely on God will fall and stumble (8:15; 28:13).<sup>115</sup> Therefore, if the stone in Isaiah is the Lord God, this evidence explains Paul’s rationale for conflating the two passages in Romans 9:33. Paul wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the stone and “the one who believes in him (*ἐπ’ αὐτῷ*) will not be put to shame” (v. 33).

Furthermore, if Jesus is the Isaianic stone, then he is also the Lord in whom one must confess to be saved (10:9).<sup>116</sup> Paul reiterates this assertion by citing Isaiah 28:16 again with Christ as the referent of *ἐπ’ αὐτῷ* (v. 11). This interpretation of verse 11 is

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the Messiah, faith, the remnant, or the actual promise about the one who trusts.” John E. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 156.

<sup>112</sup>This point is affirmed by the majority of scholars, see Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 583; Barrett, *Romans*, 181; Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series 69 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 119–25; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 579; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:511–12; Schreiner, *Romans*, 528. For an extended treatment on the form of the text and the possibility of Paul’s indebtedness to previous traditions, see J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul “in Concert” in the Letter to the Romans*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 101 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 127–36; Jewett, *Romans*, 612–14.

<sup>113</sup>Wagner notes, “There is good evidence to suggest that this interpretive move had already been made by the author or editor of Isaiah 28 and then further developed by the translator of the LXX” (Wagner, *Heralds*, 127).

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 145. Contra Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 129; Barrett, *Romans*, 181.

<sup>115</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 145–50.

<sup>116</sup>There may be some indications of a Jewish tradition that interpreted the stone messianically, see Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 583; Jeremias, *TDNT* 4:272. Such evidence primarily rests upon the Targum of Isaiah. However, with a 4<sup>th</sup> century date it may merely be a Christian interpolation. Schreiner suggests the stone reference in Dan 2:34 is more promising evidence for a messianic tradition (Schreiner, *Romans*, 528). This suggestion is strengthened by Josephus’ possible messianic interpretation of the stone (*Ant.* 10.10.4 §210).

strongly supported for the following reasons.<sup>117</sup> First, Jesus is the clearest antecedent to  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}$ . In 10:9 Paul not only identifies Jesus as Lord, but as the one ( $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$ ) God raised from the dead. The  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}$  in 10:11 is therefore continuing the use of the pronoun ( $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$ ) in reference to Jesus. Second, one should not try to make a hard distinction between Jesus and God, for Paul’s purpose is to show that the two are inseparable (i.e., v. 12); hence Paul is putting forth a christological monotheism. Third, Paul has already cited Isaiah 28:16 in reference to Christ.<sup>118</sup> Fourth, Paul will again identify Jesus as Lord in 10:12–13 making it clear that  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}$  is Jesus—the same Lord ( $\delta\ \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}\varsigma\ \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ ; v. 12)—whom one must put their faith in to be saved.

Consequently, Paul sees Isaiah 28 as a mystery unveiled which has eschatological significance for the present time.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, he reads Isaiah typologically seeing that “the word of hope concerning faith in the Lord in the past, which came in the face of the judgment on Israel, is echoed in the present call to faith in Christ, in the face of the judgment coming on the world.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, Paul has reimagined Isaiah 28:16 around the Christ event. And in light of this event, he understands its universal implications for calling “everyone” [ $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ ] to believe in Christ (Rom 10:11), since “he himself is the Lord over all” (v. 12).<sup>121</sup>

Continuing this theme, Paul reiterates the universal call to salvation by connecting the prophetic word of Isaiah 28:16 (LXX) with Joel 3:5 (LXX) through the

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<sup>117</sup>Here I’m summarizing the insights of Rowe, “Romans 10,” 143–44.

<sup>118</sup>Nearly all commentators understand Jesus as the stumbling stone in 9:33. See Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 584; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 580; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:510–12; Jewett, *Romans*, 613; Schreiner, *Romans*, 528.

<sup>119</sup>The Qumran community also interpreted Isaianic stone eschatologically. However, they interpreted the community itself as the fulfilment (1QS 8:7).

<sup>120</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 659.

<sup>121</sup>Rightly, Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 118; Barrett, *Romans*, 188; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 592; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:531; Jewett, *Romans*, 631.

practice of *gezerah shavah* (interpretation by analogy).<sup>122</sup> As in Romans 10:9 where belief is expressed through the confession of Jesus as Lord, so Paul’s citation of Joel 3:5 focuses on the expression of that faith by “calling upon the name of the Lord” (Rom 10:13).<sup>123</sup> The context of Joel centers on the coming day of the Lord (2:1), and like Isaiah, the Lord is coming to judge (vv. 1–11). Nevertheless, in the midst of this judgment, salvation is offered to everyone who returns to the Lord (vv. 12–17). The Lord will spare Israel (2:18–19) and the nation will know that “I am the Lord your God and there is none except me” (2:27). Through this act of salvation through judgment, “it will be for everyone, that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (3:5). The citation of Joel 3:5 in Romans 10:13 reveals that Paul views the mystery of the gospel to be patterned in this past declaration of salvation through judgment. In this way, “Jesus himself is the eschatological manifestation of YHWH’s unique identity to the whole world, so that those who call on *Jesus*’ name and confess *Jesus* as Lord are acknowledging YHWH the God of Israel to be the one and only true God.”<sup>124</sup> In sum, Paul has shown that Jesus is the promised stone of stumbling upon whom Israel must believe in order to avoid eschatological shame.<sup>125</sup>

Another passage where Paul employs a christological monotheism is in

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<sup>122</sup>Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 196; Seifrid, “Romans,” 660. Some deny that Joel is being cited since there is no explicit statement (i.e., λέγει ἢ γραφή; see Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 134); however, such a conclusion is too strict and overlooks the fact that Paul nearly cites Joel 3:5a verbatim. Rightly, Barrett, *Romans*, 188; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 593; Rowe, “Romans 10,” 152; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:532; Jewett, *Romans*, 633.

<sup>123</sup>Rowe insightfully comments, “In addition to recalling the oracular dimension of vv. 9–10 (ὁμολογήσης, ὁμολογεῖται, ‘you confess,’ ‘it is confessed’), ἐπικαλουμένους sounds a resonating note with the OT that could be lost only on the most tone deaf of readers. The use of ‘call upon’ to describe one’s action toward YHWH was exceedingly prevalent, spanning both genre and historical period. That act of ‘calling upon’ varies from worship (e.g., Ge 13:4; 21:33), to prayer for deliverance (e.g., 2 Sam 22 [Ps 18]), to apocalyptic or eschatological vision (Zech 13:9; Joel 3:5), but in each case, the one upon whom the people call is YHWH, the one God of Israel. This is particularly emphasized in those passages which speak of calling upon ‘the name’ of the Lord.” Rowe, “Romans 10,” 151.

<sup>124</sup>Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 193.

<sup>125</sup>Rightly Schreiner, “The word κατασχυθήσεται should not be interpreted psychologically; it refers to vindication in the final judgment. Those who put their faith in Jesus as the resurrected Lord will be vindicated by God on the day of judgment.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 547. Contra, Jewett, *Romans*, 631.

Romans 14:11. Here Paul confronts the issue of believers passing judgment upon one another and calls them to reorient their lives around the mystery of Christ as Lord.<sup>126</sup> In order to address this concern, he cites Isaiah 45:23 (LXX) as scriptural support that each “will stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom 14:10; cf., 2:6–11; 12–16).<sup>127</sup> His choice of Isaiah 45 is significant since it makes some of the strongest monotheistic statements in all the OT. In this passage, the Lord calls Cyrus his anointed instrument to deliver Israel from captivity (vv. 1–4). However, the Lord is clear to make himself known saying, “I am Lord and there is no other God except me” (v. 5). He is the sovereign creator over all things (vv. 6–13; 18–19). He alone is God, and there is not another “righteous or savior” besides him (v. 21). For this reason, Cyrus and Israel must learn that salvation only comes through him (v. 22). Only in the Lord will Israel be justified and glorified (v. 25). For this reason, the Lord makes an oath that “to me every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess [ἐξομολογήσεται] to God” that “righteousness and strength” are found in him alone (vv. 23–24).

Returning to Romans 14:11, Paul cites this oath, but adds the words, “as I live, says the Lord.” Scholars have noted, this introductory phrase is often used in the OT to introduce a warning of judgment (Num 14:28; Jer 22:24; Ezek 15:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:28) or a promise of salvation (Isa 49:18).<sup>128</sup> Paul seems to have added these words in

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<sup>126</sup>For a thorough discussion on the background and setting of this passage, see Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph series 103 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>127</sup>Besides the transposition of ἐξομολογήσεται and πᾶσα γλῶσσα and the additional oath formula, Paul does not deviate from the LXX. This change may be due to Paul’s desire “to highlight . . . the requirement of verbal ‘confession’ before God.” Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 178.

<sup>128</sup>Rightly, Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 809; Seifrid, “Romans,” 685; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:710. Some scholars think the citation originates from Isa 49:18 (Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 69 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 184–85). However, Stanley is most likely correct when he asserts, “Besides the fact that Isa 49.18 has almost nothing in common with the present passage, the commonness of the phrase ζῶ ἐγὼ λέγει κύριος in the LXX make it unlikely that even the most informed reader would have seen anything more than a general appropriation of biblical language in the use of the phrase in Rom 14.11.” Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 177.

order to evoke the theme of salvation based on the fact that Christ is “alive” and the future judgment of believers has already been pronounced in his death and resurrection.<sup>129</sup> As Isaiah says, all who are the Lord’s offspring are vindicated (45:25). Since the Roman believers belong to the risen Christ (Rom 14:7–8), their end-time verdict of justification has already been declared. As Paul reminds them, they have been welcomed by God (v. 3; cf. 18). For this reason, they must not pass judgment upon one another, because everyone “will stand before the judgment seat of God” (v. 10). And the basis upon which they will stand on that day is that “righteousness and strength” are found in the Lord alone (Isa 45:24; cf. Rom 14:4).

However, it must be asked, whom does Paul identify as the Lord in Isaiah 45:23? Is it Christ or God? There are several reasons for seeing Christ as the referent. First it should be noted that the Isaiah citation fits nicely into Paul’s train of thought. In Romans 14:1–10 Paul has been alternating between speaking of the Lord (i.e., Christ) and God; so, it would make sense that he’d maintain this alternation when citing Isaiah, which also speaks of the “Lord” and “God” (Isa 45:23). Second, it is possible that the reversal of ἐξομολογήσεται and πᾶσα γλῶσσα “reveals Paul’s attempt to disrupt the parallelism which would naturally identify both phrases with God (τῷ θεῷ) in the second line.”<sup>130</sup> Third, the verbal connection between ἔζησεν (Rom 10:9) and ζῶ (v. 11) reinforces the identification of Jesus as Lord based on the resurrection of the dead. Fourth, this interpretation is consistent with how Paul uses Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10–11, where God the Father has exalted Jesus by giving him the name, Lord. Fifth, Paul’s ethical admonition rests upon Christ being Lord, and as Lord he is the judge of all (Rom 10:7–8). Therefore, by taking the surrounding context into account, Paul’s citation

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<sup>129</sup>Matthew Black, “Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 18, no. 1 (1971): 8; Wagner, *Heralds*, 338n123; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 702; Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 125–27. Contra, Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:710.

<sup>130</sup>Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 127.



of Isaiah 45:23 is best understood as identifying Christ within the divine identity of Israel's God.<sup>131</sup> Consequently, Paul has reappropriated the salvific implications of Isaiah 45 around the reality of the risen Christ, seeing him as the Lord and judge of all.

Consistent with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, Paul has reappropriated Isaiah 45 around the apocalyptic revelation of Christ. As a result, Paul seeks to reorient the Roman believers' perspective around this new reality, seeing Christ as Lord. As Wagner cogently states,

Paul is able through his citation of Isaiah 45:23 to portray the Roman's present life in Christ as the proleptic realization of the eschatological deliverance promised in Isaiah. Paul's citation invites those who hear the echoes of Isaiah's narrative to locate themselves imaginatively at the climactic moment of this story and to shape their communal life in light of what God has now accomplished for them in Christ. Paul does not merely warn of a future judgment to come, he insists that the time of judgment has already begun: that Christ, crucified and risen has taken up his rule as Lord of the living and the dead.<sup>132</sup>

Having briefly examined Paul's use of the OT in 1:1–4 (Psalm 2), 10:13 (Isa 28:16; Joel 3:5), and 14:11 (Isa 45:23), one sees a melding of messianic and divine categories. Not only is Jesus the promised Messiah, but he is the Lord, the one true God, who has come to deliver his people. It is this mystery of the Christ that Paul has “made known through the prophetic writings” (16:26a); yet there is another component of this mystery that has come to light, namely God's redemptive plan for the nations (16:26b).

**Mystery of the nations.** By reimagining the OT around Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, the mystery of Christ was made known. In the later part of 16:25–27, Paul also explains that the mystery of Christ is “being made known to all the nations . . . for the obedience of faith” (v. 26). As mentioned above, the “obedience of the nations” recalls Psalm 2:8. However, this subjugation of the nations to a coming king was also

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<sup>131</sup>Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 692; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 209; Seifrid, “Romans,” 685; Wagner, *Heralds*, 336–38; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 702. Contra Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 810; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:710; Moo, *Romans*, 864; Schreiner, *Romans*, 700.

<sup>132</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 339.

promised in Genesis 49:8–10.<sup>133</sup> In context, Genesis 49 is cast as a prophecy which will occur in the “latter days” (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים; 49:1; cf. Num 24:14; Dan 2:8). Therefore, like Psalm 2, this passage looks forward to an eschatological ruler in whom “shall be the obedience of the nations (ἐθνῶν, v. 10).”

In Romans, Paul explains that through the proclamation of the gospel the anticipated obedience of the nations to the Christ is “now” being fulfilled (16:26). Paul’s use of νῦν signals that a new age has dawned, the latter days have been inaugurated with the advent of Christ. Yet the “obedience of the nations” has come about in a startling manner. Both Genesis 49 and Psalm 2 picture a coming ruler who will subjugate the nations by force (cf. Num 24:17–19).<sup>134</sup> While Paul still anticipates a not-yet component to this prophecy (Rom 2:6–12), he sees a surprising fulfillment occurring at the present time: “antagonistic Gentiles have begun to yield themselves voluntarily to the Messiah’s reign by the ‘obedience of faith.’”<sup>135</sup> This mystery reveals that not only are the nations yielding themselves to Christ, but by doing so they have inherited the same promises and privileges as Israel (cf. Eph 3:6). In fact, by faith the Gentiles are incorporated into Israel, whereas the majority of ethnic Jews have been cut off (11:11–24).<sup>136</sup>

It is in this regard that Beale and Gladd define the mystery of Romans as the reversal in the order of salvation, whereby now it is Gentile first, then Jew.<sup>137</sup> While this phenomenon—in the present time of fulfilment—is apparent (11:11–14), Paul insists that his gospel remains for the Jew first, then the Greek (1:16; 2:9–10; 15:8–9). This sequence

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<sup>133</sup>See Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith,” 203. See also Chip Anderson, “Romans 1:1-5 and the Occasion of the Letter: The Solution to the Two-Congregation Problem in Rome,” *Trinity Journal* 14, no. 1 (1993): 38; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 95–96.

<sup>134</sup>Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 96.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Sears, *Heirs of Promise*, 84–86.

<sup>137</sup>Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 102.

reflects more than his missionary practices, but a theological priority in the God's redemptive purposes (3:1–3; 9:1–5; 11:28). For Paul this principle is upheld by the fact that God's promises are fulfilled in the Jewish Messiah, who is the true seed of David (1:3; 15:9) and of Abraham (4:23–25; 9:5; 15:8). In this way, Paul can genuinely say that the gospel is for the Jew first because God has kept his promise to Abraham, for the blessing has come to the world through the Davidic king of Israel. Therefore, the mystery of Romans does not fundamentally concern the *order* of salvation, but the *paradigm* of salvation in and through the Jewish Messiah.

Paul fleshes out this mystery in Romans 4 demonstrating that God is not only the God of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, justifying all by faith rather than by works (cf. 3:27–31).<sup>138</sup> This principle is grounded even in God's promise to Abraham—"our forefather"—who was justified by faith (4:1–2).<sup>139</sup> Paul explains, that if Abraham were

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<sup>138</sup>Rightly, Käsemann, *Romans*, 106; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 369; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:224; Moo, *Romans*, 281–82. Schreiner aptly notes the close relationship between 3:27–28 and 4:1–8, "The words 'boasting,' 'works,' 'reckon,' 'justify,' and 'faith' are central in both sections." Schreiner, *Romans*, 218.

<sup>139</sup>Gathercole perceptively notes the significance of the Abrahamic narrative to Paul's gospel when he states, "The crucial presupposition behind 4:1 is that Abraham is the paradigm *par excellence* for God's people. He is not *an* illustration from the Old Testament; rather, presupposing in the ancient (and not least, the Jewish) world that children imitate their parents, as 'our forefather' he is *the* example. If Paul's theology cannot accommodate him, it *must* be false." Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 233. Contra Richard B. Hays, "'Have We Found Abraham to Be Our Forefather According to the Flesh': A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1," *Novum Testamentum* 27, no. 1 (1985): 76–98; N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, Romans., vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 40. Gathercole reiterates, "Paul's use of Abraham in 4:1 establishes the patriarch as the prototype of justification both by literary style and vocabulary." Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 233.

Hays translates and punctuates Rom 4:1 as follows, "What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh" (Hays, "A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1," 77)? He contends that τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν constitutes a complete sentence and should be understood as an initial question. He then takes the infinitive, εὐρηχέναι, as a first-person plural setting out a second complete sentence and question. This intuitive translation allows Hays and Wright to shift the emphasis of justification away from soteriology. Many other NT scholars have adopted this translation or a nuanced version of it, see Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 227–50; Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," 38–39; Douglas A. Campbell, "Towards a New, Rhetorically Assisted Reading of Romans 3.27–4.25," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible: Essays from the 1998 Florence Conference* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 386–90. As tempting as it may be to adopt Hays' translation, there are two major grammatical problems. First, it leaves the infinitive without an explicit accusative subject. Second, the other instances of τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν in Romans provide clearly identifiable subjects in the subsequent question (3:5; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30). Rightly, Thomas H. Tobin, "What Shall We Say That Abraham Found? The Controversy behind Romans 4," *Harvard Theological Review* 88, no. 4 (1995): 437–52. For a more thorough assessment of Hays' translation, both from a grammatical and theological perspective, see Longenecker, *Romans*, 186–

justified by works, he would have grounds for boasting, but not before God (v. 2).<sup>140</sup> Paul supports this assertion<sup>141</sup> by turning to the Scripture (Gen 15:6 LXX) which says, “Abraham believed (ἐπίστευσεν) God, and it was counted (ἐλογίσθη) to him for righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)” (Rom 4:3).<sup>142</sup> Paul appeals to the Abrahamic narrative because it recalls the basis for Jewish identification as the chosen seed of Abraham and heirs of God’s promises. This association is evident throughout the Old Testament (Isa 29:22; 41:8; 51:2; Jer 33:26; Mic 7:20) and later Jewish literature (Jub. 15:9–10; 1QapGen 21:5–14; T. Levi. 15:4; *Pss. Sol* 9:8–11, 18:3). An example is found within *The Psalms of Solomon* where the righteous ones (Israelites) are sharply distinguished from sinners (i.e., Gentiles). Within this theological context, Abraham is referenced as the basis of the identity of the righteous:

And now, you are God and we are the people whom you have loved; look and be compassionate, O God of Israel, for we are yours, and do not take away your mercy from us, lest they set upon us. For you chose the descendants of Abraham above all the nations, and you put your name upon us, Lord, and it will not cease forever (9:8–9).<sup>143</sup>

In this regard, Paul stands within the Jewish tradition seeing the children of Abraham as God’s people and rightful heirs of the promise. However, where Paul breaks with the traditions of his fathers (Gal 1:14) is the basis for being identified with Abraham.<sup>144</sup>

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91; Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 234–35.

<sup>140</sup>The idea of “boasting” is fundamental to an accurate understanding of Rom 4. The term is initially picked up in 2:17 and Paul returns to it in 3:27. Gathercole rightly identifies two components of Jewish boasting: (1) “Israel’s election and gift of Torah” and (2) “the conviction that God would vindicate his people at the *eschaton* on the basis of their obedience.” Gathercole also rightly connects Paul’s train of thought between boasting and Abraham when he says, “Vital to Paul’s use of the term ‘boasting’ here is that he is describing implicitly in 3:27 a relationship between Israel, obedience, and justification that is exactly analogous to that of Abraham, justification, and boasting in 4:2.” Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 226.

<sup>141</sup>Note Paul’s use of the explanatory γὰρ.

<sup>142</sup>Paul essentially cites the LXX verbatim, besides exchanging the καὶ for δὲ. Gaston’s translation, “Abraham trusted in Yahweh, and it was counted to Yahweh as righteousness,” should be rejected. Rightly, Schreiner, *Romans*, 223n14.

<sup>143</sup>Translation from James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>144</sup>Rightly Gathercole who states, “Paul expresses the position he is opposing, in Roman 4:2:

Paul asserts that a right standing with God and identification with Abraham's offspring comes on the basis of faith; whereas the Jewish tradition emphasized Abraham's faithfulness to the law as the source of his right standing (Jub. 17:17–18; Sir 44:19–21; 1 Macc 5:50–52, 64, 67–68; T. Levi. 9:1–14). Again, *The Psalms of Solomon* prove informative as the children of Abraham were reminded that God's faithfulness is toward those who keep his law, "The Lord is faithful to those who truly love him, to those who endure his discipline, to those who live in the righteousness of his commandments, in the law, which he has commanded for our life" (14:1–2).<sup>145</sup>

Returning to Romans, Paul's recollection of the story of Abraham breaks with Jewish tradition, but not from the Old Testament (Rom 1:1–4).<sup>146</sup> For Paul, Genesis 15:6 is central for his understanding of the significance of the Abrahamic narrative. Paul certainly does not discount Abraham's obedience (Rom 4:11, 20–22), but he seeks to demonstrate that it was Abraham's faith that served as the grounds for righteousness (v. 23). Contrary to Boyarin's claim that Paul practiced a "heretical midrash" in order to support his new understanding of Judaism, Paul carefully reads the Abrahamic narrative within context to make his case.<sup>147</sup> In Genesis 15 Abraham confesses his concern that he remains childless, despite the Lord's promise to bless him with offspring to be his heir (vv. 2–3; cf. Gen 12:7). The Lord reassures Abraham that his offspring will be more

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that Abraham was declared righteous *subsequent to* and *because of* his obedience, his faithfulness under trial." Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 236.

<sup>145</sup>Translation from Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

<sup>146</sup>Contra Mark Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>147</sup>Contra Daniel Boyarin, "Was Paul an 'Anti-Semite'? A Reading of Galatians 3–4," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 47, no. 1–2 (1993): 48. Collins is correct in his assertion that when Paul interpreted the Old Testament, "he saw things that were really there." C. John Collins, "Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete was Paul?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 1 (2004): 86. I also concur with Hays when he says "Paul the Jew remained passionately driven, to the end of his life, by the desire to demonstrate that God had *not* abandoned Israel." Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), ix. It is this underlying conviction that Hays sees operative behind Paul's use of Israel's Scripture. A failure to see Paul as an interpreter of Israel's Scripture is to misread Paul's letters and fail to grasp the meaning of the Old Testament.

numerous than the stars (v. 5). It is in response to this promise that we read “And he [Abraham] *believed* the Lord and he [the Lord] counted it to him as *righteousness*” (v. 6). The rest of Genesis 15 then focuses on the Lord’s work, namely that he would ultimately fulfill the covenant he established with Abraham (vv. 12–21).

Therefore, Paul rightly interprets Genesis 15:6 seeing that it was Abraham’s trust/faith in God’s promise that was “counted (ἐλογίσθη) for righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)” (Rom 4:3–5). Such righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) should be understood in the forensic sense.<sup>148</sup> The verb δικαίω is derived from the Old Testament use of קָטַב, where judges were able to declare someone as in the right (Deut 25:1). This forensic meaning of δικαιοσύνη is further supported by Paul’s use of λογίζομαι (4:4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 22, 23, 24). In this context, the verb means to “count” or “reckon,”<sup>149</sup> and in this case what is being counted to Abraham is righteousness. Therefore, righteousness—a right standing before God—is a gift from God which is inherently alien to Abraham. As Vickers eloquently states,

By faith, Abraham stands before God as one who has fulfilled every standard and condition expected by God. If God declares that Abraham is righteous, it means that God himself views Abraham as a righteous person. The surprising turn in the story is that ‘righteousness,’ typically associated with what one does, is here declared on one who believes.<sup>150</sup>

If there was any doubt that Paul’s emphasis on justification fundamentally concerns the forgiveness of sins, it is eliminated with the citation of Psalm 31:1–2 (LXX).

A primary reason Paul recalls these verses is the occurrence of λογίζομαι.<sup>151</sup> The Psalm

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<sup>148</sup>Contra Wright who argues that “[Paul’s] reference to Abraham’s ‘reward’ (μισθός) in 4.4. is an allusion to Gen. 15.1, where the ‘reward is the large family; he is not then, refuting a view of justification which involves ‘earning’ a righteous status.” N. T. Wright, “Paul and the Patriarch: The Role of Abraham in Romans 4,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35, no. 3 (2013): 207. For a thorough critique of Wright’s argument, see David Shaw, “Romans 4 and the Justification of Abraham in Light of Perspectives New and Newer,” *Themelios* 40, no. 1 (2015): 50–62.

<sup>149</sup>BDAG 587.1.

<sup>150</sup>Brian J. Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 84.

<sup>151</sup>Rightly, Moo, *Romans*, 289.

reiterates the theme of justification and the forgiveness of sins, namely that “blessing” occurs when “the Lord does not reckon (λογίζηται) sin.”<sup>152</sup>

Since Abraham and David were reckoned righteous on the basis of faith and not works (Rom 4:2–8), Paul asks, “Is this blessing for the circumcision or also for the uncircumcision” (v. 9a)? The question assumes a positive answer. Yes, through faith this blessing is for the Jews and even the Gentiles! Consequently, if justification and entrance into the people of God is on the basis of faith, then Gentiles do not have to undergo circumcision and subject themselves to the Mosaic Law. It is at this point where Boyarin accuses Paul of abandoning his Jewish heritage. According to Boyarin, if the people of God are defined by faith then “it is conditional precisely on abandoning that to which we hold so dearly, our separate cultural, religious identity, our own fleshy and historical practice, our existence according to the flesh, our Law, our difference.”<sup>153</sup>

While such a conclusion may come across as a radical reinterpretation of the people of God—and in some sense it is—Paul again bases his gospel in the OT Scripture (4:9b; cf. Gen 15:6).<sup>154</sup> From Genesis 15:6, Paul highlights two ways that Gentile inclusion into the people of God was prefigured in Abraham. First, since Abraham was declared righteous before receiving circumcision, he is able to be the father of all who believe (Rom 4:9–12; Gal 3:17–18). Paul asks, “How was [Abraham’s faith] reckoned?” While circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised but uncircumcised” (v. 10). Paul’s point is simple, the chronological details of Abraham’s justification are

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<sup>152</sup>Schreiner is correct when he states, “The sins of David obviously had nothing to do with boundary markers or the excluding of Gentiles from the promise. Paul is doubtless thinking of his moral failures, particularly his transgression relating to Bathsheba and Uriah.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 228.

<sup>153</sup>Boyarin, “Was Paul an ‘Anti-Semite’?,” 61.

<sup>154</sup>Note that Paul makes the same argument in Gal 3 asserting that “the Scripture foresaw that God justifies the Gentiles by faith, he preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham that ‘all nations will be blessed in you’” (v. 8).

significant.<sup>155</sup> Abraham was justified *before* he was circumcised, and his circumcision was a sign of his faith which he had when uncircumcised (v. 11a).<sup>156</sup> Therefore, since Abraham’s justification occurred while uncircumcised, he serves as typological figure anticipating the fatherhood of both Gentiles and Jews.<sup>157</sup> As Paul put it, God’s purpose in justifying Abraham by faith was “so that he should be the father of all who believe” and so that “righteousness should be reckoned to them” (v. 11b).

Second, the blessing to the nations is a central element of the promise given to Abraham (vv. 13–17). Paul furthers his argument by explaining (γὰρ) that the promise to Abraham “does not come through the law,” but “through the righteousness of faith” (v. 13). And what is the promise to Abraham and his offspring; “he would inherit the world” (v. 13). While the exact wording of this promise is not found in the OT, Paul is summarizing God’s covenant with Abraham.<sup>158</sup> In particular, Paul recalls God promise (1) to bless Abraham with innumerable descendants (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4–6, 16–20; 22:17), (2) to give Abraham possession of the land (Gen 13:15–17; 15:12–21; 17:8), and (3) that all the nations would be blessed in him (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Paul contends, that if it is the adherents of the law (οἱ ἐκ νόμου) who are heirs of the promise,

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<sup>155</sup>Rightly, Moo, *Romans*, 293.

<sup>156</sup>Paul further describes circumcision as a “sign and seal of the righteousness he had by faith” (v. 11). Περιτομῆς is a genitive of apposition to σημεῖον; whereas σημεῖον is in apposition to σφραγίδα. Rightly, John D. Harvey, *Romans*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 110. Contra Murray, *Romans*, 1:138, Schreiner notes, “Distinctions should not be drawn between the words σημεῖον and σφραγίς. The purpose in using both words is to say that circumcision is not intrinsic or essential to faith. Instead, it confirms, documents, ratifies, and authenticates the right standing by faith that Abraham already had” (Schreiner, *Romans*, 233). For a theological treatment on circumcision as it relates to the Abrahamic Covenant and New Covenant, see Stephen J. Wellum, “Baptism and the Relationship Between the Covenants,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 97–162.

<sup>157</sup>Hays cogently summarizes the significance of Paul’s use of the Abrahamic narrative, “The Story of Abraham is told as it is told (or, as Paul would say, these things happened to Abraham in the order which they happened) in order that Abraham might fitly serve as the archetype for Gentile believers as well as Jewish believers. He is said to be the father of both group not because they are descended from him *kata sarka* but because their faith mirrors his and because their destiny is prefigured in him: they are included vicariously in the blessing pronounced upon him by God, a blessing which is specifically said to apply to ‘all the nations.’” Hays, *Echoes*, 56.

<sup>158</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 299.



then “faith is emptied and the promise is void” (v. 14). How can this be? Because “the law brings wrath” (v. 15). Paul is likely explaining that since no one is able to keep the law (Rom 1–3), the law only brings the judgment of God (2:1–5). It is for this reason that the promise is for those who have faith (ἐκ πίστεως) because faith is according to grace and secures the promise to all Abraham’s offspring, both Jew (τῶ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου) and Gentile (τῶ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ; v. 16).<sup>159</sup>

Paul claims that it is on the basis of faith that God’s promise to “make [Abraham] the father of many nations” is fulfilled (Rom 4:17; cf. Gen 17:5). Again, by drawing upon the Abrahamic narrative, Paul is able to present him as an exemplar of saving faith. This step is crucial to Paul’s argument because “Abraham by his faith functions as the father of all peoples, and if his faith was counted to him as righteousness, then it is imperative to define the nature of his faith.”<sup>160</sup>

It is at this point that rays of gospel prefigurement shine. Paul explains, Abraham “believed the God who raises the dead and calls things that are non-existent into being” (Rom 4:17).<sup>161</sup> In Abraham’s case, he believed against all odds (“hope against hope”) that he and Sarah would conceive to bear a son (v. 18); he considered (ἐλογίσθη)

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<sup>159</sup>Contra Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 216. Schreiner is likely on target when he states, “This phrase is rather strange because it seems to say that the inheritance is available either by the law or by faith. This would imply that Jews, who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, would receive the inheritance via the law. But this would contradict the clear intention of the preceding verses. For instance, verses 11–12 say that Jews who are circumcised but lack faith are not true children of Abraham, and verses 13–15 contend that the promised inheritance cannot be gained through the law. Thus Paul is likely using the phrase τῶ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου in a different sense than the phrase ἐκ νόμου in verse 14. Here the intent is to say that the inheritance is available to both Jewish Christians and Gentiles who share the faith of Abraham.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 240. See also Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:242.

<sup>160</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 243.

<sup>161</sup>The latter phrase καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα has been variously interpreted. Some see it in reference to God’s creative power by which he created the world *ex nihilo* (Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 218; Barrett, *Romans*, 91; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 386; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:244). This view understands the ὡς to signal a result. In this way, God calls that which did not exist, resulting in its existence. Others take God’s calling to refer to his “summoning of that which does not exist as if it does.” This interpretation explains God’s promise to summon the nations that will become Abraham’s heirs (Murray, *Romans*, 1:146–47; Moo, *Romans*, 308; Schreiner, *Romans*, 244–45). Both interpretations fit the context and it’s possible that both ideas are present in Paul’s mind. In this way, God’s creative power is the means by which he summons the nations to faith and they become Abraham’s descendants (cf. 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 1:18). Either way, a decision does not inherently change the meaning of the passage.

his own body “as good as dead, being 100 years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb” (v. 19). It is this kind of faith that Paul says is “reckoned . . . for righteousness” (v. 22). And furthermore, this story of faith reveals the death-life paradigm by which God fulfils his promises.

Paul concludes this section on Abraham by explicitly unveiling the mystery of Christ hidden in the narrative. Paul says, the phrase “‘it was reckoned’ was not written for his sake alone, but also ours” (vv. 23–24a; cf. 15:4).<sup>162</sup> The word of justification pronounced upon Abraham finds its ultimate fulfillment in the work of God in Christ.<sup>163</sup> Paul implicitly presents Jesus as the promised seed of Abraham, complementary to Galatians 3.<sup>164</sup> In Galatians, Paul explicitly identifies Jesus as the promised seed (v. 16) in whom those who believe become Abraham’s seed (v. 29). Here in Romans, Paul makes the same point when he says, righteousness is “reckoned to those who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:24b).<sup>165</sup>

Therefore, in accord with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, Paul views the cross and resurrection as an eschatological event which connects the past with the present. It is in this way, that the mystery of Christ reimagines the people of God as those who belong to him by faith (1:6; 16–17; 4:11–12, 24), while also maintaining continuity with the OT promises.<sup>166</sup> The Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection) not only serves as

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<sup>162</sup>In 4:24, the phrase *οἷς μέλλει λογίζεσθαι* is in the future because it reflects the perspective of the OT. In this way, the Scripture looked forward to the present era when the God would justify all peoples by faith. Rightly, Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:277; Schreiner, *Romans*, 250.

<sup>163</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 627.

<sup>164</sup>Seifrid notes, “The ‘seed’ to whom the promise belongs consists of believing Jews and Gentiles (4:16–17, 24). Yet Paul breaks off his subsequent narration of Abraham’s faith at the point of Isaac’s birth and figurative ‘resurrection’ (4:25), speaking instead of the resurrection of ‘Jesus our Lord.’ Implicitly Jesus himself is the promised seed of Abraham (4:24) (ibid., 626).

<sup>165</sup>Rightly Daniel Kirk who remarks, “The point of connection between Paul’s audience and Abraham is the God who raised Jesus from the dead (4:24). Only this act of God explains the language Paul uses to describe Abraham, Sarah, and the God of Abraham’s faith. Resurrection is God’s means of fulfilling his purpose to bless Abraham with a great family comprised of all nations (4:17, 23–24).” Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 72.

<sup>166</sup>Carson insightfully remarks, “In this instance of appeal to Scripture, the continuity is found not in the actual *practice* or *pattern* of religion, but in the kind of relationship inherent in promise and

the paradigm for discerning God's unfolding redemptive plan, but also the fulfilment of God's promise to bring about the obedience of faith among the nations (1:5; 16:26).

Paul revealed this mysterious plan through the Abrahamic narrative (4:1–25), but he also shows that it fits within the prophetic expectations of the coming eschatological seed of David (1:2–4; 15:7–13). In doing so, Paul demonstrates that Jesus is the true Son of God who embodies his people Israel, thus fulfilling God's promise of blessing the nations. Consequently, all those who are united to Christ by faith are sons of God and members of the true Israel of promise (8:12–17).<sup>167</sup> In 15:7–13, Paul summarizes this mystery showing how the Gentiles are incorporated into Israel through union with Christ in accordance to the Scriptures.<sup>168</sup> To this end, Paul reveals that the mystery was hidden in the Psalms (Pss 17:50; 116:1 LXX), the Law (Deut 32:43), and the Prophets (Isa 11:10).

Leading up to these verses, Paul has already exhorted the church in Rome to live in harmony together as the one people of God (v. 5). Specifically, they are not to please themselves, but seek the good of their neighbor (vv. 1–2).<sup>169</sup> Paul grounds this

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fulfillment. Indeed, this particular promise, fulfilled in the manner that Paul understands it, can only result in some *discontinuity* at the level of religious practice, for it means that the Israelite-locus of the covenant community must be enlarged to constitute an all-nations-locus. In other words, the continuity established by specific fulfillment of Scripture ensures there will be some measure of discontinuity at the level of practice and experience." Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment," 403.

<sup>167</sup>I have written elsewhere how Jesus is the true Israel and promised Davidic king through whom God's people find their identity. Sears, *Heirs of Promise*, 12–38. See also Beale who discusses Christ's role as the true, end-time Israel. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 651–56.

<sup>168</sup>Many scholars argue that these verses serve as the summation of the entire epistle, see Hays, *Echoes*, 71; Leander E. Keck, "Christology, Soteriology, and the Praise of God (Romans 15:7–13)," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 85; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 235; Wagner, *Heralds*, 307.

<sup>169</sup>There is much scholarly discussion concerning the identity of the weak. For an overview of the various positions, see Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 1–23. While this discussion is beyond the focus of this dissertation I take the view that the "weak" are primarily Jewish Christians and the strong are primarily Gentile Christians. This position makes the best sense of the immediate context whereby the "circumcision" corresponds with the weak and the "Gentiles" correspond with the strong (15:8–9). Rightly, Käsemann, *Romans*, 384; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 845; Scott J. Hafemann, "Eschatology and Ethics: The Future of Israel and the Nations in Romans 15:1–13," *Tyndale Bulletin* 51, no. 2 (2000): 187–88; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:740–41; Schreiner, *Romans*, 727. Contra, A. Andrew Das, "'Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles': The Encoded Audience of Romans 15.7–13," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34, no. 1 (2011): 90–110.

exhortation in the example of Christ, “For even [he] did not please himself, but as it is written, ‘the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me’” (v. 3; cf. Ps 68:10 [LXX]). The use of Psalm 68 is significant because early Christians saw the cross of Christ as its fulfillment and explanation (Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23, 36; Luke 23:36; John 2:17; 15:25; 19:29; Acts 1:20; Rom 11:9).<sup>170</sup> Paul did not use this Psalm because he thought the pre-existent Christ was speaking in it;<sup>171</sup> rather he read it typologically prefiguring Christ as David’s eschatological seed (Rom 1:3; cf., 2 Sam 7:12–14).<sup>172</sup> Therefore, as the promised seed of David, Jesus’s sufferings on the cross and cry of lament are the full expression and fulfillment of Psalm 68. It is in this way that Paul reimagines the words of David as the present words of the risen Christ.<sup>173</sup>

This reorientation of Scripture is significant for how mystery functions in Romans. In fact, in 15:4 Paul tips his hand to a christological hermeneutic when he states, “For whatever was written beforehand was written for our instruction, so that . . . through the Scripture we should have hope.” This eschatological hope (15:13; cf. 5:2–5; 8:20, 24–25) is precisely found by situating one’s life within the eschatological paradigm of the cross and resurrection of Christ prefigured in the OT. Previous Scripture now speaks

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<sup>170</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 722.

<sup>171</sup>Contra Keck, “Christology,” 93.

<sup>172</sup>Hays rightly notes, “[The royal lament psalms] would be construed—by most Jews, not only by Christians—as paradigmatic for Israel’s corporate national sufferings in the present time, and their characteristic triumphant conclusions would be read as pointers to God’s eschatological restoration of Israel. Thus ‘David’ in these psalms becomes a symbol for the whole people and—at the same time—a prefiguration of the future Anointed One (ὁ Χριστός) who will be the heir of the promises and the restorer of the throne.” Richard B. Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul’s Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention,” in *The Future of Christology*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 130. As with other lament Psalms, the LXX includes the superscription Εἰς τὸ τέλος. Though difficult to discern its meaning, the superscription could be a hermeneutical indicator to understand the Psalm eschatologically. *Ibid.*, 127. See also Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 515–18.

<sup>173</sup>See Hays who defends the thesis that Paul’s christological interpretation of this Ps must have been a well-established tradition within early Christianity. Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms,” 127–29. For similar interpretations see Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:745; Seifrid, “Romans,” 686; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:3:108. Such a christological interpretation does not exclude David as the historic speaker of the Psalm, for Paul attributes Ps 68 (LXX) to him in Rom 11:9. Nevertheless, the Ps is given greater meaning in light of the arrival of the Messiah to whom David typologically prefigured.

anew in the present era of fulfillment. In light of this revealed mystery, the Roman believers are to reorient their perspective of reality and imagine themselves as God’s eschatological people in Christ. As Seifrid remarks, “All that has been ‘written in advance’ about the inbreaking of the eschaton has been written for our instruction; even the words of the Davidic psalm speak to believers now, including Gentile readers.”<sup>174</sup> In other words, just as David speaks in Psalm 68 as the representative of his people, embodying Israel’s fate through suffering and exaltation, so Jesus as the true Davidic seed speaks embodying the fate of his people through death and resurrection. It is for this reason Paul grounds his exhortation for unity appealing to the example of “the Christ” (Rom 15:3).

As in 15:1–3, Paul’s exhortation in 15:7–13 reflects this eschatological reorientation by explaining how Christ “became a servant” (διάκονον)<sup>175</sup> to both Jews and Gentiles thus fulfilling the promises to the patriarchs (vv. 8–9; cf. 4:1–25).<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 687.

<sup>175</sup>The “servant” theme may even allude to the Servant songs of Isa, whereby the mission to rescue Israel results also in the salvation of the nations (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 52:13–52:12). Ibid., 688. Also Paul’s use of the perfect (γεγενῆσθαι) emphasizes Christ’s state as a servant and may indicate his ongoing role as such. See Barrett, *Romans*, 271.

<sup>176</sup>The syntax of Rom 15:8–9 is particularly difficult. The primary issue concerns how to relate the clause of 15:8 to that in 15:9. There are three main ways scholars have translated these verses. (1) Some take the infinitives γεγενῆσθαι (v. 8) and δοξάσαι (v. 9) as parallel, both dependent upon as the main verb. The translation is as follows: “For I say that the Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truthfulness of God in order to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, but the Gentiles glorify God for his mercy.” For advocates of this view, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:742–44; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:106; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 704. (2) Others see δοξάσαι (with τὰ ἔθνη as the subject) parallel with εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι in v. 8. Thus, both are infinitives of purpose. The translation is as follows: “For I say that the Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truthfulness of God in order to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs’ and that the Gentiles might glorify God on behalf of his mercy.” Proponents of this translation include Murray, *Romans*, 2:204–06; Käsemann, *Romans*, 386; Barrett, *Romans*, 249; Jewett, *Romans*, 892–93; Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 170; Das, “Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,” 92; Schreiner, *Romans*, 730–31. (3) Another view has been put forth by Wagner which also sees δοξάσαι as parallel with εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι in v. 8, see J. Ross Wagner, “The Christ, Servant of Jew and Gentile: A Fresh Approach to Romans 15:8–9,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 3 (1997): 473–85. However, τὰ ἔθνη is not the subject of δοξάσαι, but is an accusative of respect and parallel with περιτομῆς. Wagner identifies a balanced relationship between v. 8 and 9 and translates it accordingly: “for I say that the Christ has become a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truthfulness of God, in order to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs, and [a servant] with respect to the Gentiles on behalf of the mercy [of God] in order to glorify God.” Others who have adopted this translation include: Seifrid, “Romans,” 687–88; Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 355–57. The main difficulty of this view is seeing it in parallel with περιτομῆς. However, though not frequent in the NT, the accusative of respect is found elsewhere in Paul 7:21; 8:3; 9:5; 12:18; 15:17. On this point Wagner further argues that “the use of the genitive (in parallel with περιτομῆς) would cause confusion with the immediately

Specifically, Paul grounds his exhortation to “receive one another” in the example of “the Christ” (v. 7).<sup>177</sup> First, “Christ became a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God” (8a).<sup>178</sup> The prepositional phrase, ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ, elicits the reoccurring theme that Paul’s gospel upholds the faithfulness of God (1:18, 25; 3:4, 7; 9:14). This assertion is reinforced by the second prepositional phrase, εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων (v. 8b). The purpose for why Christ became a servant to the Jews was “to confirm the promises of the fathers.” Paul again sets the Christ event within the narrative of Abraham. As the true seed of Abraham, Jesus upholds God’s faithfulness to the Jews. Along these lines, “confirm” not only carries the sense of *reaffirming* the promises but of *realizing* them.<sup>179</sup>

Not only did Christ become a servant of the Jews, but also “in respect to the Gentiles on behalf of God’s mercy in order to glorify God” (v. 9). The parallel structure of these two verses reemphasizes the conviction Paul stated at the beginning of the letter: the gospel is for the Jew first, and the Gentile (1:16). As Wagner cogently states,

Throughout Romans, Paul has been concerned to show that God’s redemptive

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preceding genitive, τῶν πατέρων, which belongs to the other half of the sentence. Wagner, “Christ, Servant of Jew and Gentile,” 482. I find Wagner’s proposal most satisfying for the following reasons. First, it maintains a parallel relationship between the two verses:

περιτομῆς	ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ,	εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων
τὰ δὲ ἔθνη	ὑπὲρ ἐλέους	[εἰς τὸ] δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν

Second, it preserves the important theological theme that the gospel of Christ is for the Jew first and the Gentile. Third, by making Christ the subject of the infinitives the passage best fits the context whereby Christ is the main figure whom both Jew and Gentile are to emulate.

<sup>177</sup>While some commentators understand καθὼς to be causal (Käsemann, *Romans*, 385; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:739; Moo, *Romans*, 891), it’s best to retain its more common comparative sense. Rightly Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 846; Jewett, *Romans*, 889; Harvey, *Romans*, 352; Schreiner, *Romans*, 728. Also, I agree with Dunn and others who take ὁ Χριστός in its fullest sense as a title highlighting the significance of the Messiah in Paul’s thought. Dunn remarks, “The use of the definite article with Χριστός is unusual in Paul but is consistently maintained to the end of this section (15:3, 7); so we should probably see here a deliberate attempt to express himself in terms closest to those of the Jewish Christian minority = ‘the Messiah’ (as in 9:3, 5).” Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 824. See also Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 41–55.

<sup>178</sup>“Circumcision” (περιτομή) should be understood in reference to the Jews in contrast to the Gentiles (cf. 3:30; 4:12). Rightly Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:740; Wagner, *Heralds*, 309; Schreiner, *Romans*, 728.

<sup>179</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 309.

purpose, realized in and through Christ's ministry, encompasses Jew and Gentile alike in such a way that God remains faithful to his promises to Israel even as God reaches out in mercy to embrace the Gentiles, to whom he had formerly made no promises.<sup>180</sup>

Paul supports this new reality for both Jew and Gentile with a catena of OT prophetic passages (vv. 9b–12). These passages reveal God's redemptive plan to create a worshipping community of Jews and Gentiles through the *service* of the Messiah. In verse 9, Paul initially appeals to Psalm 17:50 (LXX) which recalls David's victory over his enemies and deliverance from the hand of Saul (cf. 2 Sam 22:1).<sup>181</sup> In a miraculous fashion God delivers him from certain death because he was upright and entrusted himself to the Lord (Ps 17:6–30). As a result, David was vindicated (vv. 31–37) and given victory over his enemies (vv. 38–46). And the praise David offers shows that he is the rightful king who has been exalted over Israel and the nations (vv. 47–51). He rejoices in the faithfulness of God in keeping his promise to show mercy “to David and to his seed forever” (v. 51b).<sup>182</sup> This last line of the psalm coupled with God's promise in 2 Samuel 7:12 to raise up seed from David to establish his throne forever gave Israel hope in an eschatological king who would at last bring salvation to Israel.<sup>183</sup> Since, the Davidic king represented his people and the experiences they would endure, Israel's hope was wrapped up in the vindication and exaltation of the eschatological Davidic king.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 310.

<sup>181</sup>Paul's citation could also be from 2 Sam 22:50, Moo says, “The LXX text of these two verses is identical, except for the placement of the vocative *κύριε*, which Paul omits. With this exception, Paul's text reproduces the LXX exactly.” Moo, *Romans*, 895n766. A decision between the two offers little exegetical payoff for the context of 2 Sam lies behind the Ps.

<sup>182</sup>Themes of God's “mercy” and “faithfulness” resound in this Psalm providing a clear connection with Paul's opening words (Rom 15:7-9a). This thematic links continues with the other passages Paul cites (vv. 10–12).

<sup>183</sup>Das is certainly correct that the Gentiles are the common denominator between Ps 17:50; Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; and Isa 11:10. Das, “Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,” 98. However, he overlooks the context of Ps 17:50—as well as the other OT citations—and fails to see the hope of Israel has not been abandoned in Paul's mind. Contra Das, Hafemann accurately captures Paul's christological reading of Ps 17, “The Messiah's vindication at his resurrection, for which he will (and already does) praise God among the nations, points forward to that day when Israel too will share in the Messiah's triumph as a result of having experienced the same steadfast love already experienced by her king.” Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 178. See also Wagner, *Heralds*, 311–15.

<sup>184</sup>Rightly, Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms,” 130; Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 177–

It is no surprise that Paul reimagines this Psalm by drawing out the typological connection to Christ's victory accomplished in his death and resurrection.<sup>185</sup> Like David, Jesus also was delivered from death and vindicated over his enemies. And in accordance to God's mercy (Ps 17:51), the promise to David and his seed has been "confirmed" (Rom 15:8) being fulfilled in the eschatological son of David (1:3–4). In this way, the enemies of the Christ have been defeated by his resurrection. Having been raised (Ps 17:49), Christ now confesses the name of the Lord among the nations thus bringing them his merciful salvation. And just as David represented Israel, so Jesus represents the new Israel among whom the Gentiles are included as his offspring. Therefore, as with the Jewish apocalyptic mysteries, Paul sees a typological pattern in the past, which is recapitulated in the present work of Christ. Consequently, God's people are to discern this paradigm revealed in the Christ, as the example for how they should receive one another (Rom 15:7). They are to humble themselves (vv. 1–2), just as the Christ humbled himself (v. 3; cf. Ps 17:28) and was then exalted to the glory and praise of God (Rom 15:6–7; cf. Ps 17:47–51).

Paul continues his catena of Scripture in 15:10 recalling Deuteronomy 32:43 (LXX).<sup>186</sup> Paul has already evoked Deuteronomy 32 earlier in Romans 9–11 (10:19; 11:1). The motif of Israel's judgment and provocation to jealousy is crucial to Paul's

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<sup>185</sup>On this basis, Hays and others argue that Paul reads Ps 17 (LXX) as the present words of Christ (Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms," 123–24; Wagner, *Heralds*, 312; Seifrid, "Romans," 688). However, Hafemann and Das contend that David remains the speaker, but that Paul sees in David's life a typological prefiguration of Jesus (Das, "'Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,'" 99; Hafemann, "Eschatology and Ethics," 175). The difference between these two interpretations is not substantial, for even the basis for seeing Christ as the current speaker is established on a typological relationship between David and the Christ. See Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms," 130. Nevertheless, a full discussion on this matter is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What is important to understand is that Paul sees a historical correspondence between the current eschatological reality of Christ's death and resurrection, and David's past suffering and exaltation. This typological correspondence reveals a death and resurrection paradigm for understanding God's redemptive purposes for his people.

<sup>186</sup>Paul's citation is verbatim with the LXX. While there are textual difficulties with this verse, the portion Paul cites is not far from the MT which reads, "O nations, praise his people." It could be that the LXX "presupposes a haplography, by which *'im* ("with") has been omitted, and supplies it to the text." Seifrid, "Romans," 689.



understanding of Israel’s current state of unbelief. However, here in Romans 15:10, Paul cites from the last verse of the Song of Moses which focuses on the inclusion of the Gentiles within the worshipping community of Israel.<sup>187</sup>

Deuteronomy 32 falls within the greater segment of chapters 27–32. This section lays before Israel future blessings for covenant obedience (27:12; 28:1–14) and curses for covenantal disobedience (27:13–26; 28:15–68). Moses warns that Israel will experience judgment by the hand of a distant nation (28:45–57), leaving Israel to be “few in number” (v. 62), scattering them among the ends of the earth (v. 64). Moses explains that this fate is certain because the Lord has not given Israel a “circumcised heart” so that they should obey (29:4; 30:1). Yet a future generation of the children of Israel<sup>188</sup>—and even foreigners—will look upon Israel’s judgment with understanding, knowing that Israel rejected God’s covenant (vv. 22–29).<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless, after these things have come upon Israel, God will show them mercy (30:3), circumcising their hearts (v. 6) and restoring them to their land with greater numbers and prosperity than before (vv. 3–5; 8–10). Furthermore, the judgment Israel experienced will then come upon all their “foes and

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<sup>187</sup>Hafemann makes an intriguing proposal that Paul’s citation from Ps 17 emphasizes the Christ’s vindication at his first coming and the implication for Israel’s future restoration; whereas the citation of Deut 32 points to the implications of his second coming and its implication for the Gentiles. Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 179–81. While Hafemann is correct to see that the promises of God have only been inaugurated and thus await consummation, he fails to recognize the eschatological tension at play in both passages. Furthermore, his proposal places the emphasis in Ps 17 on Israel’s restoration; yet Paul’s purpose in citing Ps 17 is to highlight the implications for the Gentiles. The citation from Deut 32 then further supports the inclusion of the Gentiles in light of Christ’s death and resurrection, while also anticipating a future consummation of these things.

<sup>188</sup>Note the MT reads, “the future generation” (הַדּוֹר הַבָּא, v. 21[MT]).

<sup>189</sup>I agree with Beale and Gladd who see these verses as a positive reference to Gentiles who join the future remnant of Israel in submitting to God’s covenant. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 104–07. Patrick makes a similar argument, “The surrounding nations appear primarily in Deuteronomy as Israel’s foes, [yet] there is a later place for them in the divine economy than is suggested by the hostile relationship . . . . Not only does [the larger] history serve as the plane on which God’s story with Israel is worked out, but in these indirect ways the other nations are seen as witnessing, reflecting upon, and comprehending that story even though it is not their own. The divine word through the prophets draws those nations even more directly into the story, confirming the word at the beginning (Gen 12:1–3) that Israel’s way was never for its own sake along but a part of God’s purposes for all the families of the earth.” D. Miller Patrick, *Deuteronomy, Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 211–12.

enemies” (v. 7).<sup>190</sup> Therefore, Deuteronomy 27–31 reveals a fourfold sequential plan concerning Israel’s judgment and ultimate restoration: (1) Israel’s judgment by a foreign nation; (2) Israel left to only a remnant which includes foreigners; (3) Israel is shown mercy and restored; and (4) Israel is vindicated as judgment is meted out upon their enemies.

The Song of Moses is recounted in Deuteronomy 32 and serves as a summary of Israel’s “latter-day” plight and restoration detailed in chapters 27–31.<sup>191</sup> By learning the Song, Israel is to remember what God has said so as not to be without excuse when the judgment comes upon them (31:19–22).<sup>192</sup> Thus, the Song recounts how God will make Israel jealous by a foolish nation as they experience judgment at their hand (32:21, 22–38; cf. 28:45–57). Nonetheless, God promises to exact vengeance upon his enemies (vv. 39–42).<sup>193</sup> Accordingly, this judgment is the means by which God will bring purification (*ἐκκαθαριεῖ*) to “his land and his people” (v. 43b).<sup>194</sup> Therefore, a theme of salvation through judgment resounds from Deuteronomy 32. God says, “I will kill and make alive; I will strike and heal” (v. 39). In this manner, God will show mercy to Israel. After Israel is brought to nothing, God will give them back to life (30:3–6; 32:36). The Song of Moses then climatically ends by calling upon the heavens and nations to join

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<sup>190</sup>As Sailhamer observes “The present judgement against Israel at the hands of the nations is therefore a foretaste of the coming judgement against the nations at the hand of God himself (Dt. 32:40-42).” John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 475–76. See also Das, “Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,” 99.

<sup>191</sup>Furthermore, the Song of Moses serves as a climatic conclusion to the entire Pentateuch as the last section of poetic material prophetically detailing Israel’s fate in the “latter days” (Deut 31:29; 32:20, 29; cf. Gen 49:1; Num 24:14). See Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch*, 35–37.

<sup>192</sup>It is important to note that Paul quotes from the Song of Moses in Rom 10:19 to support his claim that Israel has known that God would make them jealous through the Gentiles. He understands the Song of Moses speaks to the plight of Israel in his own day. This point will be explored fully in the next chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>193</sup>As others have noted, the enemies of God are never directly identified as “the Gentiles.” Instead of speaking of judgment upon *τα ἔθνη*, the Song speaks of *οἱ ὑπεναντίοι*, *τοῖς ἐχθροῖς*, and *τοῖς μισοῦσίν με*. The significance is that the oracle of judgment does not condemn the Gentiles as a whole, but all who oppose God. Rightly Wagner, *Heralds*, 317; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 101.

<sup>194</sup>Rightly, Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 180.

with God’s people in worship (v. 43; cf. 29:22–29).<sup>195</sup> It is in light of the judgment to come that the hope of salvation is held out to all, even the Gentiles.

Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 32:43 reveals that God’s mercy to the Gentiles is a present reality because of Christ’s death and resurrection.<sup>196</sup> God’s ways with Israel which involve “killing and making alive” (Deut 32:39) have now been manifested in the work of the Christ. While Israel’s full restoration awaits, at the present time there is a believing remnant which includes Gentiles (9:24–27). Therefore, Paul sees the latter day welcoming of Jews and Gentiles in Christ as an initial fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32. In this way, the OT reveals the paradigm of death and resurrection which now serves as the basis for understanding the eschatological identity of God’s people (15:1–7; 8–9a).

Paul continues to emphasize the reception of the Gentiles among Israel with his citation of Psalm 116:1 [LXX] (Rom 15:11). This Psalm is a part of the *Hallel* (Pss 112–117 [LXX]), a collection of psalms reminiscing upon God’s faithfulness to restore Israel. Paul, however, cites from the only *Hallel* psalm that unequivocally includes the nations. Paul bolsters this emphasis on the Gentiles by advancing the phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη forward against its position in the LXX.<sup>197</sup> When read as a whole, it becomes even more apparent why Paul cites this Psalm. It contains striking similarities with Romans 15:8–9 where Paul employs the themes of God’s truthfulness (ἀληθείας, v. 8) and mercy (ἐλέους, v. 9). In particular, Psalm 116:2 serves as the grounds for the universal call to worship the Lord whereby both the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) and Israel (οἱ λαοί) are to praise the Lord because “his mercy (ἐλεος) was strengthened for us and the truthfulness (ἀλήθεια) of

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<sup>195</sup>Note that there is a distinction between the nations (ἔθνη) and God’s people Israel (τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ; Dt 32:43). The significance is that the nations are summoned to join Israel in worshiping the Lord. Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 180–81.

<sup>196</sup>Rightly, Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 849. Contra Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 181; Das, “Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,” 99.

<sup>197</sup>Rightly Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 181–82.

the Lord remains forever” (v. 2).<sup>198</sup> As others have noted, the combination of God’s mercy and truth alludes to Exodus 33:19 and 34:6.<sup>199</sup> In Exodus, God claims freedom to show mercy to whomever he chooses. Paul even picks up this theme in Romans 9:15 to defend God’s justice toward Israel. Therefore, in citing this Psalm, Paul sees in the reception of the Gentiles in Christ the confirmation of God’s covenant with Israel.

This point is further established when the canonical location of Psalm 116 is considered.<sup>200</sup> In the preceding Psalm (115 [LXX]), the psalmist confesses his love to the Lord, because the Lord answered his pleas for mercy (v. 1). Like David in Psalm 17 [LXX], the psalmist here has been rescued from the “snares of death” (115:3). Then in the subsequent Psalm (117 [LXX]) God’s enduring mercy is again highlighted as the psalmist reflects upon the salvation wrought by the Lord. Particularly, insightful is the psalmist gratitude to the Lord’s discipline (117:18), for opening the gate of righteous and salvation (vv. 19–21), and his recognition of the Lord’s doing in “the stone that the builders rejected” (v. 22). If Paul has the larger canonical context in view, the christological connection with Psalm 116 becomes even clearer showing that in placing Christ as the stumbling stone (Ps 117:22; cf. Rom 10:33), God has brought mercy to both Jews and Gentiles in fulfilment of the promise to the patriarchs.

Once more, Paul appeals to the OT as witness that his gospel has been made known in the prophetic writings (Rom 1:1–3; 16:25–26). In verse 12, Paul climactically concludes his catena of OT citations with Isaiah 11:10 (LXX), a verse which encapsulates the themes initially presenting in Romans 15:8–9 and reiterates Paul’s emphasis on the inclusion of the Gentiles among God’s people. Paul closely follows the LXX, only

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<sup>198</sup>See Wagner who also makes the same observation that ἔθνη and λαοί are not “synonyms, but references to distinct groups: Gentiles and Israel.” Wagner, *Heralds*, 314.

<sup>199</sup>Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 184; Das, ““Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,”” 100. See also Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, Word Biblical Commentary 21 (Dallas: Word, 2002), 158.

<sup>200</sup>See Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 183.

omitting the eschatological reference “in that day.” For Paul, “that day” has been inaugurated with the resurrection of Christ (Rom 1:4).<sup>201</sup> Specifically, the promises of God have found their confirmation in him (15:8), who is “the root of Jesse” in whom “the Gentiles hope” (v. 12). Structurally, this citation books ends Paul’s emphasis upon Jesus’s service as the Christ. Paul began with Psalm 17:50 to present Jesus as the messianic seed of David (Rom 15:9b). He now concludes showing that as the Davidic King, the Gentiles now find their hope in him (v. 12).<sup>202</sup> Yet, Paul’s citation of Isaiah is not only significant because of its climactic role in Paul’s catena of Scripture, but because it “taps into the larger Isaianic story of Israel’s restoration.”<sup>203</sup>

The wider context Isaiah 11:10 looks to the eschatological day of restoration that will occur after severe judgment has come upon Israel (Isa 9:8–11:16).<sup>204</sup> Mirroring many of the eschatological themes from Deuteronomy 27–32,<sup>205</sup> Isaiah prophecies of: (1) Israel’s judgment by a foreign nation and exile from the land (9:8–10:4); (2) Israel’s dwindling to a believing remnant (10:20–26); (3) the rebirth of the Davidic monarchy (11:1–9); (4) the recognition of the Davidic king by the nations (v. 10); and (5) a final restoration of Israel from all the earth (11:11–16).

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<sup>201</sup>Käsemann overlooks the “not-yet” component to Pauline Eschatology when he says, “For the opening indication of time has no application since he is not concerned with the future but with the epiphany of the shoot of David which has already taken place.” Käsemann, *Romans*, 386–87. Nevertheless, he is correct to see that Paul likely understands the temporal indicator as superfluous because this prophecy is in presently being realized in the life of the Roman church. Others who take a similar view of Paul’s omission of this eschatological phrase include the following: Koch, *Schrift*, 241–42; Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David,” 671; Wagner, *Heralds*, 318; Seifrid, “Romans,” 690. However, Dunn suggests that “Paul may have preferred to reserve [the phrase] for the final day of judgment (cf. 2:5, 16; 13:12; 1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; etc.).” Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 850. In response to Dunn, Hafemann aptly notes, “Yet in these cases Paul is referring to ‘the day’ of judgement without quoting a text from Scripture, where has his quotation of Is. 11:10 in 15:12 makes an additional reference to ‘the day’ superfluous.” Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 186n72.

<sup>202</sup>Rightly Das, “‘Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,’” 100.

<sup>203</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 318.

<sup>204</sup>Motyer comments on the phrase “that day” saying, “The formula emphasizes the eschatological nature of the vision.” J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 125.

<sup>205</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 328.

Paul's use of Isaiah 11:10 reveals a "christological hermeneutic" is at work.<sup>206</sup> Not only does this passage provide a clear connection to the Christ's Davidic lineage, but the verb ἀνίστημι is filled with new meaning in light of Christ's resurrection.<sup>207</sup> As in Romans 1:4–5, it is by his resurrection from the dead that Jesus is appointed as the Davidic king bringing about the obedience of faith among the nations. Furthermore, it is on the basis of the resurrection that one confesses Jesus as Lord (10:9), whether Jew or Gentile (v. 12). Therefore, in fulfillment of Isaiah 11, the Gentiles are placing their hope in the Christ, the seed of David in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (Rom 15:8–9).

Such messianic interpretations of Isaiah 11 were understood by other Jewish groups in the Second Temple period.<sup>208</sup> For instance, Psalm of Solomon 17:21–46 seems to contain several allusions to Isaiah 11 anticipating Israel's Davidic king to arise rule over the nation (v. 21). This rule, however, also includes judgment upon the nations, whereby the Messiah will "purify Jerusalem from the Gentiles" (v. 22) and gather his holy people whom he will lead in righteousness (v. 26). Once Jerusalem is purified, the nations will come to see his glory (v. 31), and those Gentiles who fear him, he will show mercy (v. 34). While the Gentiles will find mercy from the king, the Jewish tradition seems to maintain a distinction between Israel and the nations, even ensuring obedience of the Gentiles by force (Genesis Rabbah 99:8; 4Q161 8–10 III, 18–25). Yet, Paul uses Isaiah 11 to support the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ (Rom 15:5, 7–9). Therefore, in

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<sup>206</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 319.

<sup>207</sup>Dunn insightfully notes that, "ἀνίστημι can mean simply 'arise' (Cranfield; cf. 1 Cor 10:7), but since it occurs so frequently in reference to the resurrection (not least in the passion predictions of the Gospels; also Acts 17:3 and 1 Thess 4:14; cf. the only other references in the Pauline corpus [1 Thess 4:16; Eph 5:14]), it would be surprising if Paul did not have in mind the double reference (cf. particularly Acts 3:22, 26; 7:37)." Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 850. Similarly, Hafemann, "Eschatology and Ethics," 186; Whitsett, "Son of God, Seed of David," 672; Jewett, *Romans*, 896; Das, "'Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles,'" 100.

<sup>208</sup>See Wagner for a more extensive survey of Second Temple interpretations of Isaiah 11. Wagner, *Heralds*, 320–23.

continuity with the Jewish tradition Paul presents Jesus as Isaiah's new David who has come to rule over the Gentiles. In this way, Paul has concluded his catena of OT prophetic passages, not only revealing God's plan to create a unified people, but to ground in it the death and resurrection of Christ (vv. 7–12).

**Conclusion.** This overview of mystery has confirmed that the gospel serves as the key for interpreting the OT and discerning God's redemptive plan in Christ (Rom 1:16–17; 16:25–26). As an interpretive mystery, the fulfillment of Israel's Scripture has startlingly come through a crucified Messiah. Nevertheless, there remains a level of continuity in that God's ways in the past have served as typological patterns recapitulated in the present. Primarily this mystery schema was detailed in the revelation of the person of the Christ. Paul not only presents Jesus as the promised "seed (*σπέρματος*) of David according to the flesh" (1:3), but also as the divine Son of God (1:4). Paul's use of the OT reveals a "christological monotheism" whereby Jesus is included in the unique identity of Israel's God. In this way, Israel's eschatological expectations of YHWH's coming reign have found their meaning and fulfillment in the Christ event.

Paul also relates the mystery of Christ to God's purposes for the nations (1:5; 16:26). In accord with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, Paul views the cross and resurrection as an eschatological event which connects the past with the present. In this way, the mystery of Christ reimagines the people of God as those who belong to him by faith (1:6; 16–17; 4:11–12, 24), while also maintaining continuity with the OT promises (15:7–12). The Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection) not only serves as the paradigm for discerning God's unfolding redemptive plan, but also the fulfillment of God's promise to bring about the obedience of faith among the nations (1:5; 16:26). Consequently, Paul calls the Roman church to orient their lives as the eschatological community embodied in the risen Christ (15:1–7) in whom they have hope (v. 13).

## Mystery as Eschatological Revelation

The theme of hope is a fitting place to begin when considering the eschatological dimension of the Pauline mystery (4:18; 5:2, 4, 5; 8:20, 24, 25; 12:12; 15:4, 12, 13). The term hope (ἐλπίς, ἐλπίζω) occurs seventeen times in Romans and “provides a comprehensive horizon for Paul’s statements dealing with salvation and eschatology.”<sup>209</sup> Like the Jewish apocalyptic mysteries in the OT and Second Temple period, so the Pauline mystery looks forward to a future fulfillment (cf. Dan 2:28–29; 12:4; 1Q27 1 I, 3–4; CD 3:12–20; 3 Bar. 16:4; T. Levi. 2:10). However, unique to Romans—and Pauline theology altogether—is that the “age to come” has broken into the present. There is an overlap in the two ages whereby the apocalyptic mystery of Christ is already fulfilled, but still looks to a future not-yet realized.<sup>210</sup> Despite this difference, the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema remains functional in Romans revealing God’s ways in the past as being recapitulated in the present, in order to give hope for the future (Rom 15:7–13). Yet for Paul, the definitive work of God in the past is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. This apocalyptic event now prefigures the eschatological redemption of God’s people (8:17). Therefore, it is according to this mystery that God is able to strengthen the believers in Rome (16:25).

Already I have contended that the resurrection of Christ marks the inauguration of the new age (1:4, 16–17; 4:24–25; 6:4, 5, 9, 10; 8:11, 29, 34; 10:9; 14:9, 11; 15:12). It is the mystery of the risen Christ through which the eschatological promises of the OT have found their fulfillment. The centrality of the resurrection of the dead is consistent

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<sup>209</sup>Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 197.

<sup>210</sup>The “already-not-yet” is well established theme in Paul, see Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); Werner G. Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament According to its Major Witnesses: Jesus — Paul — John*, trans. J. E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 141–51; Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1992), 1–41; Karl P. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 233–52; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 96–108; Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 249–316.



with the OT and Second Temple Judaism. As Wright aptly argues, the hope of resurrection in Judaism is inseparable from the promises of the new exodus and the coming new creation (Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:12–14):

The Jews who believed in resurrection did so as one part of a larger belief in the renewal of the whole created order. Resurrection would be, in one and the same moment, the reaffirmation of the covenant and the reaffirmation of creation. Israel would be restored within a restored cosmos: the world would see, at last, who had all along been the true people of the creator god.<sup>211</sup>

According to the mystery of Christ, Paul proclaimed that the fulfillment of these realities is only visible through the eyes of faith (1:17). For this reason, there remains hope for a future manifestation of these hidden realities (8:24–25). For Paul, this future manifestation will be realized at the return of Christ: a well-developed theme within the Pauline epistles.<sup>212</sup> While the return of Christ is not a dominant theme within Romans, it is implicit within the hope of the consummation of all things whereby the wicked will be judged (2:5, 16; 12:19; 16:20) and God’s glory will be revealed (2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:18, 21).<sup>213</sup>

In order to strengthen the believers with this hope, Paul grounds their future in the resurrection of Christ. Paul says that believers are “predestined to be conformed to the image of [God’s] son, so that [the son] should be the firstborn (πρωτότοκον) among many brothers and sisters” (v. 29). Paul has in view the eschatological glory of the people of God anticipating the day when they will be conformed to Christ’s image, no longer bearing the image of mortal man (1:23; 3:23).<sup>214</sup> The image of Christ refers to the glory

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<sup>211</sup>N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 332.

<sup>212</sup>For a more developed study of this Pauline theme see, Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 72–93; Schreiner, *Paul*, 453–84; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*.

<sup>213</sup>Rightly Schreiner, *Paul*, 454.

<sup>214</sup>Rightly Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:731; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:432; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 483–84; Byrne, *Romans*, 273; Moo, *Romans*, 556. Contra, Käsemann who denies any eschatological telos in this passage, but rather argues that Paul has in view a baptism tradition whereby the divine image is now fully restored. Käsemann, *Romans*, 244–45.

that he obtained by his resurrection from the dead (cf. Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4).<sup>215</sup> This is confirmed by the title “firstborn,” a term which also speaks of Christ’s resurrection from the dead and status as the Davidic son of God (Rom 1:4; Col 1:18; cf. Ps 2:7–9; 89:27).<sup>216</sup> Paul assures believers that they are Christ’s co-heirs and thus will share in Christ’s glory (8:17), because Jesus is the first among many brothers and sisters (v. 29).<sup>217</sup>

In this way, Paul presents Christ’s death and resurrection as a prototype of believers’ death and resurrection.<sup>218</sup> This point is explicitly made in Romans 6:3–5 when Paul says:

Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death? We were buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we certainly will be united in a resurrection like his.

For Paul, identification with Christ is secured with the gift of the Spirit (5:5; 8:9–11). In the OT the giving of the Spirit was linked with the promise of a new creation and resurrection (Ezek 36:26; 37:5–6, 9–10, 14). It’s not surprising then that Paul unites these themes in Romans 8. Those who have the Spirit belong to Christ (v. 9). Since the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead also dwells in believers, their mortal bodies will be made alive through the Spirit (v. 11). Therefore, it is on the basis of union with Christ by means of the Spirit that Paul exhorts believers to rejoice in their sufferings (Rom 5:3; 8:17). As the sufferings of Christ led to his exaltation, so the sufferings of believers lead to theirs.

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<sup>215</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 445.

<sup>216</sup>Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 525; Byrne, *Romans*, 273; Schreiner, *Romans*, 445–56.

<sup>217</sup>As Dunn remarks, “the thought is of the resurrected Christ as the pattern of the new humanity of the last age, the firstborn (of the dead) of a new race of eschatological people in whom God’s design from the beginning of creation is at last fulfilled.” Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 484.

<sup>218</sup>A similar idea is found in 1 Cor where Christ is said to be the “firstfruits” of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23). Schreiner elaborates, “just as the first fruits of the harvest are the prelude to the full harvest, so also the resurrection of Christ anticipates and ensures the resurrection of all those who belong to him.” Schreiner, *Paul*, 457.

For this reason, Paul can say in the face of tribulation, “I consider that the present sufferings do not compare to the glory to be revealed [ἀποκαλυφθῆναι] in us” (8:18); namely the “revealing of the sons of God” (v. 19), which is the glory of the children of God” (v. 21), “the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23). Contrary to Susan Eastman, the revealed “sons of God” in verse 19 are the same as those mentioned in verse 14.<sup>219</sup> Paul has not expanded the scope of his audience to include unbelieving Israel, but rather is expounding upon the future consummation of believers’ adoption as the sons of God at the resurrection. He’s explaining that those who suffer with Christ now will not be disappointed because they will also be glorified with him (5:5; 8:17, 24).

Not only does Christ’s death and resurrection prefigure the suffering and resurrection of believers, but the creation as well. Here in Romans 8, the creation is personified, longing for the glory that is to be revealed (vv. 19–23).<sup>220</sup> Paul explains that the creation eagerly awaits and hopes for the “revealing [ἀποκάλυψιν] of the sons of God” because at that time the creation will share in the “freedom of the glory of the children of God,” that is a “freedom from the slavery of corruption” (vv. 19–21).<sup>221</sup> While the nonhuman creation is never spoken of as “hoping” per se, this idea is similarly captured among the prophets where the land is said to mourn (Isa 24:4, 7; Jer 4:28; 12:4) as it waits for renewal. In the same way, Paul says the creation has been subjected to futility because of the curse of sin (Gen 3:17–19); however, it waits renewal or resurrection

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<sup>219</sup>Susan Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse?: The Identity of the Sons of God in Romans 8:19,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 2 (2002): 266–67.

<sup>220</sup>The word translated “creation” is *κτίσις*. Paul’s use of the term is not to speak of humanity—believers or unbelievers—or of the angelic realm but the nonhuman, nonrational creation. Rightly, Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 469; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 506; John Bolt, “The Relation Between Creation and Redemption in Romans 8:18–27,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (1995): 34–51; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:411–12; Moo, *Romans*, 536. Contra, Adolf von Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 184; John G. Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology*, NovTSup 26 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1971), 40; Eastman, “Sons of God,” 273–76.

<sup>221</sup>Vos aptly notes that *ἀποκάλυψιν* is a term often associated with the future return of Christ (2 Thess 1:7; 1 Cor 1:7; 3:13). Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 77.

when it will be freed from the curse. Paul explains that this renewal or new creation has been inaugurated with the giving of the firstfruits of the Spirit within believers (Rom 8:23; cf. 2 Cor 5:17). The giving of the Spirit anticipates not only the believers' transformation, but the creation's as well.

Therefore, the resurrection of Christ becomes the hermeneutical key for understanding God's present dealings in the world and future plans of redemption. As Kirk states, "What is true of the resurrected Christ, whose status was elevated to that of exalted son by the Spirit's raising activity, is true of believers who have received that same Spirit."<sup>222</sup> Already, believers experience resurrection life through union with Christ (6:1–11), yet they still await the redemption of their bodies (8:18–25). Wrapped up in the hope of resurrection is the manifestation of God's saving righteousness. The mystery of Christ reveals that believers' sin has been forgiven through the cross and resurrection of Christ (4:1–8; 5:1, 18–21; 8:1), yet believers still await vindication and the gift of eternal life (2:6–10; 8:12–18; 13:11).

The logical counter-part, namely God's judging righteousness, follows the same pattern. Currently, God's wrath is being revealed against all unrighteousness. However, it will not be fully realized until the future "day of wrath and revelation (*ἀποκαλύψεως*) of God's righteous judgment" (2:5, 8–9; 12:19). Therefore, while the revelation of God's saving and judging righteousness are revealed in the gospel (1:16–18), it will not be until "that day when God judges the secrets of men through Christ Jesus, according to [Paul's] gospel" (2:16). Finally, through the resurrection of Christ, the enemies of God and his people have been defeated (5:12–21; 6:5–11). Nevertheless, the cosmic powers of the present age still remain (6:12–13; 8:38–39), and those under their

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<sup>222</sup>Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 134. Elsewhere, Kirk insightfully notes the connection between Jesus' resurrection in power by the Spirit in 1:4 and how the same Spirit is at work in believers for their resurrection and participation in the glory of Christ (8:23, 29). See J. R. Daniel Kirk, "Appointed Son(s): An Exegetical Note on Romans 1:4 and 8:29," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14, no. 2 (2004): 241–42.

rule await final destruction (2:1–3, 6–11; 16:17–18, 20).

## **Conclusion**

By using 16:25–27 as a launching pad, I've sought to demonstrate that Paul characterizes his gospel and the contents of this letter as an apocalyptic mystery concerning Jesus Christ (v. 26). Like the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, the Pauline mystery bears the characteristics of hiddenness, interpretation, and eschatology. Paul's gospel, which is the proclamation of Christ, was hidden in the previous age (v. 25), but now—in light of the Christ event—has been manifested (v. 26a). While disclosed apart from the OT Scripture (cf. 3:21), the revelation of Christ has been made known through it (16:26b; 3:22). Following a two-fold pattern of symbol and interpretation, God's initial revelation in the OT was shrouded in mystery, but now is given its proper interpretation. This interpretation has revealed that God's ways in the past are being recapitulated in the present in order to give hope for the future; namely, God's past patterns of redemption find their culmination in the death burial and resurrection of Christ.

Consequently, while the OT promises find their present fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ, an eschatological component of the mystery remains. God's plan of redemption has been inaugurated in Christ but awaits its full realization in the future. Christ's death and resurrection serves not only as the basis of redemption, but the *paradigm* for it (see Table 1). Therefore, the Pauline mystery is the apocalyptic revelation of God's previously hidden—but now made known—wisdom concerning the redemption of his people and the cosmos through Christ for his glory (16:27).

Table 1. Christological paradigm for God’s redemptive plan

	Judgment (Past)	Inaugurated Salvation (Present)	Consummated Salvation (Future)
Christ	Judgment of death (3:23–25; 4:24–25; 5:6–10; 6:5, 10; 8:3, 32, 34; 9:32– 33; 10:9; 14:9, 15; 15:3, 8).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (1:4; 4:24– 25; 5:18–21; 6:4, 5, 9, 10; 8:11, 29, 34; 10:9; 14:9, 11; 15:12).	Revealed righteousness and glory of Christ (2:5, 7, 10 16; 8:18; 12:19; 16:20).
Church	Judgment of death (6:3–4, 5, 6, 8; 7:4).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (5:9–11; 6:4, 6, 11, 13; 7:4, 6; 8:1–2, 9–11, 23).	Resurrection and glory of God’s sons (5:2, 5; 6:5, 8; 8:17, 18, 19, 21, 23–25, 28–30; 13:11; 14:10–12; 15:13).
Creation	Judgment of death (5:12–13; 8:20, 22).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (8:23).	Resurrection and glory of the creation (8:21).

### Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to show that the Pauline mystery in Romans is rooted in Jewish apocalypticism and provides a Christological paradigm for understanding God’s unfolding redemptive purposes in history and creation. Particularly, like the OT and Second Temple literature, the mystery reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. This mystery schema is initially apparent as Paul describes his gospel as “the revelation [ἀποκάλυψιν] of the mystery [μυστηρίου] hidden [σεσιγημένου] for long ages past (16:25). He presents the advent of Christ as an apocalyptic event whereby God’s hidden wisdom is “now manifested” (φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν, v. 26a). Paul effectively casts the entirety of Romans as a mystery revealed with 16:25–27 summarizing the central themes of the letter. Specifically, the hidden eschatological realities of Israel’s salvation and the judgment of the wicked are made

known through the gospel of Jesus Christ for everyone who believes. In this way, Romans is a revealed mystery which reorients one's perspective of reality around the Christ event.

The mystery schema is also upheld as Paul presents God's initial revelation in the OT as an encoded symbol in need of a subsequent revelation (1:2; 3:21; 16:26; cf. Dan 2:31–44; 4Q418 123 II, 2–4; 1QpHab 7:1–8; 3 Bar. 2:6). The gospel of Christ is that revelation, the hermeneutical key for explaining the fulfillment of OT Scripture (Rom 1:16–17; 16:25).<sup>223</sup> Therefore, in light of this gospel, Paul reimagines figures and experiences in Israel's history around the apocalyptic event of Christ's death and resurrection. In this way, the OT reveals that Jesus is not only the promised Messiah, but he is the Lord, the one true God who has come to deliver his people (Rom 1:1–4 [Ps 2; 2 Sam 7]; 10:9–13 [Isa 28:16; Joel 3:5]; 14:11 [Isa 45:23]). Not only does the Pauline mystery reveal Christ's divine identity as Lord, but it reimagines the people of God as those who belong to him by faith (1:6; 16–7; 16:26). God's decisive action in Christ is bringing about the "obedience of the nations" anticipated in the OT (Gen 49:8–10; Num 24:12; Ps 2:8). As a result, the Gentiles are incorporated into Israel through union with Christ (Rom 15:7–13), a mystery—hidden but now revealed—in the Psalms (Ps 17:50; 116:1 LXX), the Law (Deut 32:43), and the Prophets (Isa 11:10).

Finally, like the Jewish mystery schema, so the Pauline mystery looks forward to a future fulfillment (cf. Dan 2:28–29; 12:4; 1Q27 1 I, 3–4; CD 3:12–20; 3 Bar. 16:4; T. Levi. 2:10). Romans reveals that God's ways in the past are being recapitulated in the present, in order to give hope for the future (Rom 15:7–13). God's ways are definitively understood in the past death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This apocalyptic event "now" prefigures the eschatological redemption of God's people and the cosmos (Rom 6:1–4; 8:18–25). Christ's death and resurrection serve not only as the basis of God's

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<sup>223</sup>Rightly, Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 915.

redemption, but the *paradigm* for it. In other words, Christ is the apex which unifies God's redemptive plan throughout history and into the eschaton. The Christ event lifts the veil over the OT, retrospectively revealing countless prefigurations of that event. Through faith in Christ, God's people now see their eschatological hopes prefigured in him being incorporated to God's unfolding narrative of redemption.

Paul's use of the Jewish mystery schema throughout Romans provides a framework for analyzing the mystery of Romans 9–11. In the chapters ahead, I will argue that the mystery of 11:25–27 follows the same pattern for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God's hidden plan of redemption for ethnic Israel. In this way, Paul reimagines Israel's history around the death, resurrection, and return of Christ, unveiling God's redemptive plan concerning Israel's plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures.



CHAPTER 4  
THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL'S ELECTION  
AND HARDENING

The mystery of Romans reveals a christological paradigm for discerning God's wise plan of redemption for the nations and the creation (16:25–27). Paul explains that God's covenant promises to Israel have mysteriously found their fulfillment in the Christ event (1:1–4). It is in the proclamation of Christ (i.e., the gospel; 1:16; 16:25) that God's righteousness has been revealed by faith and is able to bring about salvation for the Jew first and also to the Greek (1:16–17). Therefore, all who are in Christ are redeemed from the power of sin (3:23–24; 6:1–11), the condemnation of the law (7:4–6; 8:1), and have received the Spirit of adoption whereby they are heirs of all God's covenant promises (8:14–17).

Nevertheless, inherent to the letter is a theological tension concerning Israel's place in God's economy of salvation (1:16; 3:1–9).<sup>1</sup> While Paul's gospel is being received among the Gentiles, it is by-and-large rejected by ethnic Israel. This phenomenon not only calls into question Paul's gospel, but also the integrity of God himself. Questions swirl as to whether God has shown himself unfaithful to the Jewish people (3:3). And if God has been unfaithful, how can the church even trust that their election will keep them in the love of God (8:31–39)? Furthermore, how can it be that God's promises have found their fulfillment in Jesus—the Jewish Messiah—when the

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<sup>1</sup>Contra Gaston who argues that Paul's concern is not over Israel's salvation, but their failure to embrace God's purposes for including the Gentiles among his people. Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 135–50. See also Paul M. van Buren, "The Church and Israel: Romans 9–11," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 11, no. 1 (1990): 10–11; Sidney G. Hall, *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul's Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 88–93, 113–27; John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 135.

majority of Jews remain in a state of unbelief? How can God justify Gentiles who did not pursue him, and yet cast aside Israelites who sought righteousness through the law (9:30–31)? Is God unjust (3:5; 9:14)? Could it be that his word is unreliable (9:6)?

To such questions Paul resoundingly responds, “By no means” (3:4, 6; 9:14, 11:1, 11)! And it is for this reason that Paul writes Romans 9–11. This theologically dense section of Romans is aimed at defending the truthfulness of his gospel and the righteousness of God.<sup>2</sup> Paul’s overarching thesis is found in 9:6 which says, “It is not as though the word of God has failed.”<sup>3</sup> In what follows, Paul argues that Israel’s unbelief—though shocking—is not unprecedented; nor is it permanent! In fact, Israel’s stumbling was foretold in the prophetic Scripture anticipating their current plight, while also extending hope for a future restoration. Paul contends that the apparent incongruity between Israel’s plight and God’s word of promise is resolved in the mystery of Christ (11:25–27; cf. 16:25–27).

In chapter 3, I argued that the entirety of Romans is cast as a revealed mystery rooted in Jewish apocalypticism. Accordingly, Romans reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. In particular, this mystery centers on the gospel of Christ (16:25–27) reorienting one’s perspective of God’s redemptive purposes around the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Thus, I showed how the Pauline mystery in Romans

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<sup>2</sup>Rightly Schreiner who writes, “The primary question relates to the faithfulness of God. Is God who made these saving promises to Israel faithful to his pledges?” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 462.

<sup>3</sup>Rightly, C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 473; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Röm 6–11*, vol. 2, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Zurich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 191; Douglas J. Moo, “The Theology of Romans 9–11: A Response to E. Elizabeth Johnson,” in *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 3:246; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 571–73; B. J. Oropeza, “Paul and Theodicy: Intertextual Thoughts on God’s Justice and Faithfulness to Israel in Romans 9–11,” *New Testament Studies* 53, no. 1 (2007): 60; Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 9–16*, Concordia Commentary (ST Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 855.

<sup>4</sup>Bockmuehl makes a similar observation, namely that Paul interprets Israel’s Scripture in light

reveals a christological paradigm for discerning God's redemptive plan hidden in the OT. In this chapter, I intend to further explore Paul's mystery motif as he concludes the argument of Romans 9–11 with mystery language (11:25–27). I will argue that Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in 11:25 elicits the same christological paradigm it carries in 16:25–27 to unveil God's hidden wisdom concerning Israel's present unbelief and future restoration.

Others have presented evidence that Paul employs a christological interpretation of Israel's history in Romans 9–11. However, these observations have been incomplete. For instance, Hays identifies a christological allusion in 11:21 noting that just as God did not spare (*ἐφείσατο*) Israel, so he did not spare (*ἐφείσατο*) his own son (cf. 8:32). Thus, he argues, "By describing the fate of unbelieving Israel in the same language that he had used to describe Jesus' death, Paul hints as a daring trope . . . . What Paul has done, in a word, is to interpret the fate of Israel christologically."<sup>5</sup> While I ultimately agree with Hays's reading, the exegetical argumentation falls short since he merely makes this observation on the basis of one word. Certainly, more evidence must be presented to make such a sweeping claim. Here's where I think a thorough exploration of Paul's mystery motif will provide the necessary framework to support such an exegetical move.

To this point, Wright aptly detects that the Pauline mystery motif is at play in Romans 9–11 suggesting "that Paul [re-reads] the whole history of Israel through the lens of the cross."<sup>6</sup> He contends, that as a new mystery, Paul re-tells Israel's story in light of the coming of Messiah to explain how God's covenant has been renewed and God's

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of the apocalyptic mystery of Christ. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 174.

<sup>5</sup>Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 61.

<sup>6</sup>N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1192.

people are reshaped around the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> This mystery, he says, “Is woven tightly into the fabric of the whole argument.”<sup>8</sup> He even suggests the mystery may unveil a prophetic sequence based on Daniel to explain Israel’s story moving forward.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, while Wright correctly taps into the apocalyptic mystery motif of Romans, he does not give the prophetic sequence—or paradigm—full weight in Romans 9–11. Wright overlooks the future eschatological expectation of the mystery seeing Israel’s restoration as already complete in the resurrection of Christ.<sup>10</sup> This “elision of the parousia” from the mystery of Christ inevitably prevents a complete telling of Israel’s story, particularly as it relates to the consummation of all things.<sup>11</sup>

In light of these short comings, I aim to present a more complete picture for how Paul’s mystery motif functions in Romans 9–11. Again, I will contend that the mystery of 11:25–27 summarizes all of Romans 9–11 and evokes a christological paradigm in order to unveil God’s hidden wisdom concerning Israel’s present unbelief and future restoration. Specifically, Paul reimagines Israel’s history around the death, resurrection, and parousia of Christ to unveil God’s redemptive plan surrounding Israel’s plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures. In the following two chapters, I will explore this function of the Pauline mystery as it relates to Israel’s (1) election, (2) hardening, (3) remnant, and (4) restoration.

### **The Mystery of Israel’s Election**

Understandably, Romans 11:25–27 serves as the focal point for exploring the

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<sup>7</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1158–61.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 1161.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 1159.

<sup>10</sup>N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in *Pauline Theology: Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 3:61.

<sup>11</sup>See Hays’s critique where he specially identifies how Wright fails to account for the parousia in Paul’s theology in Romans. Richard B. Hays, “Adam, Israel, Christ,” in *Pauline Theology: Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, vol. 3 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 75, 83–84.

mystery of Israel's salvation. Scholars typically identify the substance of the mystery as threefold: first concerning the partial hardening of Israel, second the full inclusion of the Gentiles, and third the salvation of "all Israel."<sup>12</sup> However, one would be remiss to limit the content of the mystery to these verses.<sup>13</sup> The mystery of 11:25–27 is not a new contribution to Paul's case in chapters 9–11, but rather a climactic summation of a sustained argument that God's word of promise to Israel has not and will not fail (9:6, 14; 11:1, 28–29).<sup>14</sup> In fact, the entire section of Romans 9–11 is predicated upon God's

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<sup>12</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:572; Jewett, *Romans*, 899; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 731; Schreiner, *Romans*, 595–96; Michael J. Vlach, "A Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View," in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 49. However, Longenecker adds two other components: the coming deliverer from Zion and God's promise to take away Israel's sins. Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 896.

<sup>13</sup>Some suggest that by evoking the term mystery Paul intends to introduce a new idea to his argument. For instance, both Moo and Wagner propose that what is new is that ethnic Israel's redemption will not occur until after the Gentile mission is complete. See J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul "in Concert" in the Letter to the Romans*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 101 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 277; Moo, *Romans*, 731–32. While I do not object to their conclusion that Israel's redemption will occur after the Gentile mission, I do object that Paul's use of "mystery" signals a new piece of information inserted into his argument. For instance, in 9:24–26, Paul cites from Hos 2 (LXX), to show that Hosea's prophecy is being predominately fulfilled among Gentiles and not Israel. Yet, this surprising reversal gives renewed hope that God will one day call Israel again, who are now effectively "not my people." This reversal is the very reason why Israel is provoked to jealousy (10:19; 11:14). In 10:18–21, Paul recalls the jealousy motif of Deut 32 to explain the significance of the Gentiles' inclusion among the people of God and Israel's obduracy. What's significant is that the current inclusion of the Gentiles coincides with the judgment and hardening of Israel. Nevertheless, as Deut anticipates, the day will come when this judgment will cease, the hardening will be lifted. Consequently, Paul discerns a pattern whereby Israel's redemption, will occur after the inclusion of the Gentiles. Paul makes this point explicit in 11:11–15 by presenting an *a fortiori* argument to explain that Israel's current stumbling and failure is not final. Instead, the Gentile mission serves the purpose of provoking Israel to jealousy leading to their fullness and resulting in the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, Rom 11:25–27 is a summation of the mystery which Paul has expounded throughout Rom 9–11, just as Rom 16:25–27 is a summation of the entire letter. Rather than denoting a new piece of information, Paul's use of mystery signals how he has interpreted Israel's story of plight to restoration in terms of the gospel of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>Rightly Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 152; E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 162; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1232; Simon J. Gathercole, "Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9–11," in *God and Israel*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 134. Contra Bent Noack, "Current and Backwater in the Epistle to the Romans," *Studia Theologica* 19 (1965): 165–66; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 416. A close parallel to Rom 11:25–27 can be found in Paul's use of mystery in 1 Cor 15:51–55. In these verses Paul does not make an entirely new point concerning the future resurrection; rather he climactically summarizes his entire argument which began in 15:1. It should be further noted that Paul's argument is predicated on the gospel he preaches, and this message accords with the OT Scriptures (v. 3–4). Consistent with the mystery motif of Rom, Paul sees the resurrection of Christ as a hidden mystery revealed through the prophetic Scripture—in this case the creation narrative—which serves as the paradigm for believer's future resurrection. For a thorough discussion of mystery in 1 Cor 15, see Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple*

gracious calling and election of Israel.<sup>15</sup> This is evident in that Paul bookends his discussion with an emphasis on the Israel's elect status (9:4–5; 11:28–29). Therefore, despite Israel's current unbelief, Paul insists that the nation remains holy and beloved unto God (11:16, 28).

What's particularly significant about Israel's elect status is its correlation to God's ongoing commitment to the patriarchs (9:5; 11:28; 15:8). It was to Israel's forefathers that God promised physical offspring through whom blessing would come to the world (Gen 12:3, 17:4–8; 18:18; 22:15–18; 26:3–4; 28:3–4, 13–14; 32:12; 35:10–12; Gen 49:8–10; Num 24:1–9, 17; 2 Sam 7:8–16). On the one hand, this promise has been fulfilled in Christ, the true offspring of Abraham and of David (Rom 1:3, 4:13, 23; 15:8, 12; cf. Gal 3:14, 16). On the other hand, Paul also emphasizes Israel's ongoing role in bringing blessing to the world (11:11–12), not only because they are physically descended from the patriarchs (9:5a), but also because the Christ is physically descended from them (9:5b; cf. 1:3). Therefore, an understanding of Israel's elect status in light of the nation's lineage with the patriarchs and the Christ is essential to unpack the mystery of Romans 9–11.

### **Israel Descended from the Patriarchs**

The apostle Paul introduces his discourse on the mystery of Israel by expressing his unceasing anguish over his kinsmen according to the flesh (9:1–3). He is distraught because they are separated from Christ (v. 3; cf. 10:1). And in regard to the gospel, they are at enmity with God (11:28). Thus, Paul's anguish is not over Israel's failure to grasp the full implications of the Gentile mission; but because Israel is

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*Judaism with its Bearing on First Corinthians* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 223–62.

<sup>15</sup>It's important to note that Paul's use of the title "Israel" refers to the nation as a whole, not individual Jews. In chapters 9–11 Paul shifts from speaking of Jews to Israel denoting this change in emphasis. Rightly Pablo T. Gadenz, *Called from the Jews and from the Gentiles: Pauline Ecclesiology in Romans 9–11* (Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 48; Jason A. Staples, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011): 376.

*anathema*.<sup>16</sup> So, if Israel continues in unbelief, they will remain cut off from the Christ and fail to obtain the covenant blessings of God (v. 3; 11:23).<sup>17</sup>

Yet, these covenant blessings were particularly promised to Israel; after all, “they are Israelites” (Ἰσραηλιῖται, 9:4). The name Israel reaches back to the patriarch Jacob from whom the tribes of Israel descend (Gen 32:28; 49:1–27). The term simply means “he wrestles with God” and aptly describes Jacob’s complicated relationship with God.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, though Jacob wrestled with God as his enemy (32:24), he would be overcome by God and learn to see him as his blessed savior (vv. 25–28). Not only did the meaning of “Israel” picture Jacob’s relationship with God, but it would define the nation’s future as well.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the name “Israel” recalls the struggle between the nation and YHWH, but it also marks the nation’s unique relationship as God’s covenant people (35:10–12; 46:2–3; cf. 12:13; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4–8; 28:13).<sup>20</sup> As Jeremiah declares, “[YHWH] is the portion of Jacob . . . and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance, YWHH of hosts is his name” (Jer 10:16). Therefore, when Paul uses the name “Israel” he evokes the

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<sup>16</sup>Commenting on the term *anathema*, Schreiner notes, “In Rom. 9:3 (cf. also 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal 1:8, 9) the term refers to eschatological judgment: one is cursed forever and separated from the presence of Christ” (Schreiner, *Romans*, 469). Pace Räisänen who contends that Paul’s lamentations “implies that [Israel] must be in the very plight he is willing to enter for their sake: they are anathema.” Heikki Räisänen, “Torn Between Two Loyalties: Romans 9–11 and Paul’s Conflicting Convictions,” in *The Nordic Paul: Finnish Approaches to Pauline Theology*, ed. L. Aejmelaeus and A. Mustakallio, Library of New Testament Studies (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 25. Contra Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 1–5; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 135–50; Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 285–316; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 128–42.

<sup>17</sup>Seifrid rightly remarks, “Paul’s opening lament provides the conceptual framework for the entire discourse, including the closing hymn of praise, which, according to the pattern of the psalms of lament, reaffirms the hope of the promises, contrary to all outward appearances (e.g., Pss. 10; 13; 22; 60; 102).” Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 638.

<sup>18</sup>TWOT, יִשְׂרָאֵל, 883.

<sup>19</sup>Motyer states, “It can be argued that the story in Genesis 32:22–32 is prototypical; that is, it reveals the underlying dynamic of Israel’s relationship with Yahweh so as to set a pattern for the nation’s whole history.” S. Motyer, “Israel (Nation),” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 582.

<sup>20</sup>Rightly John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 21; Schreiner, *Romans*, 472.

nation's particular designation as God's covenant people, the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom 11:1–2; cf. Exod 2:24; 3:6, 15).<sup>21</sup>

Returning to Romans, Paul denotes six privileges (encapsulated in one relative clause, ὧν . . .) inherent to the Israelites as God's elect people (9:4–5). Cranfield rightly notes, “Their recital serves at the same time to underline the sadness of the Jews’ present unbelief, to explain the depth of Paul’s grief on their behalf, and also to indicate the continuing fact of their election.”<sup>22</sup> This list has a symmetry to it, whereby the six items are divided into two groups of three.<sup>23</sup> In this way, each term is paralleled with the other that shares the same ending: *-ία*, *-α*, *-αι*. Beyond the grammatical association, there is also a conceptual relationship between the parallel terms.

This parallel association is confirmed as each couplet is considered. First, both ἡ υἰοθεσία and ἡ νομοθεσία likely allude to the exodus where God redeemed Israel as his firstborn son (Exod 4:22; Jer 32:9; Hos 11:1) and entered into covenant with them at Sinai.<sup>24</sup> Although υἰοθεσία is not found in the LXX—or any other Jewish literature—it does not preclude the idea from being familiar to the Jews.<sup>25</sup> It's noteworthy that Paul

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<sup>21</sup>Moo insightfully notes, “It is . . . no accident that Paul in Rom. 9–11 generally abandons the word ‘Jew,’ which has figured so prominently in chaps. 1–8, in favor of the terms ‘Israelites’ and ‘Israel.’ Paul is no longer looking at the Jews from the perspective of the Gentiles and in their relationship to the Gentiles but from the perspective of salvation history and in their relationship to God and his promises to them. The appellation ‘Israelites,’ then, is no mere political or nationalistic designation but a religiously significant and honorific title. And despite the refusal of most of the Israelites to accept God’s gift of salvation in Christ, this title has not been revoked.” Moo, *Romans*, 582.

<sup>22</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:459–60. See also Vlach, “A Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion,” 28.

<sup>23</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:460; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 522; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 21; Schreiner, *Romans*, 473.

<sup>24</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 473.

<sup>25</sup>Rightly Fitzmyer, “Paul adopts *huiiothesia* from current Hellenistic usage and employs it in a figurative sense of the ‘sonship’ of Israel, chosen by Yahweh as his ‘firstborn son’ as of the exodus from Egypt (Exod 4:22; cf. Deut 14:1; Isa 1:2; Jer 3:19–22; 31:9; Hos 11:1), to whom he constantly expressed his fatherly affection (Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; Isa 1:2; Wis 2:13, 16; 16:26), and from whom he expected filial obedience (Deut 14:1; Mal 1:6). This corporate status of Israel as son was a matter of divine favor.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 545.



includes the term in a list of Jewish privileges. Also, as James Scott observes, Paul elsewhere uses *υιοθεσία* alongside exodus typology to emphasize believers' redemption from the slavery of sin to become sons of God (Gal 4:1–7).<sup>26</sup> Scott contends that Paul's adoption language arises from 2 Samuel 7:14 where the promised Davidic king will become a son and God will be his father.<sup>27</sup>

This adoption language not only applied to the Davidic Messiah, but also the eschatological people of the Messiah (Hos 2:1 [LXX]; Jub. 1:24; T. Judah 24:3; 4QFlor 1:11). Not surprisingly, Paul cites the adoption language of 2 Samuel 7:14 in 2 Corinthians 6:18 which includes both new exodus and new covenant themes which are applied to the church. Therefore, here in Romans 9:4, it's fitting to identify *υιοθεσία* as a Jewish privilege alongside the giving of the law. As God's chosen people, Israel has been adopted as his sons (Hos 11:1) entering a covenant with them through the giving of his law in the exodus. Paul already alluded to this blessing in Romans 3:2, namely that Israel was "entrusted with the oracles of God." As God's adopted sons, they were privileged to know his will because they were instructed by his law (2:18).

Second, the privileges of *δόξα* and *λατρεία* speak of Israel's blessing of being in the presence of God's glory through the cultic worship which took place at the tent of meeting and the temple (Exod 29:42–43; 40:34–35; Lev 9:23; Num 14:10; 16:19; 20:6; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:13–14; 7:1, 2, 3; Ezek 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23).<sup>28</sup> It was God's glory which led Israel in the exodus (Exod 13:17–22; 15:6, 11–13), the desert (16:10; 40:34), and to the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:13–14). It was with Israel alone that God chose to make his glory personally known. Nevertheless, God stipulated how Israel

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<sup>26</sup>James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 149–85.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 187–214.

<sup>28</sup>John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 5; Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 31; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 258–59; Schreiner, *Romans*, 474.

was to come to him in worship, that is through the cult (*λατρεία*, Exod 25–31; cf. Josh 22:27; 1 Chr 28:13). This ordained worship of YHWH distinguished Israel from the idolatry of the surrounding nations.

Finally, Paul mentions the privileges of *διαθήκαι* and *ἐπαγγελίαι*. Scholars have sought to specifically identify which covenants Paul has in mind.<sup>29</sup> In light of Romans as a whole, it's possible that he includes the Abrahamic (Rom 4); the Mosaic (2:12–3:2; 7:1–25; 9:4); the Davidic (1:3–4); and the New Covenant (2:28–29; 6:4; 8:1–17; 11:27). However, perhaps such definition is “overly precise” and Paul merely aims to highlight all the promises of God given to Israel (cf. Eph 2:12).<sup>30</sup> At the very least, Paul has in view God's covenant with the patriarchs which promises blessing upon the nation of Israel itself (11:29). Thus, with these two blessings in view, Paul's emphasis shifts from the past to the future.<sup>31</sup>

Paul's point is that, along with Israel's past privileges, God has promised the nation a future salvation and restoration. In other words, the God who chose Israel as his cherished possession, who gave them the law, and manifested his glory, promised them a magnificent salvation under the reign of the Christ. Yet, these promises have not been realized among Israel as a whole. Instead, they have actually been cut off from the Christ. Consequently, this surprising outcome calls God's faithfulness to Israel into question (9:6, 14; cf. 3:3).

Therefore, as Paul raises the problem of Israel's unbelief—particularly as it relates to God's faithfulness to the nation—it does not follow that Paul simply views the blessings listed as being transferred to the church.<sup>32</sup> While all these blessings are being

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<sup>29</sup>See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:462; Middendorf, *Romans 9-16*, 839; Longenecker, *Romans*, 785; Moo, *Romans*, 583–84.

<sup>30</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 474.

<sup>31</sup>Rightly Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 287. Contra Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 30–32.

<sup>32</sup>Rightly, Martin Rese, “Die Vorzüge Israels in Röm. 9, 4f. und Eph. 2, 12: Exegetische

enjoyed by the church;<sup>33</sup> the gnomic present (εἶσιν, 9:4) denotes that the Jewish people remain Israelites and all the blessings enumerated still belong to them. However, while Paul contends for Israel's ongoing elect status; this does not suggest that every Israelite will be saved.<sup>34</sup> Paul's argument is highly nuanced upholding a tension between God's corporate election of Israel as a nation (11:28) and his election of individuals—both Jew and Gentile—in Christ (11:7).

Wright appears to overlook this tension and nullifies any hope of blessing for Israel inherent to their election. For Wright, election merely means to be chosen to complete a task.<sup>35</sup> In Israel's case, they were chosen as a nation to restore the world from the chaos introduced by Adam's sin. Yet, where Israel failed to be the light God had commissioned them to be in the world, their Messiah accomplished this task for them by means of his covenant faithfulness.<sup>36</sup> In this way, Israel's election has been completely reworked around Christ as God's true elect. Though Wright does insist that ethnic Israel remains God's elect people, their election is primarily expressed by means of their hardening whereby God continues to use them to carry out his saving purpose in the

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Anmerkungen zum Thema Kirche und Israel.," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 81 (1975): 211–22; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 30; Schreiner, *Romans*, 475.

<sup>33</sup>It is significant to notice the parallels between Rom 8 and 9. See Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background*, *Analecta Biblica* 83 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 127–28. In Rom 8, Christians are said to have received the "Spirit of adoption" (v. 15), which anticipates their eschatological adoption (v. 23); whereas in Rom 9 adoption is the privilege of Israel (v. 4). Christians are called "sons" and "children of God" (8:14, 16–17, 19, 21) who will be "conformed to the image of [God's] son" (8:29). Israel is also called God's children (9:8). These privileges are closely tied to God's calling (8:28, 30; 9:7, 12, 24, 25, 26), election (8:28, 33; 9:11); and glory (8:18, 21, 30; 9:4, 23).

<sup>34</sup>Contra Gager who reinterprets all of Rom 9–11 around Israel's failure to embrace the Gentile mission. According to Gager Israel's election secures their inheritance regardless of their embrace of Jesus as the Christ. God's prior covenant with Israel at Sinai is the means by which their sins will be forgiven (Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 128–42). Neither does Israel's elect status support Bell's view "that Israelites from every age will believe in the Christ when they see him coming again in his glory." Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul's Theology of Israel*, 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 265.

<sup>35</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 784.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 836.

world.<sup>37</sup>

However, Paul's concept of election—both corporately and individually—is not reduced to a task.<sup>38</sup> Election is the gracious choice of God to set his covenant love upon his people to bless them and give them an inheritance (Rom 8:28–30; 11:2; Eph 1:1–14). It's an act of God which has occurred before the foundation of the world and apart from one's works, good or bad (Rom 9:11; 11:5–6).<sup>39</sup> By reducing the concept of election to a task, Wright effectively empties it of any hope of salvation for the nation of Israel. But when Paul speaks of Israel's election, he says on this basis they're beloved and that the gifts and calling God has promised them are irrevocable (Rom 11:28–29).

Wright's concept of election struggles to account for this dual status among ethnic Israel and how Paul can still extend hope for the nation on the basis of their election. Wright's reading only works on one plane, the corporate plane. He only emphasizes God's dealings with Israel until the arrival of Christ and fails to see how their relationship with the Messiah not only explains their current plight, but their future restoration. Furthermore, individual election is virtually absent from Wright's treatment of Romans 9–11, skewing his view of God's hardening of Israel and how it will be ultimately lifted. Consequently, Wright's emphasis on Israel's election is too narrow and strips it of the hope God has promised the nation.

On the contrary, Paul continues to emphasize Israel's hope on the basis of their special relationship to the patriarchs (οἱ πατέρες, 9:5): Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>40</sup> As

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<sup>37</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1192.

<sup>38</sup>For a critical evaluation of Wright's view of election, see Sigurd Grindheim, "Election and the Role of Israel," in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N.T. Wright* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 343–44.

<sup>39</sup>For a fuller treatment on Paul's concept of election, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 236–48.

<sup>40</sup>Note Paul's use of the possessive relative pronoun (ὧν) which gives special emphasis to their relationship the patriarchs.

Paul continues into 9:6–13 he specifically identifies these three as those to whom God’s promises were made. However, it is possible that Paul intended to include David as well.<sup>41</sup> Either way, the meaning is not significantly altered, because it was to the fathers that the promises and covenants of Israel were fundamentally made (v. 4; cf. Gen 12:1–3; 18:18; 22:17–18; 26:3–4; 28:13–14; 35:11–12).

At this point in Paul’s argument it’s not entirely clear why he highlights the patriarchs; especially since he’s already recalled the promises and the covenants in 9:4. However, by turning to the end of Paul’s argument in 11:28–29 it becomes apparent that Paul anticipates an eschatological fulfillment of the promises for the sake of the fathers which has not yet been realized.<sup>42</sup> Paul again highlights Israel’s relationship to the patriarchs to emphasize the nation’s ongoing elect status before God which guarantees their promised salvation.

Again, it is significant to note the tension between Israel’s dual status as God’s enemy and his beloved (v. 28).<sup>43</sup> Paul says in respect to the gospel—both its content and dissemination throughout the world—the Jews are enemies (ἐχθροί).<sup>44</sup> While some opt to place the onus of hostility upon Israel, Paul places it upon God.<sup>45</sup> Yes, Israel bears responsibility for rejecting the gospel (10:19–21); however, Israel’s rejection is ultimately due to God’s hardening of the nation (11:7, 17, 25). Furthermore, this interpretation fits the parallel statement in 11:28b that Israel is beloved by God.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:6.

<sup>42</sup>Rightly Schreiner, *Romans*, 476; Moo, *Romans*, 585.

<sup>43</sup>Note the μέν . . . δε construction juxtaposing the two clauses in v. 28.

<sup>44</sup>Cranfield fails to see the full sense of Israel’s enmity with God when he says, “In the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον the word εὐαγγέλιον must mean, not the gospel message, the content of the gospel, since with regard to that the Jews also are certainly ‘beloved’, but the progress of the gospel in the world.” Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:579. Dunn makes the inverse error. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 685. Rather, as Schreiner states, “There is no need to distinguish between the content of the gospel and its advance in the world, because both ideas are included.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 609.

<sup>45</sup>Contra Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 279.

<sup>46</sup>Rightly Murray, *Romans*, 2:100; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:580; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die*

How can Israel be under the enmity of God and at the same time be beloved of God? As a mystery, Paul aims to provide insight into God's redemptive purposes with Israel, a purpose that has always been a struggle since the nation's inception (Gen 32:24). In other words, Israel's current plight is another iteration of their striving with God; yet like in Israel's past, this hostility will not define the end of their story. They remain beloved with respect to election (ἐκλογὴν, Rom 11:28). Both words, ἐκλογή and ἀγαπητός, speak of God's choosing of ethnic Israel to be his covenant people and sum up the privileges enumerated in Romans 9:4.<sup>47</sup> As Paul initially stipulated, he again relates Israel's election with God's commitment to the patriarchs. God's promises to the patriarchs ensure that he will not permanently cast off the nation. Though at the present time Israelites are cut off from the blessings promised to the patriarchs, it is for the sake of the patriarchs that God will not allow the present plight to remain. In other words, Israel's elect status has not changed; and this is due to the fact that the patriarchs belong to Israel (ὧν οἱ πατέρες, 9:5a).

Israel's physical lineage with the patriarchs remains meaningful, not because of any merit of the patriarchs themselves, but because of God's promise to them.<sup>48</sup> Both 9:4–5 and 11:28–29 indicate a crucial component to Paul's argument: God's commitment to the physical offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continues. While Paul can contend that Jesus is the true seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16) and it's not the children of the flesh who are reckoned as Abraham's offspring, but rather the children of promise (Rom 9:6); he insists that God's commitment to the patriarchs necessitates that the promise will be realized among the nation itself.<sup>49</sup>

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*Römer*, 2:259; Schreiner, *Romans*, 609.

<sup>47</sup>Schreiner insightfully notes, "The close connection between God's election and his love is substantiated by the LXX of Isaiah (41:8–9; 44:1–2; 51:2), where God's choice (ἐκλέγειν, *eklegein*) and calling (καλεῖν, *kalein*) of Israel are parallel to his love for them." Schreiner, *Romans*, 609–10.

<sup>48</sup>Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 746; Schreiner, *Romans*, 610.

<sup>49</sup>Wright is correct in that the promises to the patriarchs are fulfilled in the true seed of

This commitment is expounded upon in 11:29 where Paul says that Israel’s elect status remains because “the gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα) and the calling (ἡ κλήσις) of God are irrevocable (ἀμεταμέλητα).”<sup>50</sup> The gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα) recall the enumeration of Israel’s blessings found in 9:4–5.<sup>51</sup> As those blessings anticipate a future realization of God’s promise of salvation, so here the emphasis remains. Interconnected with these gifts is God’s calling of Israel. Calling (κλήσις) refers to God’s effectual call to salvation and here elicits God’s calling of Abraham and Israel to be his covenant people (Gen 12:1–3; Deut 7:6–7; Ps 135:4; Isa 41:8–10; Ezek 20:5).<sup>52</sup> Paul explicitly states that Israel’s calling, along with the gifts which accompany it, are “irrevocable (ἀμεταμέλητα).”<sup>53</sup> The term ἀμεταμέλητος is a legal term which only occurs one other place in the NT (cf. 2 Cor 7:10). It carries the idea of having “no regret” or “not taking something back.”<sup>54</sup> Consequently, Paul concludes where he began, namely that “God’s word has not failed” (Rom 9:6). Paul emphatically reminds the church at Rome that “God will not forsake his people but has pledged, in accordance with his covenant love, to graft them again into their olive tree. Yet, Israel’s ancestry does not amount to a claim on God; rather, “God

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Abraham, Christ and as the Christ he has assumed the identification and vocation of Israel (Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 822–25). However, Paul’s argument concerning the hope of Israel is more sophisticated than Wright acknowledges. Yes, Israel has been redefined around the person of Christ; yet, Paul’s argument is that because of Israel’s election and relationship to the patriarchs they will not remain forever severed from their own Messiah in whom blessings of the covenant are found. It is precisely Paul’s contention that true Israel is defined in Christ that calls into question God’s faithfulness to ethnic Israel.

<sup>50</sup>Paul’s use of the explanatory γάρ signals that this verse further explains how Israel can still remain beloved before God (v. 28).

<sup>51</sup>Bell sees a possible reference to Rom 4:4, 16 (κατὰ χάριν) arguing that “God’s gracious gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα) are most likely the election of and promise to Abraham and his descendants.” Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 280. This view is possible, but the easiest solution is to see the parallel with 9:1–5, see Moo, *Romans*, 746–47. In the end, Bell’s interpretation is not much different and the main emphasis upon Israel’s elect status is still the same.

<sup>52</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 610.

<sup>53</sup>Note that ἀμεταμέλητα is brought to the beginning of the sentence for emphasis. A more wooden translation captures the idea well: “for irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God.”

<sup>54</sup>BDAG, ἀμεταμέλητος, 53. For a thorough treatment on the legal connotations of the term, see Ceslas Spicq, “Ἀμεταμέλητος,” *TLNT*, 1:94.

freely pledged to bestow his grace on Israel as an expression of his loving-kindness.”<sup>55</sup>

Again, Israel’s corporate election does not guarantee that every Israelite will be saved. It’s important to distinguish God’s election of individuals (9:6–13; 11:7) from God’s election of the nation. This distinction will be argued in greater detail when considering the mystery of the remnant; but for now it must be noted that the election spoken of here in 11:28–29 is the same election Paul refers to in 9:4–5 and 11:1–2.<sup>56</sup> As Moo aptly remarks, “This election . . . is that choosing of Israel as a nation which the OT frequently emphasizes, a choice that does not mean salvation for every single member of the nation, but blessing for the nation as a whole.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, concerning Israel’s corporate election, the nation as a whole remains beloved because of God’s commitment to the patriarchs (9:5a; 11:28b–29). God will not go back on his promise that ethnic Israel will receive salvation; a salvation that will be wrought by the Christ (1:1–3; 9:3).

### **Christ Descended from Israel**

In Romans 9:4–5, Paul not only recalls Israel’s privileged blessings (v. 4) and ancestry (v. 5a), but he also features Israel’s special relationship to the Christ. Bringing the list of Israel’s privileges to a climactic head, Paul explains that the Christ derives his lineage “from Israel” (ἐξ ὧν) (v. 5b): he is an Israelite.<sup>58</sup> Certainly the Jewish heritage of the Christ would not be surprising to anyone; yet Paul’s purpose is to drive home the paradoxical reality of Israel’s present plight. Despite the fact that their whole history has culminated with the arrival of the Christ—in whom all the promises of God find their

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<sup>55</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 610.

<sup>56</sup>In 11:1–2 Paul speaks of Israel as God’s people whom he foreknew (προέγνω). Προγινώσκω is thematically parallel to calling (κλησις) and election (ἐκλογή). It’s another term that speaks of God placing his covenant love upon someone. In this case, Israel is God’s people whom he foreknew, that is set his electing covenant love upon. See Moo, *Romans*, 692–93.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 746.

<sup>58</sup>Piper insightfully identifies a parallel statement in 11:1, “ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ. Note, he does not say ‘from Abraham’ but ‘from the seed of Abraham’ which is virtually the same as saying ‘from Abraham’s descendants,’ i.e. ‘from Israelites.’” Piper, *The Justification of God*, 42n51.



fulfillment—Israel is spiritually alienated from their Messiah. Or, as Gathercole states, “Israel and Christ have . . . at one level a most intimate relationship, that of a mother and child. On the other hand, however, Israel has been a neglectful mother.”<sup>59</sup>

To this latter point, many scholars note Paul’s qualification of Israel’s relationship with the Christ as being “according to the flesh (τὸ κατὰ σάρκα).” The phrase places a limitation on Israel’s relationship with the Christ as merely within the human or physical sense.<sup>60</sup> It is used in much the same way as in 1:3 where Paul remarks that Jesus “was descended from the offspring of David according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα),” or as in 4:1 speaking of “Abraham our forefather according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα).” Twice within Romans 9–11 Paul speaks of his own relationship to Israel in regard to the “flesh” (9:3; 11:14). While *σάρξ* is often used to describe the sinful condition of unbelievers (7:5, 14, 18, 25; 8:5–9); here it is—at the very least—neutral focusing on Christ’s physical descent.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, Paul may have intended to communicate something more than merely Israel’s ethnic relationship with the Christ. While it is correct that Israel is spiritually cut off from the Christ (9:1–3); Paul’s purpose in 9:4–5 has been positive: to demonstrate the privileges they have as God’s elect people.<sup>62</sup> By concluding the series of privileges with Israel’s descent from the patriarchs and their birthing of the Christ, Paul encapsulates Israel’s privileged history from beginning to end. The addition of the preposition (*ἐξ*) sets

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<sup>59</sup>Gathercole, “Locating Christ,” 118.

<sup>60</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:464; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 535; Moo, *Romans*, 585; Schreiner, *Romans*, 476; George Carraway, *Christ Is God Over All: Romans 9:5 in the Context of Romans 9–11*, Library of New Testament Studies (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 42.

<sup>61</sup>Contra Jewett who contends, “The word ‘flesh’ in this context evokes the realm of self-justification by works as opposed to a neutral reference to human limitations. At one level, this critical note seems to undermine the honorific thrust of Paul’s *exsuscitatio*, but his intent is to introduce the full, tragic depth of Israel’s dilemma.” Jewett, *Romans*, 567. See also Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1971), 160–63.

<sup>62</sup>Rightly Piper, *The Justification of God*, 43; Byrne, *Romans*, 286.

Christ apart as the climatic culmination of Israel's history.<sup>63</sup>

Not only is the Christ an Israelite, but he is “the God over all, blessed forever” (ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας). Already, in chapter 3, I argued that the mystery of Christ not only reveals that God's promises are fulfilled in Christ, but that he is also the divine Son of God and Lord over all (1:4, 7; 10:11–13; 14:9, 11). This christological monotheism explains how Israel's eschatological expectations of YHWH's coming reign have found their meaning and fulfillment in the Christ event. Therefore, it should not surprise anyone that Paul would make a statement of such high christology here in Romans 9:5. Nevertheless, scholars have challenged this understanding by either seeing the phrase ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων in reference to Christ and θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας in reference to the Father, or by taking the entire clause independently in reference to God the Father alone.<sup>64</sup>

Dunn enumerates several reasons why he does not see the doxology as a reference to Christ.<sup>65</sup> First, a doxology to Christ would be an unnatural ending for a Jew reiterating God's blessings to Israel. As a thoughtful Jew, Paul would have naturally concluded his list of blessings as ultimately God's extended to the nation. Second, the christology implied by attributing the doxology to Christ is without parallel in Paul. Specifically, Paul identifies Christ as “Lord” to distinguish him from the one God (cf. 10:9). Third, the matching doxology in 11:33–36 is not in reference to Christ, but rather

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<sup>63</sup>Some have argued that Paul's addition of the preposition (ἐξ) was to guard against presenting Christ as under the control or possession of Israel. However, Piper is correct when he responds, “It is not because . . . [it] is theologically demeaning to Christ, for then Paul would surely not have been able to say the δόξα of God belongs to Israel either (9:4b). He would have simply meant that the Christ belongs to Israel in the sense that he comes from Israel and for the sake of Israel (cf. Rom 15:8)” (Piper, *The Justification of God*, 42.). Also see N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 625.

<sup>64</sup>Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2:189; Käsemann, *Romans*, 259–60; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 528–29; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 145–46; Byrne, *Romans*, 288. For a full treatment on how scholars have punctuated this verse, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:465; Carraway, *Christ Is God Over All*, 34–57.

<sup>65</sup>Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 528–29.

to God the Father. For these reasons, Dunn concludes that Paul limited himself within the already established categories of Jewish monotheism.

However, Dunn's proposal should be rejected on both exegetical and theological grounds. While an argument could be made that Paul usually maintains a distinction between Jesus as *κύριος* and the Father as *θεός*, there are good grammatical and stylistic reasons for taking the entire phrase to refer to Christ identifying him as God over all.<sup>66</sup> First, the relative clause *ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων* most naturally finds its antecedent with *ὁ Χριστός*. This is consistent with other doxologies where they are attached to the preceding antecedent (cf. Rom 1:25; 11:36; 2 Cor 11:31; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 4:11; 2 Pet 3:18).<sup>67</sup> Second, as many others have noted, the phrase *τὸ κατὰ σάρκα* anticipates an antithesis.<sup>68</sup> Thus, while the Christ is initially considered in terms of his human ancestry, Paul is quick to affirm his divine nature (cf. Rom 1:3–4). Third, whenever *εὐλογητός* is used in an independent blessing of God—both in the LXX and NT—it precedes *ὁ θεός*. However, here in Romans 9:5 it follows *θεός*. To this point, Metzger perceptively states,

It appears altogether incredible that Paul, whose ear must have been perfectly familiar with this constantly recurring formula of praise, should in this solitary instance have departed from the established usage. The passage therefore ought not to be considered as a doxology, or an ascription of praise to God, and rendered 'God be blessed', but should be taken as a declaration referring to Christ, 'who is blessed.'<sup>69</sup>

Fourth, an independent doxology to God the Father seems out of place considering the context of Romans 9:1–5. Paul has expressed his great anguish over Israel's separation

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<sup>66</sup>For an exhaustive treatment of the grammatical and stylistic arguments I present here, see Carraway, *Christ Is God Over All*, 21–57.

<sup>67</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 477. A striking parallel construction is found in 2 Cor 11:31, *ὁ θεός καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητός εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι*. In this verse, *ὁ ὢν* naturally refers back to *ὁ θεός καὶ πατὴρ*. So, in Rom 9:5, *ὁ ὢν* would refer back to *ὁ Χριστός*.

<sup>68</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, "The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 105; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:467; Moo, *Romans*, 587–88; Schreiner, *Romans*, 477.

<sup>69</sup>Metzger, "The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5," 107.

from the Christ (vv. 1–3), and the list of privileges only heighten the reality of this tragedy (vv. 4–5). Therefore, it would be rather awkward for Paul to burst into praise unto God the Father over such a dire situation.<sup>70</sup> Instead, it makes better sense that Paul’s doxological conclusion further illuminates the identity of Israel’s Messiah and contributes to the startling condition of their unbelief.

Beyond these grammatical and stylistic considerations, Dunn’s reading should also be rejected on theological and contextual grounds. Theologically, Dunn’s interpretation overlooks how Paul has reappropriated the framework of Jewish monotheism around the revelation of the mystery of Christ. In chapter 3, I affirmed Richard Bauckham’s proposal that Paul’s understanding of monotheism has been reimagined around the Christ event and can best be described as a “christological monotheism.”<sup>71</sup> In this way, Paul is able to include Christ within the divine identity of God without violating his commitment to Jewish monotheism as stipulated in the Shema (Deut 6:4; cf. Rom 3:29–30; 10:9–13). Therefore, the claim that Paul limits himself within the categories of Jewish monotheism is misleading.

Furthermore, the wider context of Romans 9–11 confirms the doxology as in reference to Christ. The doxology in 9:5 is not a detached statement of doctrine isolated from the rest of Paul’s argument, but serves as a heading anticipating what is to come.<sup>72</sup> Similar to how 1:1–7 is theologically pregnant, summarizing the mystery of Christ expounded throughout the letter, so 9:1–5 climactically bursts forth with christological praise in order to calibrate the minds of readers around the reality of God’s redemptive purposes for Israel in relation to the Christ.

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<sup>70</sup>Schreiner accurately captures Paul’s train of thought when he says, “Not only have the Jews rejected the Messiah, who is ethnically related to them, they also are spurning one who shares the divine nature with the Father.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 478.

<sup>71</sup>Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 182–232. See also, Carraway, *Christ Is God Over All*, 18–94.

<sup>72</sup>Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 630.

Quite contrary to the claim that Romans 9–11 is non-christological,<sup>73</sup> Paul goes on to argue that Christ himself is the “stumbling stone” (9:33), he is the *τέλος* of the law (10:4, 5–12), he is the Lord bestowing the riches of salvation upon all who call upon his name (v. 9–13), he is the nourishing root of the olive tree (11:17), he is the redeemer who will come from Zion (11:26), and in him the depths of the wisdom and the riches of the knowledge of God are found (vv. 33–36).<sup>74</sup> From beginning to end, Romans 9–11 expounds upon the mystery of Jesus as both the Christ of Israel and Lord over all. Therefore, on grammatical, stylistic, theological, and contextual grounds it is best to view the doxology of 9:5 as speaking of Christ as “God over all, blessed forever Amen!”

Having crowned Israel’s privileges with their birthing of the Christ, who is also God over all, what significance does this have in light of Israel’s plight? Has Paul merely listed Israel’s extraordinary privileges to ironically underscore their disastrous state? On the one hand, yes! The recollection of these privileges heightens the severity of Israel’s rejection of the Christ and it incites lament unto God to keep his promises. In fact, it raises the question of whether “the word of God has ultimately failed.” Yet, on the other hand, in recalling Israel’s privileges, Paul holds out hope that they will one day experience the fulfillment of all God’s promises; because God’s word is sure (9:6; cf. 11:29).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Franz Mussner, “Ganz Israel wird gerettet werden (Röm 11:26),” *Kairos* 18, no. 4 (1976): 245–53; Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 4; Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 39–40; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 147–49; John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 261–62. For a criticism such a view point, see Bruce W. Longenecker, “Different Answers to Different Issues: Israel, the Gentiles and Salvation History in Romans 9–11,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989): 95–123; Scott J. Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl,” *Ex Auditu* 4 (1988): 38–58; Reidar Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25–27,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 87–107; Terence L. Donaldson, “‘Riches for the Gentiles’ (Rom 11:12): Israel’s Rejection and Paul’s Gentile Mission,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112, no. 1 (1993): 81–98.

<sup>74</sup>For an excellent article exploring how Christ is positioned in Romans 9–11, see Gathercole, “Locating Christ,” 115–39. See also Carraway who makes a similar argument. Carraway, *Christ Is God Over All*, 121–83.

<sup>75</sup>Rightly Byrne who states, “There is great poignancy and irony in this final member . . . , since it is precisely Israel’s failure to recognize the Messiah to whom she gave birth that puts in question all

By emphasizing Israel's "flesh" relationship to the Christ, Paul drives at something more than simply highlighting Christ's ethnic descent. He presents the Christ as the focal point of Israel and the one in whom the nation finds purpose and meaning. Israel's elect status, as evoked by their "flesh" relationship to the Christ, not only privileged them in the past but it continues to hold promise for the future. As Paul says in 3:1, "What advantage is there to the Jew? Much in every way!" Israel's elect status, as testified to by their "flesh" relationship with the Christ, ensures that God's promises will not be revoked. But in what way? Does this mean that Israel will somehow obtain the promises apart from faith in Christ? No. It means that Israel's plight and restoration can only be understood in light of the nation's relationship to their Christ. Israel's flesh relationship with the Christ recalls the fact that Israel is Messiah-shaped from beginning to end.

Three times Paul will speak of Israel in terms of the "flesh" (σάρξ, 9:3, 5; 11:14). While not an overtly positive description, it nonetheless recalls their ethnic identity as Israelites and all the privileges belonging to them (9:4–5). Even though Israel—as a whole—is spiritually alienated from the Messiah, they remain the people of the Messiah. And this reality continues to have significance for understanding their current plight and future restoration. The mystery of Christ reveals that just as Israel's history of rejection and restoration prefigured the Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection), so now Christ's death and resurrection serves as the pattern or paradigm for understanding what has transpired and what will transpire for Israel: Christ's people according to the flesh.

In other words, by recalling Israel's flesh relationship to the Messiah he

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the other privileges and gives rise to this entire discussion. By bringing the recitation of the privileges to a climax in this way, Paul sharply focuses the central theological issue: where does Israel's failure with respect to the gospel leave the validity of God's original word? The whole effort from here on will be to show that the privileges (especially divine filiation) are not removed from Israel but that her way to them is roundabout and wholly dependent upon an eschatological exercise of God's creative power and mercy." Byrne, *Romans*, 286.

upholds a level of corporate solidarity between them.<sup>76</sup> Thus, in the same way David embodied the fate of Israel in his own experiences of suffering and exaltation (cf. Ps 68 [LXX]), so now the true “offspring of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3) embodies Israel’s fate through his death and resurrection. Wright makes a similar argument,

Israel, Paul is saying, is Messiah-focused. The long story that began with Abraham reached its climax, its goal, its τέλος (telos) in him. And Israel is also Messiah-shaped. The pattern of Israel’s history (rejection, failure, and exile followed by astonishing covenant renewal) is none other than the pattern of death and resurrection . . . [Paul] is treating Israel as precisely the Messiah’s own people, according to the flesh; his argument is that in Christ, and nowhere else, can we understand what has happened, is happening, and will happen to ethnic Israel.<sup>77</sup>

However, when Wright states that Paul “is treating Israel as precisely the Messiah’s own people, according to the flesh,” he merely understands it in terms of how Israel will be redefined around the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>78</sup>

It is true that Paul does see Israel as redefined in Christ, creating a new or renewed Israel. In this way, Paul can say it’s not the physical Jew who will receive eschatological praise from God, but the spiritual Jew who has been circumcised in heart (Rom 2:28–29). By faith in Christ’s redeeming work on the cross, God justifies both Jew and Gentile (3:21–30). Similarly, it is those who share the faith of Abraham who are reckoned children of Abraham (4:11–12). Furthermore, it is those who are united to

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<sup>76</sup>Peter Gentry suggests Gen 20:1–4 supplies evidence that the culture of the ANE assumed a corporate solidarity between the king and the nation he represented. He then makes the case from Isa 52:13–53:12 that Israel’s relationship with the Davidic king functioned the same way, whereby the king embodies the nation. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 422–23. For a fuller treatment on this subject, see Peter J. Gentry, “The Atonement in Isaiah’s Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12),” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 20–47. Also see A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Some Observations on Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘in Christ’ and ‘with Christ,’” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 8, no. 25 (1985): 83–97; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 46–48.

<sup>77</sup>Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 625.

<sup>78</sup>On this point, Wright further elaborates, “Paul regarded Jesus as Israel’s Messiah, and that he saw and expressed that belief in terms of the Messiah’s summing up of Israel in himself, thereby launching a *new solidarity* in which all those ‘in him’ would be characterized by his ‘faithfulness’, expressed in terms of his death and resurrection. This, I shall now suggest, is the key to, and the foundation for, the way in which Paul reworked the Jewish belief in Israel’s election” (Emphasis mine). Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 835.

Christ by faith who have received the promised Spirit (5:5; 8:2), who have been adopted as God's sons (8:14–15), and who await the glorious inheritance of the new creation as God's elect (8:18–25; 29–30). Yet, it is precisely this “new solidarity” which defines the true people of God in Christ that raises the question of God's faithfulness to ethnic Israel. If Paul is merely restating what he has already said before in Romans 1–8, then he hasn't actually answered the underlying objections to his gospel; namely, “what benefit does the Jew have” (3:1), “has God's word of promise failed” (9:6), or “has God rejected his people” (11:1).

Contrary to Wright, the Israel dilemma is not a question of whether Gentiles believe Jews are unsavable, but it's a question of whether Israel's current state of unbelief is permanent.<sup>79</sup> The problem is how the people of God can now be redefined in Christ and ethnic Israel is by-and-large estranged from this new reality. Therefore, if the current state of ethnic Israel remains, God's saving promises to them have failed: the gifts and calling of God have been revoked.

Wright's reading of Romans 9–11 doesn't actually answer the primary challenge to Paul's gospel; it neutralizes the force of Paul's emphasis upon Israel's corporate election and flesh relationship with the Christ. Paul is not merely saying God is going to continue to save Israelites throughout this age; he is saying Israel's current plight will not remain forever because they are his chosen people, the people of the Christ (9:4–5; 11:28–29). Thus, Paul does not nullify Israel's flesh relationship with the Christ by merely explaining that Israel must see the Christ as the climax and goal of their story. Rather, Paul plays up Israel's corporate election and flesh relationship with the Christ to explain the mystery of God's redemptive purposes for Israel.

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<sup>79</sup>Wright says, “Chapters 9–11 present . . . a complex and integrated whole, which in turn is closely integrated into the warp and woof of the rest of the letter. Building on the foundations already laid, Paul is developing one of the urgent points he wants to make to the Roman church: that they, more especially the Gentile Christians, should not despise non-Christian Jews or regard them as essentially unsavable.” Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 626.



In this way, Romans 9:5 stands as the climactic statement which paves the way for the rest of Paul's discussion in chapters 9–11. Israel remains the people of the Christ (according to the flesh) and only in light of this relationship can Israel's current plight and future restoration be understood. Specifically, in terms of mystery, as Israel's history proleptically anticipated the Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection), so even now this paradigm explains what is happening and will happen to Israel according to the flesh. Just as the Christ was *anathema* for the sake of the world (9:32–33; cf. 3:21–26; 8:32, 34a), so Israel has become *anathema* on behalf of the world (9:21–23; 11:7–10, 11–12, 15, 21). Yet, as Christ was raised from the dead (10:9; cf. 6:9–10; 8:34b), so Israel will be resurrected to life (11:12, 15, 24, 26–27). Perhaps then, the significance of Israel's flesh relationship to the Christ could be captured this way: though ethnic Israel is currently *anathema*, she remains beloved for the sake of “the Christ who is God overall, blessed forever. Amen (v. 5c).”

## Conclusion

Up to this point, I have sought to demonstrate how the Pauline mystery relates to Israel's election. Paul not only recalls Israel's relationship with the patriarchs (9:5a; 11:28–29) but also the Christ (9:5b; 11:26b–27). In so doing, he emphasizes God's ongoing commitment to Israel as his chosen people. Paradoxically, Israel is cut off from Christ, yet remains the people of the Christ. Though this relationship does not guarantee that every Israelite will be saved—Paul will go on to make this point in 9:6–13—it does guarantee that Israel as a nation will not be cast off forever.

Consequently, Paul will not contend for a Sonderweg<sup>80</sup> or even a retroactive salvation of every Jew throughout history.<sup>81</sup> Instead, he will continue to insist that Israel

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<sup>80</sup>Contra Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 261; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 143–48; Stendahl, *Final Account*, 39–40.

<sup>81</sup>Contra Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 265.

must receive Jesus as their Messiah in order to inherit the promises pledged to them (10:9–21; 11:23). Yet, Paul has positioned himself in such a way to discuss Israel’s destiny christologically. In other words, he will explain Israel’s current plight and future salvation as a mystery, whereby the nation recapitulates the death and resurrection of Christ. In this way, there is a sense of corporate solidarity, whereby Christ remains Israel’s representative. The pattern of rejection and acceptance continues to be played out in the story of Israel. Therefore, as a mystery, God’s plan of redemption for Israel is not only unveiled in Christ, but also through the prophetic writings (cf. 16:25–27). For this reason, Paul will rely upon Israel’s own Scriptures in order to show that their unbelief has not nullified the faithfulness of God but has played into God’s mysterious apocalyptic design in salvation history.

### **The Mystery of Israel’s Hardening**

In Romans 11:25–27, the first explicit component of “this mystery” (τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο) is introduced by a ὅτι clause, namely “that a hardening has come partially upon Israel” (ὅτι πώρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους τῶ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν, v. 25).<sup>82</sup> The word πώρωσις carries the idea of dullness or obduracy.<sup>83</sup> It was often used as a medical term in the Greco-Roman world to describe the mending of two broken bones or a hard swelling.<sup>84</sup> In the NT, it is always used metaphorically of spiritual dullness or the hardening of the heart (Mark 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40; 2 Cor 3:14). Paul follows suit and applies it to Israel’s state of unbelief (11:7, 23).<sup>85</sup> While there is no doubt that Israel is

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<sup>82</sup>The phrase ἀπὸ μέρους has been categorized in different ways: (1) adjectivally, whereby it modifies τῶ Ἰσραὴλ: “a hardening has come on a part of Israel” (Käsemann, *Romans*, 313; Jewett, *Romans*, 699; Middendorf, *Romans 9–16*, 1148); or (2) adverbially, modifying either the verbal thrust of πώρωσις: “a partial hardening” (Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 679; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 621) or the main verb γέγονεν: “a hardening has come partially” (Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:575; Byrne, *Romans*, 354; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 688; Moo, *Romans*, 732). Grammatically it seems best to see ἀπὸ μέρους as adverbial modifying γέγονεν. However, the difference in meaning is minimal.

<sup>83</sup>BDAG, πώρωσις, 900.

<sup>84</sup>TDNT, 5:1025–26.

<sup>85</sup>Contra Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter*

held responsible for their disobedience (10:21), Paul says this spiritual hardening has come upon them (τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν).<sup>86</sup> Israel's hardening is an act of divine judgment (cf. 11:7–8). Yet, as a mystery, Paul explains that this judgment is part of God's sovereign plan of redemption; not only for the world, but for Israel as well.

For this reason, even though Israel is in a state of unbelief, Paul can say, "It is not as though the word of God has failed" (9:6). God's redemptive purposes are being carried out as promised; not despite Israel's hardening, but by means of it. This is why Paul speaks of Israel's plight as affecting the coming in of the Gentiles (11:25; cf. vv. 11–15). Therefore, in a startling manner, Israel is carrying out their special role in bringing salvation to the nations.<sup>87</sup> Paul explains this surprising outcome in light of the mystery of Christ (11:25). As Messiah-people, Israel has undergone the judgment of God so that mercy and reconciliation may come to the world (9:22–24; 11:15).

### **God's Hardening in the Past**

While Israel's plight can be explained christologically, it also was hidden within the prophetic Scriptures. Consistent with a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, God's ways in the past have been recapitulated in the present, in order to give hope for the future. Therefore, by employing this mystery schema Paul unveils that Israel's current hardening, stumbling, and provocation were all prefigured in the prophetic Scriptures. In so doing, Paul explains Israel's present hardening in light of God's work of hardening in the past; in particular as it concerns his purpose of election.

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(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 263.

<sup>86</sup>Γέγονεν is an intensive perfect emphasizing the continuing results of a past action. Τῷ Ἰσραὴλ is a dative of disadvantage. Rightly Moo who states, "Israel's present hostility toward God, manifested in her general refusal of the gospel (see 9:30–10:21), is itself part of God's plan, for it is the result of God's act of hardening ('hardening has come' in v. 25b; see 11:7b–10; 9:17–18), Moo, *Romans*, 728. Contra Middendorf who understands God's hardening of Israel as retributive, Middendorf, *Romans 9–16*, 1148.

<sup>87</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1192.

**Romans 9:6–13.** Although Israel is God’s elect people (9:3–4), this elect status has never meant that every individual Israelite would inherit the promises. Paul reiterates this truth by turning his attention to God’s purpose according to election (v. 11). If he can establish that God’s present dealings with Israel are consistent with his acts in the past, then he can ward off any notion that God’s word of promise to Israel has failed (v. 6a).<sup>88</sup> Consequently, Paul explains (γὰρ), “All who are descended from Israel, these are not Israel” (οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραὴλ).<sup>89</sup> In effect, Paul contends that there is a spiritual Israel who is not the same as biological Israel.<sup>90</sup>

He further clarifies this statement in the following verse, “Nor is it that all the children are Abraham’s offspring” (οὐδ’ ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ πάντες τέκνα, v. 7a).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>The phrase ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ has been variously understood. Some take it as a specific reference to the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1; 14:36; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Col. 1:25; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:9). See Jewett, *Romans*, 573–74; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 374. In this way, Paul would be defending his gospel from the charge that it invalidates Israel’s hope of salvation. Others take it more narrowly in reference to God’s word of salvation to Israel (Piper, *The Justification of God*, 49). Neither of these options are far from each other, for Paul’s gospel is the fulfillment of God’s word of salvation for Israel (1:1–4). However, Moo best articulates the meaning of this phrase when he says, “The sequence of thoughts suggests . . . that ‘the word of God’ mentioned in v. 6 is that word which contains the privileges of Israel (vv. 4–5) and to which Paul makes reference throughout this chapter. Moreover, ‘the word of God’ here is somewhat parallel to ‘the oracles of God’ in 3:2. Therefore, ‘the word of God’ is God’s OT word, with particular reference to his promises to Israel” (Moo, *Romans*, 593). In this phrase, there may also be an allusion to Isa 40:7–8, further emphasizing that God’s word of promise to Israel will never fail. See Filippo Belli, *Argumentation and Use of Scripture in Romans 9–11*, *Analecta Biblica* 183 (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2010), 38–39.

<sup>89</sup>Piper makes a cogent case for locating the οὐ with the later part of the clause. Piper, *The Justification of God*, 65–66. See also Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 539; Moo, *Romans*, 594; Schreiner, *Romans*, 482. Gaventa understands the οὐ to negate the entire sentence. Beverly R. Gaventa, “On the Calling-into-Being of Israel: Romans 9:6–29,” in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. F. Wilk and J. R. Wagner, WUNT 257 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 259.

<sup>90</sup>The referent to the second Israel mentioned in this verse is the subject of much conversation. Who is spiritual Israel? Some contend that Paul is speaking of the church, the new covenant people of God, the new Israel in Christ, Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11*, 140–41; Jewett, *Romans*, 575; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1241–42. Others suggest that Paul refers to the Jewish remnant within the larger body of ethnic Israel, Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:474; Käsemann, *Romans*, 263; Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel,” 44; Otfried Hofius, “Das Evangelium und Israel: Erwägungen zu Römer 9–11,” in *Paulusstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 179; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 560; Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 210; Schreiner, *Romans*, 482. A decision between these two views is difficult. Perhaps Moo is correct to propose a nuanced third option: “Paul may be ‘using’ Israel in its second occurrence in this verse as a formal category that he has not yet defined. His point here is simply to claim that spiritual Israel is not the same as biological Israel. Just who ‘populates’ that spiritual Israel is not yet revealed and will become evident as Paul’s argument unfolds.” Moo, *Romans*, 595. In other words, at this moment Paul is showing that in Israel’s past there has always been an Israel within Israel; yet at the same time he is preparing for the inclusion of the Gentiles into this spiritual Israel (cf. 9:24–26; 11:17–24, 25).

<sup>91</sup>While the ὅτι could be causal (Piper, *The Justification of God*, 69; Schreiner, *Romans*, 484),

In other words, Paul makes the bold assertion that physical lineage from Abraham does not guarantee that one is a true offspring of Abraham and heir of the promise. Rather (ἀλλὰ), the true offspring are called (κληθήσεταιί, v. 7b). Paul supports this assertion with an exact citation of Genesis 21:12 (LXX), where God reminds Abraham that the promise would come through Isaac, not Ishmael. While in the OT context, καλέω carries the idea of being named, here it bears the full theological weight it has elsewhere in Romans (4:17; 8:28, 29, 30; 9:12, 24, 25, 26).<sup>92</sup> Namely, it speaks of God’s effectual call whereby he sovereignly brings about his divine will. However, Abasciano challenges this assertion by insisting that

the divine call is not a gospel summons that irresistibly creates a response of faith and obedience; rather it is a naming of those who are in Christ through faith as his covenant people. Applied individually, Christian calling relates to conversion, when one comes to share in the name and attendant blessings of the eschatological messianic community ‘as well as continuing divine acknowledgment of sonship/covenant membership.’<sup>93</sup>

Yet, a text that undermines Abasciano’s view is Romans 8:30 which says, “Those whom [God] predestined, these he also *called* (ἐκάλεσεν) and those whom he *called* (ἐκάλεσεν) these he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” It is of particular importance to notice that those whom Paul says are “called,” are also those who are “justified.” Since God’s call is directly linked with a person’s justification, calling (καλέω) cannot be reduced to an invitation. Rather, the calling of God in Pauline theology is an effectual call which creates the faith which justifies.<sup>94</sup>

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it seems better to take the ὅτι with οὐδ’ introducing the object clause (“nor is it that”) and resuming the οὐχ . . . ὅτι of v. 6. Thus, σπέρμα serves as the predicate nominative and is retained as the more theologically significant term parallel with “children of God” and “children of the promise” (v. 8). See Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 540; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 169; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 636; Moo, *Romans*, 595-96n133.

<sup>92</sup>Rightly Schreiner, *Romans*, 484.

<sup>93</sup>Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1–9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis*, Library of New Testament Studies 301 (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 218–19.

<sup>94</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, “Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9: A Response to Brian Abasciano,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006): 380.

Furthermore, Abasciano's view essentially reduces God's purpose of election to God's determination to make "faith" the terms of entry into God's covenant people.<sup>95</sup> While Paul certainly affirms that faith is required for inclusion among God's people (1:16–17; 3:22; 4:5; 5:1; 10:9–10, 17), the underlying question Paul addresses in Romans 9–11 is why most of Israel does not have faith (9:3, 32; 11:23). Paul's answer is that they were hardened (11:7, 25) and given spiritual lethargy, blindness, and deafness (v. 8). Or to put it another way, not every Israelite has been called by God.

For this reason, Paul notes that it is on the basis of God's calling that the promise was secured through Isaac and not Ishmael (9:7).<sup>96</sup> Paul further elaborates this point by saying, "The children of the flesh are not the children of God, but it is the children of the promise [i.e., those who are called] who are regarded as offspring" (v. 8). In so doing, Paul contrasts the "children of the flesh" with "the children of the promise" claiming that it is only the latter who are considered true "offspring."<sup>97</sup> Through a conflation of Genesis 18:10 and 14 (LXX),<sup>98</sup> Paul stresses the idea of promise by pointing to God's word of promise and recalls the miraculous circumstances surrounding

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<sup>95</sup>Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:10–18: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis*, Library of New Testament Studies 317 (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 52–53.

<sup>96</sup>Below I will take up in more detail the issue of corporate election, but for now it must be pointed out that contrary to Abasciano, Paul is emphasizing individuals when he references Isaac (9:7) and Jacob (9:13). Brian J. Abasciano, "Corporate Election in Romans 9: A Reply to Thomas Schreiner," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006): 354–55. Paul's argument is that Israel's corporate election does not guarantee that every Israelite will be saved simply because they're a physical descendent of Abraham. The examples drawn from birth narratives of Isaac/Ishmael and Jacob/Esau serve to demonstrate this is the case even among individuals within the line of Abraham. Rightly, Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9," 382.

<sup>97</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 597. Also note Paul's use of λογίζομαι which recalls its earlier usage in Romans 4:3 (cf. Gen 15:6 [LXX]) where Abraham's faith was reckoned for righteousness. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 484. In both cases Paul shows that identification with the people of God is predicated by God's sovereign will.

<sup>98</sup>Most scholars agree that Paul makes use of both Gen 18:10 and 14. See Murray, *Romans*, 2:11; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 541; Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1–9*, 154–57; Seifrid, "Romans," 640; Moo, *Romans*, 598; Schreiner, *Romans*, 484. However, Stanley contends that Paul only retrieved 18:14. Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series 69 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 104.

the birth of Isaac through Sarah (v. 9; cf. 4:17).<sup>99</sup> Paul notes that God came to Sarah so that she should have a son and miraculously secured for himself the promise he made to Abraham. As Moo comments, “Paul emphasizes again God’s initiative in creating his covenant people: not by natural generation but by God’s supernatural intervention.”<sup>100</sup> Consequently, Paul lays the theological foundation for why much of ethnic Israel has not believed the gospel: they’re children of the flesh.

In 9:10–13, Paul continues to develop his distinction between Israel according to the flesh and Israel according to the promise (v. 6).<sup>101</sup> This time he examines the twin sons of Isaac: Jacob and Esau. In doing so, Paul directly ties God’s “calling” with God’s “purpose according to election” (v. 11). Several features from this example should be highlighted. First—and distinct from the previous example—these brothers share the same birth mother (v. 10). This fact eliminates the objection that Isaac was chosen because of his mother.<sup>102</sup> Second, Paul notes that God’s choosing of Jacob over Esau occurred before they were born or had done anything good or bad. This element shows that God’s electing purpose is not based on “works,” but on his effectual call alone.<sup>103</sup> Thus, Paul excludes any room for human boasting, but fully places the onus upon God for determining whom he chooses to be among the Israel of promise. Finally, Paul cites

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<sup>99</sup>Seifrid insightfully comments, “Paul introduces the category of ‘promise’ by pointing to God’s announcement to Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a son (9:9). The language is nearly definitional in character: ‘This [word] is a word of promise.’ God alone promises and fulfills, contrary to all human abilities and expectations. The element of time, which Paul in fact fronts—‘at this time I shall come’—is essential. There must be a time of waiting and faith before the promise is fulfilled. Perhaps the gift of a ‘son’ to Sarah faintly anticipates the final redemption of Israel and all creation, in which its ‘sonship’ is realized (8:22–23; 9:4; 11:26–27). Seifrid, “Romans,” 639–40.

<sup>100</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 598.

<sup>101</sup>The transitional phrase οὐ μόνον δέ, indicates that Paul is adding another layer to his argument. See *ibid.*, 599.

<sup>102</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:13; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 637.

<sup>103</sup>As Seifrid states, “Neither Esau’s exchange of his birthright nor Jacob’s scheming (with Rebecca) comes into consideration. Nor does any working of the good come into view. Paul takes care to show that ‘the flesh’ is entirely excluded from God’s saving purpose: neither physical descent nor the doing of good plays a role.” Seifrid, “Romans,” 640.

from Genesis 25:23 where God says, “The older will serve the younger” (Rom 9:12b). This word of promise to Sarah is surprising since it goes against the custom that the firstborn would be preeminent.<sup>104</sup> It also evokes the biblical theme of reversal, which Paul will employ later in his argument (cf. 9:24–33; 11:11–15, 25–26, 28–32).<sup>105</sup>

Paul rounds off his recollection of Jacob and Esau with a citation from Malachi 1:2–3 (LXX) which employs the shocking language of God’s hatred of Esau. What Paul means by this quotation depends upon whether he is speaking of Jacob and Esau as representatives of nations or as individuals. It certainly would not be out of the question to see Jacob and Esau in terms of the descendants they represent. Already, Paul has emphasized that the Jews are “Israelites,” bearing the name given to Jacob by God (Gen 32:28). As Jacob can refer to Israel (Num 23:7; Ps 14:7; Isa 41:8; 45:4; 59:20), so Esau corresponds to Edom (Gen 36:8; Deut 2:4, 5, 8, 12, 22, 29; Jer 49:8, 10). That Paul is thinking corporately is also suggested by the context from which the two citations of Genesis 25:23 and Malachi 1:2–3 are found. The omitted sentence from Genesis 25:23 reads, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided.” As one continues to read Malachi it is evident that the prophet speaks of Jacob and Esau as corporate entities (Mal 1:3–5).

Understood in this corporate sense, God’s love of Jacob refers to his election of Israel as whole; whereas God’s hatred of Esau merely speaks of God’s rejection of Edom as his chosen people. In this way, God’s, election and rejection do not refer to the salvation of individuals, but to God’s choice of Israel over Edom to carry out his purposes in the world.<sup>106</sup> As Abasciano states, “Paul speaks not of unconditional eternal

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<sup>104</sup>Frank Thielman, “Unexpected Mercy: Echoes of a Biblical Motif in Romans 9–11,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (1994): 177–80; Oropeza, “Paul and Theodicy,” 62; Schreiner, *Romans*, 487.

<sup>105</sup>Thielman, “Unexpected Mercy,” 177. See also Seifrid, “Romans,” 641.

<sup>106</sup>Those who advocate for a corporate understanding of God’s election include: Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:479–80; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 356; Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11*, 224–25; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 238–29; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 542; Byrne, *Romans*, 299;



decrees regarding individual election and salvation, but of the corporate election and naming of God's people."<sup>107</sup>

On the surface, these appear to be strong reasons to read Romans 9:10–13 corporately and to reject any notion of individual election. However, such a reading is too flat and fails to make sense of Paul's overall argument. First, Paul focuses on Jacob and Esau as individuals whose standing before God were not determined by "works," but on the God who "calls" (v. 12). Abasciano seems to associate "works" with Israel's boundary markers (i.e., circumcision, food laws, sabbath). In this way, God's calling is not based on Jewish law or ethnicity, but on faith.<sup>108</sup> Yet, Paul defines "works" generally as anything "good or bad" (9:11). For this reason, even faith is excluded as the basis of God's election and calling.<sup>109</sup> Second, the vocabulary of "election," "calling," and "works" reflects Paul's other usages which concern God's gift of salvation apart from works (4:2–8; 8:28; 11:5–6). Finally, Paul's rationale for eliciting the distinction between Jacob and Esau is to support his assertion that the physical descendants of Israel do not all belong to spiritual Israel (9:6). If individual election—based on God's effectual call—is not in view, how would the assertion that Israel—not Edom—are God's chosen people further Paul's primary claim that not every Israelite belongs to the Israel of promise? Thus, while Paul does retain a notion of corporate election (9:1–5; 11:28–29), it is not to the exclusion of individual election.<sup>110</sup>

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William W. Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1–9*, 216–35; Abasciano, "Corporate Election in Romans 9"; Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy," 63.

<sup>107</sup>Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1–9*, 218.

<sup>108</sup>Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:10–18*, 52–53.

<sup>109</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 603; Schreiner, *Romans*, 489.

<sup>110</sup>Scholars who understand election in terms of individuals include: Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 211–12; Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 232; Kruse, *Romans*, 379–80; Moo, *Romans*, 604–7; Schreiner, *Romans*, 486–87. See especially Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9," 373–86.

Therefore, by recognizing Paul’s emphasis upon individual election, the statement about God’s hatred of Esau serves as the first explicit statement concerning the flip-side to election: rejection. In other words, God’s purpose of election involves actively calling individuals into his covenant love, but also actively excluding others.<sup>111</sup> Why is this the case? “So that God’s purpose according to election should stand” (v. 11). Paul’s use of *πρόθεσις* denotes God’s sovereign plan by which he will bring about his saving promises to fruition (cf. 8:28, 29–30). Paul further specifies that God’s predetermined plan is carried out by “election” (*κατ’ ἐκλογὴν*).<sup>112</sup> God has implemented his plan through his free choice; namely choosing Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau. In this way, God’s sovereign plan to bring about his saving promises cannot be thwarted. God’s plan stands (*μένω*, v. 11) because it is completely free from human influence.<sup>113</sup> Since the promise is secured according to divine election, the word of God cannot fail (v. 6a) even though the majority of Israel has not believed in the Christ.

With that said, even though individual election is primarily in view, one would be remiss to exclude any notion of Israel’s corporate election.<sup>114</sup> After all, Paul has already emphasized Israel’s special status as God’s elect people (9:4–5). In this regard,

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<sup>111</sup>Contra Fitzmyer who sees the contrast between “love” and “hate” as a Semitism whereby hate merely means to be loved less. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 563. Even if Fitzmyer was correct it would not change the fact that Esau did not receive God’s covenant love. Rightly, Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 637; Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 225; Schreiner, *Romans*, 490.

<sup>112</sup>The relationship between God’s redemptive purposes and election is key feature of the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema (e.g., 4Q417 2 I 18–19). Understanding Rom 9–11 as the unveiling of the mystery of Christ, it would not be surprising to find Paul relating these two concepts in a similar way. Thus, it seems best to view the prepositional phrase *κατ’ ἐκλογὴν* adverbially modifying *πρόθεσις* to articulate the means by which God’s redemptive purpose is carried out. Rightly, Seifrid, “Romans,” 640; Moo, *Romans*, 602n160.

<sup>113</sup>Many commentators note that *μένω* is antithetical to *ἐκπίπτω* in 9:6 and should be translated “stand.” See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:478; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 543; Schreiner, *Romans*, 489.

<sup>114</sup>As Schreiner rightly contends, “What we have here in Romans 9–11 is both corporate and individual election, for we cannot have the one without the other. If individuals are not elected, one cannot have a corporate group. It follows then, that Paul may *focus* on corporate election without in the least suggesting that individual election is excluded” (Schreiner, “Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9,” 375). Contra Abasciano, who though argues for both corporate and individual election in Rom 9, sees the former as primary. Consequently, individuals are only deemed elect by joining the group. Abasciano, “Corporate Election in Romans 9,” 352.

Wright insightfully notes,

There is simply no possibility that Paul was making general theological points and just happened, by a quirk of coincidence or subconscious memory, to frame these general points within something that looks like Israel's story but wasn't really intended that way.<sup>115</sup>

In other words, Wright contends that Paul's way of explaining why every Israelite is not a member of spiritual Israel is done so through a retelling of Israel's history. This practice is consistent with other Second Temple writings (Jub.; LAB; Josephus); especially those associated with mystery (CD 1:1–3:11; 1Q27 1 I, 3–4; 4Q418 123 II, 2–4; *Book of Watchers*; 3 Bar.; T. Levi.). As an unveiled mystery, God's acts in the past were reimagined as prefigurations of a new historical situation. In the same way, Paul is unveiling a mystery hidden in Israel's history and now made known through Christ. As the representative of Israel, Christ was both rejected and accepted, so Israel's history is characterized by this pattern. Therefore, Paul not only establishes that there is an Israel within Israel, but he establishes that as the corporate people of God, Israel's story is marked by a pattern of acceptance and rejection which continues to this day.

**Romans 9:14–18.** This two-fold purpose for retelling Israel's story continues in Paul's recollection of the exodus, specifically as it concerns God's purpose in hardening Pharaoh. In order to advance his argument that God's purpose according to election stands (v. 11), Paul opens with a familiar rhetorical question, "What then shall we say" (v. 14a; cf. 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7)?<sup>116</sup> This initial question sets up the primary

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<sup>115</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1159.

<sup>116</sup>This rhetorical question resumes Paul's diatribe style which he has employed at various points in the letter (cf. 2:1–3:8; 3:27–31; 6–7). For an exhaustive study of Paul's use of diatribe, see Stanley Kent Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 57 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). In doing so, Paul not only moves his argument forward, but he is likely responding to common objections he's heard during his preaching ministry. Moo states, "[These questions] undoubtedly reflect actual accusations brought against Paul . . . perhaps by Jews or Jewish Christians who held the popular Pharisaic conception of a cooperation between God and human beings in salvation." Moo, *Romans*, 610n192. See also Stowers, *Diatribe*, 121; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 551; Barrett, *Romans*, 172; Jewett, *Romans*, 581; Schreiner, *Romans*, 494.

objection raised against Paul’s teaching: “Is there unrighteousness (*ἀδικία*) with God” (v. 14b)? This question harks back to 3:5 where Paul addresses a similar issue concerning God’s justice in exacting wrath upon unrighteous Israel.<sup>117</sup> However, Wright contends that no devout Jew would find anything controversial about what Paul has said thus far.

No first-century Jew would have supposed that the ‘seed of Abraham’ was continued equally by Ishmael as well as Isaac, or that Esau shared the same ‘elect’ status as Jacob. They would have agreed, further, that God had the right, faced with the bullying Pharaoh, to reveal his own name and power in all the world through the events of the Exodus. They would certainly have agreed that when Israel made and worshipped the golden calf God had the right to do what he pleased, and if he showed mercy to some, that was up to him.<sup>118</sup>

On the one hand, I agree with Wright that Paul is retelling Israel’s story and that in general no devout Jew would object to the winnowing of Israel as Paul has traced it. However, the objection does not concern the fact that there is an Israel within Israel or with how God dealt his judgment against Pharaoh; rather the objection is to Paul’s reading of Israel’s history and interpretive emphasis upon God’s predetermined choice of Jacob over Esau *apart from any works of their own* (vv. 11–13).<sup>119</sup> It’s Paul’s insistence that there is an elect among Israel—based upon God’s calling and not by works—which raises questions about God’s justice.<sup>120</sup> Yet, Paul refuses to entertain any notion of

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<sup>117</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:25; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 638; Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 330; Schreiner, *Romans*, 494–95.

<sup>118</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1184–85.

<sup>119</sup>Barclay cogently states, “Paul has directly or indirectly ruled out numerous possible qualifying criteria for divine selection: birth (natural rights of decent), status (comparative ‘greatness’) and action (‘works’), all forms of superiority humanly ascribed or achieved . . . . Thus the only principle that Paul will identify as operative in Israel’s history is the principle of call/election, which operates by mercy alone.” John M. G. Barclay, “Unnerving Grace: Approaching Romans 9–11 from the Wisdom of Solomon,” in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 106–7.

<sup>120</sup>Wright merely sees the question of God’s justice as pertaining to his covenant promises to Israel. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 238. Yet Moo is correct when he says, “Paul also uses ‘righteousness’ language to refer to God’s faithfulness to his own person and character. And the course of Paul’s argument suggests that, in Paul’s answer at least, it is ultimately this standard, revealed in Scripture and in Creation, against which God’s acts must be measured.” Moo, *Romans*, 611–12. See also Piper, *The Justification of God*, 92–96.

injustice with God.<sup>121</sup> In no uncertain terms, Paul answers his own question: “By no means” (μη γένοιτο; v. 14c)!

Paul explains (γάρ, v. 15) that God’s freedom of choice is consistent with his revealed character. Paul then turns to the word of the Lord spoken to Moses in Exodus 33:19 (LXX) which says, “I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion (ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω).” These words occur in the context of Moses’s intercession for Israel after they had committed idolatry (Exod 32–34). Moses not only asks God to forgive them on the basis of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (32:11–14) and to remain present among them (33:12–17), but also that God would show Moses his glory (33:18). YHWH answers Moses request stating that he will cause all “his goodness” to pass before Moses and he that will proclaim his name in the revelation of his glory. Therefore, in this revelation of God’s glory a fundamental characteristic is made known; namely his freedom to grant mercy and compassion to whomever he chooses. God’s choice of Isaac and Jacob was an expression of his mercy; and no one can lay claim that God owes them mercy. This was certainly the case for idolatrous Israel (Exod 32) and it remains the case for all sinful humanity (Rom 3:1–20). In other words, Paul argues that the shocking truth is that God has shown mercy to some when all deserve judgment.

By explaining how God upholds his righteousness by sovereignly choosing whom he will bestow mercy, Paul also reveals that this reality most fundamentally manifests God’s glory.<sup>122</sup> As Piper cogently states, “It is the glory of God and his essential nature mainly to dispense mercy (but also wrath, Ex 34:7) on whomever he pleases apart from any constraint originating outside his own will. This is the essence of

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<sup>121</sup>The μη anticipates a negative answer to the question.

<sup>122</sup>Piper, *The Justification of God*, 88–89.

what it means to be God. This is his name.”<sup>123</sup>

In 9:16 Paul draws a conclusion (ἀρα οὖν) from the preceding citation, “It does not depend on the one who wills nor on the one who runs, but upon the God who shows mercy.” The subject of this sentence is not immediately clear. It could be God’s “choice,”<sup>124</sup> “mercy,”<sup>125</sup> or “salvation.”<sup>126</sup> Whatever decision is made, the overall meaning of the passage is not significantly affected; each of these ideas concerns the reception of God’s word of promise. However, with the close connection to 9:15, Moo may be correct in seeing the subject as “God’s bestowal of mercy.”<sup>127</sup> Consequently, Paul reiterates the point made in 9:11–13, human will and effort have no bearing upon God’s elective purpose and this purpose accords with God’s character of freely bestowing mercy upon whomever he chooses.

In 9:17, Paul then turns to a second answer for why God is not unjust;<sup>128</sup> only now he will examine the negative side of God’s elective purpose: rejection and judgment. As with 9:15 Paul cites the OT by means of explanation (γάρ). This time the Scripture is addressed to Pharaoh (λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή τῷ Φαραῶ), and again the citation comes from Exodus. It reads, “For this reason I have raised you up (ἐξήγειρά σε) so that (ὅπως) I may demonstrate to you my power (τὴν δύναμίν μου) and so that (ὅπως) my name (τὸ ὄνομά μου) should be declared in all the earth” (Rom 9:17; cf. Exod 9:16 LXX).<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Piper, *The Justification of God*, 88–89. See also Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:283; Susan Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-Reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11,” *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 377.

<sup>124</sup>Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God,” 377–78.

<sup>125</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:484–85.

<sup>126</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 497.

<sup>127</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 613.

<sup>128</sup>Moo observes an A B structure in 9:14–18 whereby verses 15 and 17 provide a two-fold answer for why God is not unjust (ibid., 614). See also Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 45; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:485; Käsemann, *Romans*, 287; Schreiner, *Romans*, 497–98. Contra William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), 255; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 553.

<sup>129</sup>Paul makes several changes to the LXX: (1) he replaces καὶ ἔνεκεν τούτου with εἰς αὐτὸ

There are several observations to be made from Paul’s citation. First, Paul particularly emphasized God’s active role in raising Pharaoh up. The verb carries the idea of elevating someone for a specific purpose in history (Num 24:19; 2 Sam 12:11; Job 5:11; Hab 1:6; Zech 11:16).<sup>130</sup> In this case, it refers to God’s providential hand in appointing Pharaoh to the role he played in the redemption of Israel in the Exodus. What role did Pharaoh play? This leads to the second observation, Pharaoh’s persistent resistance to God had the two-fold purpose (*ὅπως*) of displaying God’s power (*δύναμις*) to Pharaoh and declaring God’s name (*ὄνομα*) in all the earth (Rom 9:17). These words were spoken to Pharaoh through Moses after the sixth plague and reveal the purpose behind all God’s great acts in redeeming Israel.

Third, God’s power was on display not only in mercy toward Israel, but in judgment toward Egypt.<sup>131</sup> This demonstration of power also had the purpose of declaring God’s name—his saving and judging righteousness—throughout the earth (cf. Exod 15:13–16; Josh 2:9, 10; 9:9; Ps 78:12, 13; 1-3:26–38; 106:9–11; 136:10–15).<sup>132</sup> Therefore, God’s negative actions toward Pharaoh ultimately had a positive purpose (cf. 9:22–23). In this way, God’s righteousness is vindicated by virtue of his freedom to bring about judgment and salvation to whomever he wills.

Paul concludes (*ἄρα οὖν*) his second answer with a principle drawn from Exodus 9:16: “He has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes” (Rom 9:18). While Paul’s citation from Exodus 9:16 does not explicitly mention the

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τοῦτο to make the purpose clause more emphatic; (2) he replaces *διετηρήθης* with *ἐξήγειρά*. This change reflects Paul’s emphasis upon God’s sovereignty in appointing Pharaoh for his own purposes. (3) Paul uses *ὅπως* instead of *ἵνα*; (4) *δύναμις* instead of *ἰσχύς*. This last deviation from the LXX most likely reflects Paul’s desire associate God’s power (*δύναμις*) over Pharaoh with the power (*δύναμις*) of God in the gospel (cf. 1:16–17). Both are expressions of his mercy and judgment. Rightly, Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 221; Schreiner, *Romans*, 498.

<sup>130</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:27.

<sup>131</sup>Contra Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:487; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 554.

<sup>132</sup>See Murray, *Romans*, 2:28.

hardening of Pharaoh, he has tapped into the larger Exodus narrative which does speak of Pharaoh's heart being hardened (Exod 4–14 [LXX]). The hardening of Pharaoh's heart coincides with God's "raising up" of Pharaoh for judgment, in order to bring salvation to Israel.<sup>133</sup> This is consistent with a careful reading of the OT narrative which presents God's act of hardening as the basis for Pharaoh's self-hardening.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, this reading fits in the context of Romans as Paul will connect the demonstration of God's power (*δύναμις*) among "vessels of wrath" in order to make known his glory upon "vessels of mercy" (Rom 9:22–23). This principle is extremely important because Paul has demonstrated in Israel's history God's ways of accomplishing his redemptive purposes through a paradigm of acceptance and rejection. The same spoken word accomplishes God's purpose according to election, whether for mercy or for judgment. Later Paul will build upon this foundational principle to show how it is currently playing out through God's hardening of Israel (9:33; 11:7, 25), in order to bring salvation to the Gentiles.

By retelling Israel's story in the exodus, Paul defends any charge against God's righteousness in choosing some for salvation and rejecting others. Even God's rejection or hardening of individuals serves the purpose of extending his mercy to others, which is fundamental to his name.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, Paul has laid much of the ground work for explaining how the present hardening of Israel does not thwart God's faithfulness to keep

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<sup>133</sup>Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 616; Schreiner, *Romans*, 499. Contra those scholars who insist that Pharaoh's hardening only concerns his role in a salvation-historical sense and has no direct bearing to his own spiritual condition. See Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 44–45; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:488–89; Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 639.

<sup>134</sup>See G. K. Beale, "An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus 4–14 and Romans 9," *Trinity Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984): 129–54; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 159–71; Moo, *Romans*, 616–19. Contra Robert B. Chisholm, "Divine Hardening in the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153, no. 612 (1996): 410–34.

<sup>135</sup>As Oropeza states, "The reason for hardening Pharaoh was not just that God could magnify his power but that his fame might spread to other people apart from the Israelites. For Paul, these other people are Gentiles who come to know God, and God would be glorified because of this (Rom 9.23–26, 30). God's election and hardening of 'whom he wills' is for the purpose of bringing about a greater good: to be merciful to more people." Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy," 65.



his promises. In fact, he will contend that just as Pharaoh was hardened in order to bring salvation to Israel, so at the present time Israel has been hardened in order to bring salvation to the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul draws from Israel's history a paradigm of rejection and acceptance to demonstrate how this pattern continues at the present time.<sup>136</sup>

**Romans 9:19–23.** The subsequent verses reveal that Paul intends to present God's negative actions toward Pharaoh as parallel with most of Israel. This becomes evident in 9:19 as Paul heightens his diatribe style and directly quotes his Jewish interlocutor.<sup>137</sup> It's important to note that while these verses can be applied to all humanity, Paul continues to address the apparent incongruity between God's word of promise and Israel's resistance to the word of Christ.<sup>138</sup> Keeping the overall context in view, Paul has argued that God's promise was not contingent upon every Israelite being saved. Already he has made a distinction between ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel, between the "children of Abraham" and the "seed of Abraham." In so doing, he has equated unbelieving Israel with Ishmael (not Isaac), Esau (not Jacob), and Pharaoh (not Moses). Thus, the logical conclusion Paul leaves his readers with is that the non-elect of Israel are in the place of Pharaoh, being hardened in order that God's saving mercy may be extended to the world.<sup>139</sup> To all that Paul has said, the interlocutor's implied response

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<sup>136</sup>Wagner states, "Paul's understanding of the apparent hardening of Israel in the present is shaped by his reading of the exodus narrative as a paradigm for God's redemptive activity" (Wagner, *Heralds*, 71). Contra Barclay who states, "To find typological correspondence between the scriptural characters in Romans 9 and the present division within Israel is also problematic: nothing in Romans suggests that unbelieving Jews are to be considered equivalent to Ishmael, Esau, or Pharaoh." John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 528.

<sup>137</sup>Dunn is on target when he states, "The argument is so in-house Jewish, and since there is some indication that Jewish thinkers did wrestle with the theological problems posed by the scriptural talk of the divine hardening of Pharaoh (*Jub.* 48.17), it is, if anything, more probable that Paul sees this as an expression of Jewish theological sensitivity over the harsher-sounding corollaries to their own doctrine of election." Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 555.

<sup>138</sup>Wright asserts that Paul now moves forward in his argument by rehearsing Israel's history in the exile. In so doing, Paul responds to Israel's complaint like the prophets Isaiah or Jeremiah. Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 641.

<sup>139</sup>Rightly, Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy," 68.

can be summarized as follows: if God is completely free to show mercy and harden whomever he wills, how can he hold us responsible (v. 19)?

Paul's answer reveals that the interlocutor's question really isn't about whether it's possible to resist God's will; but the question manifests a rebelliousness to the infinite wisdom and greatness of God (v. 20; cf. 11:33–36). For this reason, Paul rebukes the objector's audacity in calling into question God's freedom as the creator. He says, "Who are you O man who talks back (*ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος*) to God" (v. 20a).<sup>140</sup> In doing so, Paul upholds the creator and creature distinction by evoking the illustration of the potter and the clay (vv. 20b–21). He initially cites verbatim Isaiah 29:16b and may have adjusted the second question from Isaiah 45:9b.<sup>141</sup> Both passages employ the potter and clay analogy to communicate God's sovereignty in accomplishing his redemptive purposes. Isaiah understood God's act of judgment upon Israel through foreign nations not only as just punishment for their covenant infidelity, but surprisingly the means by which his saving promises would be fulfilled.<sup>142</sup> Consequently, God's word was not received with approval, so Isaiah reminds Israel of the absurdity of questioning the handiwork of the Lord. Nevertheless, even though Israel has rejected the prophetic word, each oracle ends on a note of hope that God will rescue Israel from her obduracy and bring salvation to all the ends of the earth (Isa 29:22–24; 45:22–25).

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<sup>140</sup>The entire phrase *ὦ ἄνθρωπε, μενοῦνγε σὺ τίς εἶ* is emphatic. The vocative *ἄνθρωπε* plus the *ὦ* signals a highly emotive response. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 68. The particle *μενοῦνγε* is adversative. And the personal pronoun *σὺ* is emphatic both in its inclusion and position. The substantival participle (*ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος*) "denotes disputation and resistance, not merely an attempt to procure an answer to a difficult question." Schreiner, *Romans*, 503. Also see Käsemann, *Romans*, 269; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 186; Moo, *Romans*, 621.

<sup>141</sup>Seifrid, "Romans," 644–45; Bird, *Romans*, 332. See also Shum who asserts, "The relation between Rom. 9:20–21 and Isa. 29:16 can be established on the basis of their verbal and thematic similarities. Moreover Paul's explicit use of Isa 29:19 in Rom 11:8 strengthens the likelihood of their relationship." Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans*, WUNT 156 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 204.

<sup>142</sup>Oropeza notes, "The questioning of the clay to the potter is associated with Israel's questioning of Yahweh's plan to use a Gentile as Israel's liberator. The idea that a Gentile would be included in Israel's anticipated redemption and that God would be acknowledged among God's enemies may have been interpreted as a blow to Israel's pride." Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy," 69.

Paul also appears to have drawn from the broader Jewish traditions which employ this illustration as well (Jer 18:1–12; *Wis* 15:7–13; Sir 33:7–13; T. Naph. 2.2, 4; 1QS 11.22; 1QH 9[1].21; 11[3].23–24; 12[4].29; 19[11].3; 20[12].26, 32).<sup>143</sup> In fact, Paul’s language in Romans 9:21 is particularly reminiscent of Wisdom 15:7; which also speaks of God’s authority to make some pots for honorable use and others for dishonorable. So, what does Paul mean by this analogy? Some suggest he merely applies it to communicate historical destinies of nations;<sup>144</sup> whereas others see it applied to the salvation of individuals.<sup>145</sup> The latter view is on target, for Paul continues to make his case for God’s complete sovereignty in choosing some as recipients of his saving promises and rejecting others (cf. 9:11–13). Furthermore, only the salvation of individuals makes sense of Paul’s overarching argument for many Israelites do not believe the gospel.

This conclusion also makes the best sense of 9:22–23 when Paul applies the illustration God’s purposes in preparing vessels both for “destruction” and “glory.”<sup>146</sup> Though the syntax in these verses is particularly difficult,<sup>147</sup> it’s best to understand Paul

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<sup>143</sup>Rightly Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah*, 204–5; Moo, *Romans*, 622–23; Schreiner, *Romans*, 503–4. See also Barclay who states, “as biblical and other Jewish texts indicate, the potter-clay metaphor could be put to varying use (e.g., Isa 29:16; Jer 18:1–6; Sir 33:13; *Wis* 15:7); it is not clear that Paul has any one of these texts particularly in mind.” Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 533n30.

<sup>144</sup>Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 58, 67; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:492, 495; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 557; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 569; Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 368.

<sup>145</sup>Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 261; Murray, *Romans*, 2:33; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 200; Seifrid, “Romans,” 645; Moo, *Romans*, 623; Schreiner, *Romans*, 505.

<sup>146</sup>Rom 9:22 is introduced with the postpositive  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ . Some take it as an adversative contrasting with what Paul has said in verses 20 and 21. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:493; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 558. However, taking in consideration the flow of Paul’s argument he “appears to use  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  with simple transitional force as he moves from the illustration to its application.” Moo, *Romans*, 623. Schreiner cogently states, “No evidence is adduced that Paul contrasts God with the potter of verse 21 who makes some vessels for honor and some for dishonor. Instead, verses 22–23 build on that illustration by informing the reader *why* God prepared some vessels for destruction and others for mercy. To see a continuative sense is most natural, for the term  $\sigma\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , employed twice in verse 21, is repeated in both verses 22 and 23. The burden of proof is on those who see a disjunction between the use of the term in verse 21 and its use in verses 22–23.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 505–6.

<sup>147</sup>Paul begins 9:22 with a conditional clause which he does not appear to complete. Some have proposed that verse 23 functions as the apodosis. See Stählin, *TDNT* 5:426; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. C. C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), 372. However, most commentators agree that 9:22–23 are the protasis and Paul does not provide an explicit apodosis. See Murray, *Romans*,

as presenting three purposes behind God’s sovereignty activity to create some vessels for honor and some for dishonor.<sup>148</sup> Paul states it was “because God desired (θέλων ὁ θεός) to demonstrate his wrath (ὀργήν) and make known his power, he has endured with much patience vessels (σκεύη) of wrath (ὀργῆς) prepared (κατηρτισμένα) for destruction (ἀπώλειαν)” (v. 22). Therefore, Paul explains the first two reasons God has endured vessels of wrath for eschatological judgment (ἀπώλεια):<sup>149</sup> (1) to demonstrate his wrath and (2) to make his power known. These two purposes match well with God’s acts in the exodus whereby God made both his wrath and power known over Pharaoh in the plagues. Paul’s point then is that just as God dealt with Pharaoh, so now God has endured with much patience the obduracy of Israel in order to demonstrate his wrath (ὀργή) on the last day.<sup>150</sup>

On an individual basis, these vessels of wrath have been prepared for judgment;<sup>151</sup> and like Pharaoh their doom is certain. God has endured with much patience so that their sin may come to full measure and the power of his wrath may be displayed in

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2:33; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 558; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:492; Barrett, *Romans*, 176; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 187; Jewett, *Romans*, 595; Moo, *Romans*, 604; Schreiner, *Romans*, 507. In this case, Paul invites his readers to supply the concluding thought as follows: “Will you then still contest God’s rights?” Günther Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien*, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 16 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1952), 90.

<sup>148</sup>The adverbial participle θέλων is causative, not concessive. Rightly, Keck, *Romans*, 237; Kruse, *Romans*, 386–87; Eckhard Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*, vol. 2, Historisch Theologische Auslegung (Witten, Germany: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2016), 335–36; John D. Harvey, *Romans*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 239; Moo, *Romans*, 625; Schreiner, *Romans*, 507. Paul’s use of θέλω harks back to 9:16 and 18 where Paul speaks of God’s determined will to extend mercy and harden whomever he wills (θέλω). Contra Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 569; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 641; Bird, *Romans*, 334.

<sup>149</sup>Rightly Schreiner who notes that ἀπώλεια is frequently used by Paul to communicate eschatological judgment (Phil 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 6:9). Schreiner, *Romans*, 506.

<sup>150</sup>Again, Schreiner is correct to assert that Paul frequently uses ὀργή in reference to eschatological judgment (Rom 2:5, 8; 5:9; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9). Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>There is much discussion over the interpretation of the middle/passive participle κατηρτισμένα. Some commentators argue that Paul purposely does not bring God into the picture as in 9:23 where the active participle προητοίμασεν is used to speak of the vessels of mercy. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:495; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 570; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 559; Jewett, *Romans*, 596. However, the larger context and numerous parallels with 9:17–18 strongly suggest that the participle is a divine passive indicating that the reprobate are destined to eternal destruction in accords with God’s determine will (θέλω). Rightly, Käsemann, *Romans*, 271; Piper, *The Justification of God*, 193–96; Schreiner, *Romans*, 507–8.

in the greatest degree. Yet, not losing sight of the corporate significance, Paul explains that Israel has undergone a divine hardening (Rom 11:25), a spiritual obduracy as foretold by the prophets (Rom 11:8; cf. Isa 29:10). Yet, the day will come when a future generation from the house of Jacob will be given sight and understanding (Isa 29:22–24).<sup>152</sup> In the meantime, God is exercising patience so there is time for the nation to repent (cf. 2:4). As Wright observes, “Had God simply condemned Israel at once, following its decisive rejection of Jesus as Messiah, there would have been no space for either Jews to repent . . . or for Gentiles to be brought in.”<sup>153</sup>

This point leads to the third and even greater purpose (*ἵνα*): “To make known the riches of his glory (*δόξης*) upon vessels (*σκεύη*) of mercy (*ἐλέους*), which he prepared beforehand (*προητοίμασεν*) for glory (*δόξαν*)” (v. 23). God’s ultimate purpose in hardening vessels of wrath is to bestow mercy.<sup>154</sup> This mercy is clearly selective only being conferred upon those whom God chooses (9:11–12, 16, 18). This conclusion is evident by the predestinarian language employed (i.e., *προητοίμασεν*).<sup>155</sup> What are these vessels of mercy predestined for: eschatological glory (cf. 2:7, 10; 3:23; 5:2; 8:17, 18, 30). As a result, the riches of God’s glory will shine ever brighter in comparison to the severity of his wrath (cf. 11:22).

**Conclusion.** Beginning in Romans 9:6, Paul set out to explain how it is that God’s word of promise to Israel has not failed, even though the majority of Israelites have not believed in Jesus as the Christ. By retelling Israel’s story from their inception (vv. 7–13), their the exodus from Egypt (vv. 14–18), and finally their exile (vv. 19–23);

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<sup>152</sup>John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 539.

<sup>153</sup>Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 642.

<sup>154</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 627–28.

<sup>155</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:37; Käsemann, *Romans*, 265–66; Moo, *Romans*, 628; Schreiner, *Romans*, 510.

Paul has shown a consistent paradigm of rejection and acceptance grounded in God's purpose according to election (vv. 11–12). Consequently, Paul has laid the foundation for two important points he will expound in the rest of chapters 9–11. First, not every Israelite is an heir of the promise, only those whom God has chosen apart from their own willing or working. This principle prepares the way to explain how Gentiles are coming into God's family by faith (9:24, 30; 10:18–21; 11:11–24); whereas ethnic Israel is by-and-large cut off from the promises because they've pursued them by works and not by faith (9:30–10:21; 11:20–23). Second, having emphasized God's *modus operandi* in the story of Israel's past, Paul is prepared to show how Israel's current unbelief fits into God's purposes in the present. Therefore, as a Jewish apocalyptic mystery, Paul has discerned a paradigm of God's design to elect and reject, harden and show mercy, with the ultimate goal being the revelation of his glorious name. In this way, Paul is prepared to show that God's ways in the past have been recapitulated in the present in order to give hope for the future.

### **God's Hardening of Israel in the Present**

As Paul unveils the mystery of Israel's hardening, he first seeks to explain the present in light of the past. In this way, Paul is able to demonstrate that Israel's unbelief is not a failure on God's part nor an injustice, but the fulfillment of his redemptive plan in Christ to make his glory known in all the world. Therefore, as Paul explores Israel's current plight he does so in terms of God's purposes in Christ. Specifically, God has laid down a stumbling block through the cross of Christ which has served the dual purpose of hardening most of Israel and extending mercy to believing Gentiles and a Jewish remnant. In this way, Paul explains that God's word of promise to Israel is being upheld.

**Romans 9:30–10:17.** Romans 9:30 marks a new development in Paul's argument. He addresses why it is that many Gentiles are currently experiencing God's

saving righteousness, whereas the majority of Israel are not.<sup>156</sup> Paul’s fundamental answer is that Israel has “stumbled over the stone of stumbling” (v. 32b); and this stumbling is a result of the fact that they pursued the law for righteousness (*νόμον δικαιοσύνης*) as though it were by works and not by faith (vv. 31–32a).<sup>157</sup> Paul says this has occurred in fulfillment of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 (LXX), which anticipated the day when God would lay a new foundation stone in Zion and “the one who believes upon it/him will not be put to shame (*ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυνθήσεται*).” In the rest of this section (10:1–21), Paul proceeds to explain Israel’s plight christologically showing that the message of faith in Christ’s death and resurrection has resulted in the rise and fall of many.<sup>158</sup>

Already I have indicated that the stone of stumbling is none other than Jesus himself (see ch. 3). This interpretation is confirmed as Paul specifically identifies Jesus as the stone in Romans 10:9–11.<sup>159</sup> The idea of stumbling over Jesus communicates Israel’s hardened condition and their rejection of the good news of salvation through faith in the risen Christ.<sup>160</sup> Astonishingly, Paul details that the stone which has tripped Israel up was

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<sup>156</sup>Paul resumes his diatribe style with another rhetoric question *τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν*. As Paul has done previously, he uses the questions to correct a false conclusion to something he has previously said and to move his argument forward.

<sup>157</sup>The phrase *νόμον δικαιοσύνης* is the center of much discussion. For a survey of the various options, see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 578; Moo, *Romans*, 642–46. I agree with those interpreters who understand *δικαιοσύνη* in a forensic sense denoting a right relationship with God. See Schnabel, *Römer*, 2:357; Moo, *Romans*, 644; Schreiner, *Romans*, 525. Since *δικαιοσύνη* means to have a right relationship with God in 9:30, the same meaning is to be had here in verse 31. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 525. Paul then does not fault Israel for pursuing the law (i.e. the mosaic law) for righteousness; rather he points out that they didn’t keep the law, and as a result, did not attain a right standing before God. Rightly Byrne, *Romans*, 310; Schreiner, *Romans*, 526. Contra Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 581; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 648–49.

<sup>158</sup>Paul’s citations depend upon the LXX, but do not match entirely. For discussion on these textual matters, see Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 123–24.

<sup>159</sup>For this reason, it is clear that Paul does not view the law to be the stone of stumbling. Contra Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 129; Barrett, *Romans*, 181. Also Wright who understands the stone as both the law and Christ. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1210.

<sup>160</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 652. Contra Wright who contends that Israel’s stumbling was also their attempt to “confine grace to race, to create a covenant status for Jews and Jews only.” Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 650.

actually put there by God himself.<sup>161</sup> This fact is made evident by the use of *τίθῃμι* which highlights God's initiative in placing the obstacle before Israel. Paul's precise way of conflating the two passages also emphasizes the stone as God's instrument of judgment.<sup>162</sup> Isaiah 8:14 tells of how Jacob and Jerusalem are in a snare of unbelief, and as a result, their encounter with God will be in judgment. The same is true in Isaiah 28, where the anger of the Lord is said to be mighty and harsh (v. 2).

Nevertheless, this act of judgment paradoxically serves as the means of salvation for Israel. In both passages Israel is called to trust in the stone, whereby God will become a sanctuary for them, and they will not be put to shame. Reflecting on this passage christologically, Paul understands the Isaianic promise of salvation through judgment to have arrived in the death and resurrection of Christ (10:9–11). In this way, the word of Christ is simultaneously a message of judgment and salvation (10:8, 17; cf. 1:16–18). It serves a dual purpose, just as the spoken word to Moses and Pharaoh brought both mercy and wrath, acceptance and rejection (9:15–18).<sup>163</sup>

In Israel's case, they have falsely believed that they could attain righteousness by obeying the law (9:31–32a; cf. 3:20, 27–28; 4:2; 7:10–11). Paul explains that even though Israel is zealous for God, they are deceived because they lack knowledge (10:2). This lack of knowledge is exemplified in Israel's ignorance of God's righteousness which comes through faith (v. 3; cf. 1:16–17) and their worthless pursuit of their own righteousness through the law.<sup>164</sup> The net result is that Israel has not submitted to God's

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<sup>161</sup>Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 649.

<sup>162</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 648.

<sup>163</sup>This parallel between the power of the word of God spoken in the exodus and the word of Christ spoken in the new exodus further substantiates that Paul intends his readers to liken Israel's hardening with Pharaoh's. Rightly, Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 219. Contra Wagner, *Heralds*, 74–78.

<sup>164</sup>The contrast between the "righteousness of God" and "their own righteousness" (10:3) parallels the contrast in righteousness in 9:30–31. Therefore, the "righteousness of God" refers to the gift of God in a right relationship with him (cf. 9:30). See also Schreiner who details the parallels between 10:1–5 and Phil 3:2–9 to show that righteousness should be understood forensically. Schreiner, *Romans*, 530.



righteousness (v. 3). That is, “Israel’s failure lies in its disobedience to the gospel and in the misunderstanding of Scripture that this disobedience reveals.”<sup>165</sup>

Ironically, Israel has been running the wrong race. The goal or culmination (τέλος) of the law is Christ, resulting (εἰς) in righteousness for everyone who has faith (v. 4).<sup>166</sup> As a mystery, Paul reasserts what he said in 3:21, God’s righteousness has been revealed apart from the law in Christ; yet this reality is what the law pointed toward all along. Consequently, Israel not only misunderstood the meaning of Scripture, but how it should be read.<sup>167</sup>

In 10:5–9 Paul explains (γὰρ, v. 5) exactly what he means when he states that Christ is the τέλος of the law (v. 4). At the same time, he further highlights Israel’s ignorance of God’s righteousness as he explains what the Scriptures actually teach. First, he explains from Leviticus 18:5 why Israel’s attempt of obtaining righteousness through the law was futile (v. 5).<sup>168</sup> The righteousness from the law is based on doing rather than

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<sup>165</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 653. In stating that Israel sought to establish their own righteousness, Paul is not attacking Israel’s ethnocentrism through the establishment of boundary markers. Rather, he’s critiquing their zealous pursuit of being found acceptable to God through obedience to the law. This zealous ignorance manifested itself through a lack of faith in the gospel. Rightly Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:514–15; Byrne, *Romans*, 314; Kruse, *Romans*, 400–401; Moo, *Romans*, 652–54; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law in Romans 10:4–5,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 1 (1993): 121–22; Schreiner, *Romans*, 531. Contra Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 587–88; E. Elizabeth Johnson, “Romans 9–11: The Faithfulness and Impartiality of God,” in *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay, vol. 3, SBL Symposium Series (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 227–28; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 654–55; Jewett, *Romans*, 618.

<sup>166</sup>The word τέλος in verse 4 can be rendered either “end” or “goal.” Those scholars who opt for the former suggest that Paul signals the end of the Mosaic law with the coming of Christ. See Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 283–84; Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 379–80; Käsemann, *Romans*, 282–83; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, WUNT 29 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 54–55; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 589; Stephen Westerholm, *Israel’s Law and the Church’s Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 130; Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 332. The latter view understands Christ as the true intent or climax of the law. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:519–20; Robert Badenas, *Christ: The End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective*, JSNTSup 10 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1985); Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 1993; Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 207; Byrne, *Romans*, 312–15; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 656–58; Keck, *Romans*, 249–50; Seifrid, “Romans,” 653–54. However, it’s probably best to see both ideas present recognizing that with the arrival of Christ there has been a salvation-historical shift bringing an “end” to the law; yet as a mystery, Christ has always been the one whom the law has pointed (cf. Rom 3:21). For this both-and approach, see H. L. Ellison, *The Mystery of Israel: An Exposition of Romans 9–11*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 60–61; Barrett, *Romans*, 184; Bird, *Romans*, 351; Longenecker, *Romans*, 850–51; Schnabel, *Römer*, 2:375–79; Moo, *Romans*, 657–59; Schreiner, *Romans*, 533.

<sup>167</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 652–53.

<sup>168</sup>There is considerable discussion as to the meaning of verse 5 and its relationship to verses

believing (cf. Gal 3:12).<sup>169</sup> Thus, whoever does what the law commands will live. However, though the law presents the conditions for life, it does not provide what it demands.<sup>170</sup> For this reason, no one is able to keep the law, not even Israel (2:1–3:20; 9:31), because sin has hijacked the law turning it into an instrument of death (7:10–11). Thus, a proper understanding of the law is to see it as a mirror revealing one’s sin (3:20; 7:7) and one’s need for God’s gracious gift of righteousness in Christ (3:21–24).

Therefore, in contrast (δὲ) is the “righteousness based on faith” (v. 6).<sup>171</sup> Paul personifies this righteousness as that which speaks, because it’s God word which reveals his saving righteousness (cf. 1:16–17; 10:17). He then interprets Deuteronomy in light of Christ’s coming since he is the culmination of the law.<sup>172</sup> That the law affirms a righteousness by faith is confirmed in Paul’s summation of the law in Deuteronomy 9:4 and 30:12. The saying “do not to say in your heart” comes from 9:4 where Moses warns Israel not to be deceived into thinking that the reason God has brought them into the land was their own righteousness. Rather, he is giving them the land to uphold his promises to the patriarchs (v. 5). In other words, Israel’s inheritance of the land is a gift of God.

Paul then connects 9:4 with portions of 30:12–14 and applies it to Christ’s incarnation, resurrection, and proclamation. How is this acceptable since Deuteronomy is

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6–8. For a survey and evaluation of the various interpretations, see Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law,” 124–34; Moo, *Romans*, 663–67. (1) Does Paul juxtapose Leviticus 18:5 against Deut 30 seeing the latter as brought to an end in Christ? Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 329–41. (2) Does Paul teach that by believing the gospel one has actually fulfilled that law (Badenas, *Christ*, 120–25; Hays, *Echoes*, 76–77; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 245)? (3) Does Paul present Christ as the one who has perfectly obeyed the law on behalf of his people (Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:521–22)? Or, does Paul present a contrast to the righteousness by faith in verses 6–8, much like 9:31–32 and 10:3 (Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 600–601; Seifrid, “Romans,” 655; Moo, *Romans*, 664–66; Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law,” 124–34; Schreiner, *Romans*, 536–42)? Of these positions the third view is most persuasive. Paul continues to explain that Israel has failed to understand Christ as the goal of the law and for this reason has stumbled over him. In other words, they do not understand the salvation-historical shift which as occurred in Christ and has resulted in the culmination of the law.

<sup>169</sup>Barrett, *Romans*, 185; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 589; Schreiner, *Romans*, 538.

<sup>170</sup>Bird, *Romans*, 354.

<sup>171</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 667.

<sup>172</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 544.

speaking about the giving of the law? The heart of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 is that God’s commandment is “not too wonderful” (תִּלְוָה לְאִשְׂרָאֵל) for Israel nor is it out of their reach.<sup>173</sup> That is, they do not need someone to ascend to heaven to obtain it (v. 12), nor for someone cross the sea (v. 13). Rather, through the mediation of Moses the word has been brought near, so near that they can repeat it (“in your mouth”) and they can understand it (“in your heart”) and consequently “do it” (v. 14).

Paul understands the OT as a mystery of Christ whereby God’s ways in the past have been recapitulated in the present work of Christ. In the same way that God condescended to Israel in giving the word of the law as grace to them at Sinai, so God has condescended to Israel (and the world) through the word of his Son. “The gift of Torah has now been transcended by the gift of Christ.”<sup>174</sup> Therefore, just as Israel was not required to obtain the law for themselves, but it was delivered to them through Moses, so God has sent his Son apart from any human will or exertion. No one is needed or able to ascend to heaven because God has already sent his Son bridging the gap between heaven and earth (Rom 10:7).

Neither is someone required to descend the depths of the sea, because Christ has already been buried (v. 8).<sup>175</sup> Rather, the word is near in both mouth and heart,

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<sup>173</sup>Among the Qumran community the word תִּלְוָה is often associated with mystery, see chapter 2 (cf. 1QH<sup>a</sup> 6:23; 4Q176 1–2 I 1; CD 3:12–20). Furthermore, Deut 30:11–14 comes on the heels of 29:29 which resembles a mystery motif, namely the secret things which belong to the Lord and those things revealed belonging to his people. Here in Rom 10:6 describes the coming of Christ as a revelation from heaven which is no longer “too wonderful” for Israel to understand. Nobody has to ascend into the heavens to discern the mystery of God. This is further evidence of what Paul will make explicit in 11:25–26, all of Rom 9–11 is an expounding of the mystery of Christ as it concerns Israel.

<sup>174</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 657.

<sup>175</sup>Commentators notes that Paul’s citation of Deut 30:13 deviates from both the MT and LXX in that he changes the imagery from the sea (תִּלְוָה/θάλασσης) to the abyss (ἄβυσσος). This change has led some to speculate that Paul isn’t carefully interpreting the text at all (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 288–90). On the contrary, Paul’s deviations are interpretive in nature, reflecting his careful reading of the OT in light of its fulfillment in Christ. Rightly Mark A. Seifrid, “Paul’s Approach to the Old Testament in Rom 10:6–8,” *Trinity Journal* 6, no. 1 (1985): 35; Hays, *Echoes*, 80; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 659–63. The abyss was associated with the netherworld and the realm of the dead (cf. Ps. 71:20; Wis. 16:13). In this way, Paul’s alteration from “sea” to “abyss” corresponds with Jesus rising from the grave. Furthermore, as Schreiner notes, this shift in terms was not substantial as the sea was closely associated with the abyss among Jews (cf. Gen 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; Deut 33:13; Job 28:14; 38:16; Ps 71:20; Prov 3:20; 8:24; Isa 44:27; 51:10; 63:12–13; Ezek 26:19; 31:4, 15; Amos 7:4; Jon 2:3–10 LXX; Hab 3:10; Sir 24:5–6, 29; 43:23).

namely the word of faith (v. 8; cf. Deut 30:14a).<sup>176</sup> Seeing Christ as the culmination of the law, “the word that demands our works has been transcended by the word that announces God’s work.”<sup>177</sup> In Romans 10:9, Paul articulates both the content (ὅτι) and the expressions (ὁμολογήσης/πιστεύσης) of this “preached word;”<sup>178</sup> namely, Christ is the risen Lord.

Therefore, one will be saved (i.e., obtain righteousness; cf. 9:30–33; 10:1–3) through confessing and believing in Jesus as the risen Lord.<sup>179</sup> In 10:11, Paul brings this discussion full circle by returning to Isaiah 28:16 (LXX) showing that this confession of faith corresponds with the promise that everyone who believes in Christ (i.e. the stumbling stone) will not be put to eschatological shame (καταισχυνθήσεται; cf. Rom 9:33). This offer of salvation through faith applies to both Jew and Gentile, because Jesus is the one Lord and God overall (v. 13; cf. 9:6). While Paul emphasizes the positive aspect of Christ’s coming and proclamation of the gospel, he also implicitly explains what this message has done to most of Israel. As a mystery, Paul reappropriates the Isaianic word of hope in the past which came in the midst of impending judgment.<sup>180</sup> This

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Schreiner, *Romans*, 544.

<sup>176</sup>The genitive τῆς πίστεως is objective, namely the word which calls for faith. Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 675n483. See also Murray, *Romans*, 2:54; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:526; Jewett, *Romans*, 629; Harvey, *Romans*, 254. Contra Käsemann, *Romans*, 290; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 591.

<sup>177</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 659.

<sup>178</sup>The ὅτι should be understood as explicative. See Murray, *Romans*, 2:55; Käsemann, *Romans*, 291; Barrett, *Romans*, 186; Seifrid, “Romans,” 659; Schreiner, *Romans*, 546. Contra those who render the conjunction as causal. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:526; Jewett, *Romans*, 629; Moo, *Romans*, 675.

<sup>179</sup>The future passive σωθήσῃ, is best understood as a logical future subsequent to one’s confession of faith. Rightly, Barrett, *Romans*, 188; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:530; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 609; Moo, *Romans*, 676n491; Schreiner, *Romans*, 546. On the relationship between salvation and righteousness, Moo aptly notes, “Paul again writes rhetorically: the wording of the two parallel clauses follows the same order; and each clause reiterates on of the conditions of v. 9, but in reverse order (thus forming a chiasm). This evident rhetorical interest suggests that Paul would not want us to find any difference in meaning of ‘righteousness’ and ‘salvation’ here.” Moo, *Romans*, 677.

<sup>180</sup>Seifrid similarly notes, “[Paul] understands the Isaianic text in a typological manner. The word of hope concerning faith in the Lord in the past, which came in the face of the judgment on Israel, is echoed in the present call to faith in Christ, in the face of the judgment coming on the world.” Seifrid, “Romans,” 659.

word would call out a remnant, but it would also smash the foundations of the nation. In the same manner, the word of Christ has come as a stumbling stone of judgment upon the nation yet calls out a remnant of individuals (*πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων*, v. 11)—both Jews and Gentiles (v. 12; cf. 9:24–29) through faith.

Paul continues in 10:13 to show that God’s saving righteousness comes through faith by recalling Joel’s prophetic word, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (v. 13; cf. Joel 3:5 [LXX]). Like Isaiah, Joel also anticipates God’s salvation (2:18–27) coming through judgment (Joel 2:1–11). Israel will experience God’s judgment when he comes, yet afterward he will have pity on his people so that they will never be put to shame (*καταισχύνω*) again (vv. 18, 26–27). Seifrid captures the typological significance of this citation.

The passage that Paul cites again has in view the salvation of a remnant, ‘survivors’ from Jerusalem. Paul appropriates from the text the moment of judgment, with its sharp individualism of faith and prayer, as he also does with Isa. 28:16. In the reduction and reconstitution of Israel as those who believe and call upon the Lord, the ground is leveled between Israel and the nations . . . . The moment of re-creation of Israel incipiently contains and anticipates the re-creation of all humanity.<sup>181</sup>

In other words, both of these prophetic citations recall the remnant motif, a motif which inherently includes judgment. In this way, Paul has discerned a pattern in God’s past declaration of salvation through judgment, which he sees recapitulated at the present time as God simultaneously hardens Israel and calls out a remnant for himself.

This pattern of judgment and salvation has found its culmination (*τέλος*) in the death and resurrection of Christ which also serves as the paradigm for Israel’s judgment and salvation. Israel has not listened to the righteousness of faith (v. 6, 18); rather, just as Isaiah and Joel prophesied, God’s word of salvation has come through judgment. The revelation of Christ has in effect leveled Israel down to a remnant (9:27–29). They have stumbled and are being put to shame (*καταισχυνθήσεται*, 9:33). God has laid a new

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<sup>181</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 660.

foundation stone for the people of God in the risen Christ. Consequently, this message of faith in Christ has served as God's divine means of hardening Israel. As Bell states,

Regarding the internal mechanism of the hardening I would say that God has instilled in Israel the belief that she was to be saved by her works: she pursued the law *οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἔργων* (Rom. 9:32a). Because of this attitude of works-righteousness, so ingrained in the consciousness of Israel, she stumbled over the stone of offence (Rom. 9:31; cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). Because of this blindness, the preached word which creates faith (cf. *τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως*, Rom. 10:8) cannot create faith in those Jews whose blindness has not been removed by God.<sup>182</sup>

Therefore, Paul's aim has been to explain Israel's plight in light of God's purpose according to election (9:11). The same word of Christ which causes Israel to stumble (i.e. hardening), also produces faith (10:17). For this reason, Israel's unbelief must be understood in terms of God's absolute sovereignty in election (cf. 9:6–23). Again, Seifrid aptly states, "In citing Isa. 8:14 within Isa. 28:16, Paul underscores that the word of salvation arrives through judgment. This double-edge character of the promise corresponds to the conjunction of election and rejection laid out by Paul in 9:6–29."<sup>183</sup> In other words, the fact that most of Israel has not placed their faith in the risen Christ is evidence of God's hardening of them. Yet this is all part of God's redemptive plan as prefigured in the OT (10:4). Paul reiterates this point in 11:7–10.

**Romans 11:7–10.** In this section Paul continues to argue against the idea that Israel's rejection of Christ and failure to obtain righteousness constitutes God's final rejection of Israel. On the contrary, Israel's hardening is part of God's mysterious plan of redemption being carried out according to election. Though the majority of Israel has not obtained what they were seeking (i.e., righteousness, 9:30–31), the elect (*ἐκλογὴ*) obtained it (11:7a).<sup>184</sup> Consequently, the rest—the non-elect—"were hardened"

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<sup>182</sup>Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 224. However, Schreiner is correct to note that even though Israel's unbelief has been "placed under the umbrella of God's sovereignty" it is "without any intimation that their responsibility for unbelief is lessened." Schreiner, *Romans*, 528.

<sup>183</sup>Seifrid, "Romans," 651.

<sup>184</sup>Cranfield notes, "The use of the abstract *ἐκλογὴ* instead of the concrete *ἐκλεκτοί* serves to put special emphasis on the action of God as that which is altogether determinative of the existence of the

(ἐπωρώθησαν, v. 7b). Verse 7 is Paul's first explicit statement concerning the hardening of Israel; though, he's already anticipated it through the acceptance and rejection motif of Israel's history (9:6–23), the dwindling of Israel to a remnant (vv. 27–29), and the explanation of Israel's present stumbling (9:30–10:17). Nevertheless, Paul now wraps up the discussion of Israel's stumbling which began in 9:30–33. In doing so, he demonstrates that Israel's present hardening corresponds to the pattern of God's elective purpose in the past.<sup>185</sup> Paul explicitly shows how the negative implication of God's purpose according to election, namely Israel's hardening, is “just as it was written” (v. 8a).

Paul offers a three-fold witness from the law, prophets, and the writings concerning the mystery of Israel's hardening (vv. 8–10). He first conflates Deuteronomy 29:3 (LXX) with Isaiah 29:10 in order to emphasize God's judging activity in hardening Israel.<sup>186</sup> This conflation is not surprising since Paul has already relied heavily upon these two writings, especially Deuteronomy 27–30.<sup>187</sup> Paul's pairing of Moses and Isaiah signals that he views the two passages as mutually interpreting one another.<sup>188</sup> Concerning Deuteronomy 29:3, it's important to note that Moses speaks of God's withholding from Israel a heart to know, or eyes to see, or ears to hear; whereas Paul inverts God's activity as actively inducing Israel with spiritual blindness (Rom 11:8). Despite this difference, “the change is not drastic, since ‘hardening’ for Paul represents divine surrender of human beings to their rebellion . . . the very theology that appears in the Isaianic announcements of the judgment that effects Israel's deafness and

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elect.” Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:548.

<sup>185</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 669.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid.; Wagner, *Heralds*, 241; Moo, *Romans*, 699; Schreiner, *Romans*, 572.

<sup>187</sup>Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 677.

<sup>188</sup>Rightly, Wagner, *Heralds*, 241.

blindness.”<sup>189</sup>

Thus, Paul makes explicit what is implicit in Deuteronomy. The narrative of Deuteronomy 29 concerns the renewal of the covenant with Israel. However, Moses warns Israel that since they do not have hearts to understand (v. 4) they will experience exile and the judgment of the Lord for their sin. Because of their stubbornness of heart, the curses for covenant disobedience will come upon them (v. 19). It’s only in the future that Israel will return to the Lord, when he circumcises their hearts (30:1–3).

The inclusion of Isaiah 29:10 reinforces the theme of judgment promised for Israel’s stubbornness of heart. Their eyes cannot see and their ears cannot hear. Paul uses this text elsewhere to highlight Israel’s obduracy to the gospel (1 Cor 1:19; cf. Isa 29:14) and he has already alluded to it in Romans 9:20–21 (cf. Isa 29:16b). In the same way, Romans 11:7 emphasizes God’s active hardening of Israel. Paul understands the hardening of Israel in the past to have its full expression in the present. Nevertheless, there remains a word of hope: Israel’s stupor will not last forever.<sup>190</sup> As both Deuteronomy and Isaiah anticipate, Israel will be restored after enduring God’s judgment (Deut 30:1–3; Isa 22–24). What’s significant here is that Paul does not believe this day of restoration has come for Israel.<sup>191</sup> He includes Moses’s words “until this very day” (Rom 11:8; cf. Deut 29:3) to indicate that the promised awakening from Israel’s lethargy has yet to happen.<sup>192</sup>

Paul then draws from Psalm 68:23–24 (LXX) to shed further light on Israel’s

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<sup>189</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 670.

<sup>190</sup>Contra Wright who argues that Israel’s hardening is permanent. Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 677. Also Ben L. Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 4 (2000): 715; Christopher Zoccali, “‘And so All Israel Will Be Saved’: Competing Interpretations of Romans 11.26 in Pauline Scholarship,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30, no. 3 (2008): 307.

<sup>191</sup>Contra Wright who says the promise of restoration has already happened in the Messiah. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1036.

<sup>192</sup>Rightly, Seifrid, “Romans,” 670; Schreiner, *Romans*, 572–73.



divine hardening (Rom 11:9–10).<sup>193</sup> It is important to note that this is a Psalm of David which is often used elsewhere in the NT in reference to Christ (Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 3:21; 15:23, 36; Luke 13:35; 23:36; John 2:17; 15:25; 19:29; Acts 1:20; Rom 15:3; Heb 11:26).<sup>194</sup> The psalmist recounts his own sufferings and rejection by his enemies (Ps 68:1–5, 9–13, 15, 20–22) and offers imprecatory prayers asking God to curse his enemies (vv. 23–29). Paul’s appeal to this Davidic Psalm makes an important christological connection. Just as David prayed against his enemies so now the son of David (cf. Rom 1:3) pronounces a curse upon his enemies, in this case unbelieving Israel.<sup>195</sup> Seifrid is correct in that Israel’s repeated disobedience has found its culmination in the rejection of Christ. Consequently, God’s prior judgments have been recapitulated in Christ.<sup>196</sup>

As the psalmist indicates a *lex talionis* so Paul’s citation bears the same force. As Israel gave Jesus vinegar to drink, so he pronounces a curse that their table may “become a snare, trap, stumbling block, and retribution for them” (Rom 11:9; cf. Ps 68:22–23). As Jesus’s eyes were forsaken through his tears of sorrow (Ps 68:4), so he prays that Israel’s eyes will be darkened (Rom 11:10a; cf. Ps 68:24a). As Jesus bent his soul in fasting (Ps 68:11), so he prays that their backs may bend forever (Rom 9:10b; cf. Ps 68:24b).<sup>197</sup> Therefore, the words of this curse and hardening are permanent in the same way that Pharaoh’s hardening was permanent (Rom 9:17–18). Those upon whom this

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<sup>193</sup>Paul’s citation of Ps 68:23–24 (LXX) only deviates in a few of ways. First Paul removes the phrase *ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν*. Second, he adds the phrase *καὶ εἰς θήραν*. This addition may draw from Isa 35:8. Third Paul inverts the phrases *καὶ εἰς ἀνταπόδοσιν καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον*.

<sup>194</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 573.

<sup>195</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 671.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid.

<sup>197</sup>Some have speculated how the details of this prayer may apply to Israel in Paul’s day, especially what is meant by the “table.” For a brief survey of the various interpretations, see Moo, *Romans*, 701n622. However, Moo is probably correct in that Paul didn’t intend the details to be pressed that specifically, *ibid.*, 622. Yet even if specifics could be applied, their identification isn’t necessary for discerning Paul’s overall point: the prayer of David against his enemies has been fulfilled in Israel’s spiritual obduracy.

curse is pronounced are “blotted out from the book of the living” (Ps 68:29). However, the permanency only applies to the non-elect, the individual vessels of wrath (v. 22); not Israel as a whole. Again, as with Deuteronomy and Isaiah, Psalm 68 ends with a note of hope. The psalmist prays for the salvation of Zion and the restoration of Judah (Ps 68:36).

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to show that in Romans 9–11 Paul explains Israel’s plight christologically. Paul introduces the quandary of Israel’s unbelief by reinforcing the nation’s elect status (9:1–5). In particular, Paul recalls Israel’s unique relationship with the patriarchs and the Christ. It is this special relationship with their Messiah according to the flesh which paves the way for the rest of Paul’s discussion in chapters 9–11. Paul insists that Israel remains the people of the Christ and it’s only in light of this relationship that Israel’s current plight and future restoration can be understood. Consequently, Paul upholds a corporate solidarity whereby Christ’s death and resurrection serves as the paradigm for Israel’s rejection and acceptance. Thus, just as Christ became accursed by God so Israel has been accursed.

Paul characterizes Israel’s judgment as a hardening (11:7, 25). Yet before directly exploring this condition he recounts Israel’s story beginning with their inception (vv. 7–13), moving to the exodus (vv. 14–18), and finally leading to their exile (vv. 19–23). In doing so, Paul bases his explanation of Israel’s plight upon God’s redemptive purposes in the past. Paul reveals a paradigm of election and rejection which accomplishes God’s ultimate purpose of making known his glory in salvation. By keeping the mystery of Christ on the forefront of one’s mind, it’s difficult not to see Israel’s story climatically fulfilled in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Not surprisingly then, Paul explains Israel’s hardening in light of the cross (9:33). Specially, in Romans 9:30–10:17 and 11:7–10, Paul sheds light on the mystery of Israel’s hardening, demonstrating that God’s past word of judgment and salvation is

recapitulated in the present age of fulfillment in Christ. Understanding Christ as the “stumbling stone” placed in Zion (9:33) and the goal of the law (10:4), Paul has revealed how the word of Christ simultaneously produces faith in some (salvation; cf. 9:30; 10:6–13; 17; 11:7) and induces a spiritual lethargy in others (judgment; 9:31–33; 11:7–10). This paradox can only be explained by God’s “purpose according to election” (9:11). In Israel’s case, they have by-and-large been rejected being given over to the stubbornness of their hearts. Therefore, the picture which Paul paints of Israel’s hardening is devastating: God has accursed and cut Israel off from the Christ (9:3; cf. 10:1; 11:17), he has put Israel to shame (9:33); he has spiritually blinded and deafened them (11:7–10); he has rejected them (v. 15); he has not spared them (v. 21); and he is at enmity with them (11:28).

However, God’s judgment of Israel is not the last word. As a mystery in Christ, Paul has reappropriated God’s prior words of judgment to the present age of fulfillment. Israel’s history proleptically anticipated the Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection), so even now this paradigm explains what is happening and will happen to Israel. In other words, as Christ bore the curse of the law on the cross and obtained the blessing of restoration in the resurrection; so, Israel has now undergone spiritual exile and awaits the promise of restoration. Thus, as the people of the Messiah, the pattern of rejection and acceptance continues to be played out in their story. In the following chapter I will continue to tease out this pattern, particularly as it concerns the role of the believing remnant and the hope of eschatological restoration.

CHAPTER 5  
THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL'S REMNANT  
AND RESTORATION

In the previous chapter I proposed that Romans 9–11 should be read in light of the mystery of Christ (11:25–26; cf. 16:25–27), whereby Paul provides a christological explanation of Israel's plight and restoration. Specifically, this mystery reimagines the story of Israel around Christ's death, resurrection, and parousia unveiling God's redemptive plan for the nation. Already, I have shown how the mystery of Christ functions concerning Israel's election and hardening. In this chapter, I will give attention to how the mystery relates to Israel's remnant and looks forward to the nation's restoration. To this end, I will first explore how Paul's remnant theology anticipates Israel's eschatological restoration, just as Christ's resurrection anticipates the restoration of all things. Second, I will demonstrate how the calling of the Jewish remnant coincides with the inclusion of the Gentiles which in turn will result in Israel's salvation. Third, I will explain how Israel's restoration will not occur until Christ returns.

**The Mystery of Israel's Remnant**

Having explained that Israel's rejection of Christ was not a failure on God's part (9:6), but an essential component of his sovereign plan of redemption, it's now advantageous to explore the positive side of God's "purpose according to election" (9:11). In particular, God has called a believing remnant from among Israel as a seed of hope anticipating the nation's eschatological restoration. Paul teases out the significance of the Jewish remnant in Romans 9:27–29 and 11:1–7.

## Romans 9:27–29

The first instance where Paul speaks of a remnant occurs in 9:27–29 with a series of citations from Hosea and Isaiah. He begins a new element of his argument (δὲ)<sup>1</sup> by citing a conflation of Isaiah 10:22–23 (LXX) and Hosea 2:1 (LXX).<sup>2</sup> In doing so, Paul interprets both texts in light of each other.<sup>3</sup> In Hosea 2:1, the prophet speaks of Israel’s restoration after judgment; whereas Isaiah 10 emphasizes the judgment upon Israel whereby the nation will be dwindled to a remnant. By conflating the two passages, Paul maintains Hosea’s optimism of Israel’s coming restoration, despite the present judgment of hardening Israel is experiencing.<sup>4</sup> In this way, Paul upholds the OT remnant motif which communicates both the reality of judgment and the hope of restoration.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The δὲ should be understood as adversative, contrasting Hosea’s word about the people of God called from both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 25–26) with Isaiah’s lament concerning unbelieving Israel (v. 27). See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 501. However, Wagner rightly cautions interpreters from placing too much emphasis upon the contrast. J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul “in Concert” in the Letter to the Romans*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 101 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 92–93.

<sup>2</sup>Paul explicitly states that “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,” but the actual citation shares portions from both Hos 2:1 (LXX) and Isa 10:22 (LXX). Paul keeps the conditional (ἐάν) form of Isa, but then follows Hosea’s wording (ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης).

<sup>3</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 92. See also Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series 69 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 114–15; Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 649.

<sup>4</sup>For this reason, Paul’s introductory remark, Ἡσαΐας δὲ κράζει ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, should not be taken purely negative as a threat. Contra Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:501. The prepositional phrase κράζει ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ does not mean Isaiah cries out against Israel. Perhaps Paul means just the opposite, that Isaiah is crying out on Israel’s behalf. See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 68. But this translation swings the pendulum too far the other direction. It’s best to see κράζω denoting a sense of urgency (cf. Rom 8:15) and ὑπὲρ overlapping in semantic range with περί meaning concerning or about (LN 90.24). See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 572–73; John Paul Heil, “From Remnant to Seed of Hope for Israel: Romans 9:27–29,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2002): 706; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 633.

<sup>5</sup>Contra Heil who does not recognize the element of judgment within the remnant motif (Heil, “From Remnant to Seed,” 705–12). Wagner rightly notes the tension between judgment and hope: “Within the book of Isaiah itself . . . the language of ‘remnant’ and ‘seed’ resonates with promises of a future and a hope for Israel on the other side of judgment” (Wagner, *Heralds*, 94). For an exhaustive study of the remnant motif in the OT, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1972). See also R. E. Clements, “‘A Remnant Chosen by Grace’ (Romans 11:5): The Old Testament Background and Origin of the Remnant Concept,” in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald Alfred Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 106–21; M. W.

Interpreting Isaiah 10:22–23 (along with Hosea 2:1) typologically, Paul sees God’s word of judgment in the past recapitulated in the present.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, only “a remnant will be saved” (Rom 9:27c).<sup>7</sup> In other words, just as God’s judgment of Israel in the exile resulted in only a remnant returning to the land, so now the judgment of spiritual exile and alienation from Christ has resulted in only a remnant turning to the Lord to be saved.<sup>8</sup> Paul then rounds out his citation of Isaiah 10:22–23 saying, “For the Lord will carry out the word (λόγον) completely (συντελῶν) and decisively (συντέμνων) upon the earth” (Rom 9:28). What exactly Paul means here is difficult to discern. First, how should the two participles *συντελῶν* and *συντέμνων* be understood? The former carries the sense of “complete, to accomplish, to exhaust, or come to an end.”<sup>9</sup> The latter is more difficult, but woodenly means to “cut short” or “limit.”<sup>10</sup> But this rendering leads to another question: what is being cut short? Some take it to mean that God will cut short his promises to Israel by only fulfilling them with a remnant.<sup>11</sup> Others see it in terms of

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Elliot, “Remnant,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 723–26; Andrew M. King, “A Remnant Will Return: An Analysis of the Literary Function of the Remnant Motif in Isaiah,” *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 4, no. 2 (2015): 145–69; Richard Longenecker, “Remnant Theology and Rhetoric,” in *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 247–53; Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 803–10.

<sup>6</sup>Paul’s citation of Isa 1:22–23 slightly deviates from the LXX in two ways: (1) by using *ὑπόλειμμα* for remnant rather than *κατάλειμμα*. However, the words are synonymous (V. Hertrich, *TDNT* 4. 195); (2) he cites ending of Isaiah 10:23 as *ποιήσει κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* instead of *ποιήσει ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ οἰκουμένῃ ἅλη*. The meaning is not significantly changed and may be due to a conflation with Isa 28:22. Paul’s use of *κύριος* rather than *θεός* would fit better with his citation of Isa 1:9 (*κύριος σαβαώθ*; Rom 9:29). For a thorough treatment of Paul’s citation, see Wagner, *Heralds*, 95–100.

<sup>7</sup>In an attempt to eliminate any notion of judgment, Heil reads the passage as conditional rather than concessive. Heil, “From Remnant to Seed,” 707–08. However, Schreiner is correct to note, “A concessive notion is present here conceptually, if not grammatically.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 516n16.

<sup>8</sup>Seifrid correctly states, “For Paul, this interpretation of ‘restoration’ as ‘salvation’ shifts the center of the hope away from the possession of the land to faith and participation in Christ. This shift corresponds very closely with the Isaianic context, which promises the remnant of Israel ‘truly lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel,’ returning to God (Isa. 10:20-21).” Seifrid, “Romans,” 649.

<sup>9</sup>BDAG, 975.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 573.

limiting time, thus being a speedy action.<sup>12</sup> The second of these options seems best, communicating a decisiveness to God's action. But this conclusion leads to even another question: what is the referent of *λόγον*?

Commentators choose between one of two options. First, they see it as a reference to God's sentence of judgment upon Israel.<sup>13</sup> Second, they see it as God's word of salvation for Israel.<sup>14</sup> Both interpretations are possible and a decision is difficult. However, taking in consideration the prophetic context and Paul's recollection of the salvation through judgment theme, both ideas may be present.<sup>15</sup> This conclusion fits with Paul understanding of the word of promise (9:6) being fulfilled in the gospel (1:2–4). A word which has gone out into the world (10:17–18) and simultaneously serves as a stumbling block for Israel (9:33; cf. 11:28) and a message of salvation for those who believe (10:6–15).<sup>16</sup> This understanding is also consistent with the Isaianic context which concludes by saying, God's "word is complete and decisive in righteousness" (*δικαιοσύνη*, Isa 10:22). The LXX upholds the context of the Hebrew, promising salvation to the remnant in the overflow of righteousness. Already, I have argued that God's righteousness is both saving and retributive (see ch. 3). Thus, by recalling the remnant motif, Paul perceives this oracle as a message of salvation in the midst of judgment.<sup>17</sup>

That Paul intends to accent the hope of restoration is evident in his citation of

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<sup>12</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:502; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 604; Moo, *Romans*, 635n316.

<sup>13</sup>N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 643; Moo, *Romans*, 635.

<sup>14</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 604; Heil, "From Remnant to Seed," 716; Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans*, WUNT 156 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 209–10; Wagner, *Heralds*, 103–4.

<sup>15</sup>David Wallace seems to notice this tension when he writes, "In the Isaiah context, those of the house of Jacob who have escaped will rely upon the Holy One of Israel—a remnant will return unto God, 'the remnant of Jacob' (Isa. 10:20–21). But the context of this prophesy also accents the wrath of God to Israel." David R. Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son: Paul's Lament-Midrash in Romans 9–11* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 99.

<sup>16</sup>Seifrid, "Romans," 649.

<sup>17</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 102–3.

Isaiah 1:9 (LXX).<sup>18</sup> This second citation from Isaiah allows Paul to elicit again the seed theme (*σπέρμα*, cf. Rom 9:6–9) while also anticipating the future restoration of ethnic Israel. His introduction to the prophetic word (i.e., “just as Isaiah foretold”) expresses his understanding that Isaiah’s oracle in the past is being fulfilled in the present.<sup>19</sup> Paul then builds upon 9:27–28 which explains that only a remnant would be saved. This remnant is the seed of Israel which God has graciously left (*ἐγκατέλιπεν*, cf. 11:4); otherwise the nation would be annihilated like Sodom and Gomorrah. Just as in 9:6–9, this seed (*σπέρμα*) consists of the true Israel and children of Abraham.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, though Israel has undergone severe judgment, God’s promise to the patriarchs is preserved. In God’s sovereignty and mercy, he is keeping a righteous seed among ethnic Israel.

However, not only does the remnant motif highlight God’s mercy in preserving a remnant in Israel, but it adumbrates the nation’s future restoration. In Isaiah, the remnant represents a seed of hope whereby God promises to restore the nation (Isa 6:13; 10:20–23; 11:11–16; 37:30–32; 49:5–6, 14–21; 51:1–3).<sup>21</sup> This usage of the remnant is consistent with earlier motifs in the OT whereby the remnant represents a nucleus of God’s people which will grow to an innumerable number.<sup>22</sup> In Isaiah, the remnant represent the survivors left from God’s judgment which will encompass the beginning of the renewed people of God. In the same way, Paul understands the present remnant of

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<sup>18</sup>Paul’s use of Isa 1:9 is verbatim from the LXX.

<sup>19</sup>Heil rightly notes that Paul reappropriates Isa for his present context. However, Heil goes too far when he contends that the hope of a remnant is exclusively in the future. He does not appear to see the salvation of the remnant as a present reality which continues into the future. Heil, “From Remnant to Seed,” 716–17. This conclusion does not square with what Paul says later in 11:5, namely that at the *present time* there is a remnant according to God’s gracious election.

<sup>20</sup>Rightly John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 41; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 574; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 1991), 178; Heil, “From Remnant to Seed,” 717–18; Seifrid, “Romans,” 650. Contra Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:503.

<sup>21</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 650.

<sup>22</sup>Hasel, *The Remnant*, 398. See also Wagner, who argues, “The idea that the preservation of ‘seed’ guarantees a nation’s continued survival *and future growth* continues to have widespread currency in the Second Temple Period.” Wagner, *Heralds*, 114–15.



believing Israel as a seed which anticipates the rest of Israel's future growth and restoration. Therefore, reading Isaiah as a revealed mystery,

[Paul] imaginatively places Israel in the situation analogous to that originally addressed by the prophet, a situation in which Israel is already experiencing God's judgment . . . . As a result of Paul's trope, the prophet's words in Romans function as they do in their context in Isaiah—as a message of *hope* in the midst of disaster, as a *promise* that Israel yet has a future.<sup>23</sup>

### **Romans 11:1–7**

Paul evokes this remnant motif again in Romans 11:1–7, explicitly applying it to Israel's current experience (v. 5). In light of Israel's continued disobedience to Christ and failure to obtain righteousness (9:30–10:21), Paul asks the question, "Has God rejected (*ἀπόσατο*) his people?" (11:1a). To this notion of rejection, he emphatically replies, "by no means" (*μὴ γένοιτο*, 11:1b). Rather, "God has not rejected (*ἀπόσατο*) his people whom he foreknew (*προέγνω*, v. 2)." How can Paul assert that Israel hasn't been rejected, while at the same time argue that Israel has been hardened (11:7, 25), raised up as vessels of wrath (9:19–23), broken off from the people of God (11:17), and stumbled over the stumbling stone of Christ (9:30–33)? He's able to make this assertion by drawing upon the OT theology of the remnant. In so doing, Paul contends that Israel's current rejection is not wholesale, nor is it permanent (11:15).

Paul initially presents himself as proof that God has not rejected all of Israel. He explains (*γάρ*), "I myself am an Israelite, descendent (*ἐκ σπέρματος*) of Abraham, and of the tribe of Benjamin" (v. 1b). In doing so, Paul appeals to his ethnic heritage as evidence that God has not rejected every Israelite.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, he identifies himself

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<sup>23</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 107.

<sup>24</sup>Several suggestions have been made for why the tribe of Benjamin is mentioned. (1) Because rabbinic tradition teaches that the tribe of Benjamin was the first to cross the Red Sea; see Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 299. (2) It is one of the two tribes that remains faithful to David and was the tribe of Saul; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 604. (3) Benjamin was one of the few tribes able to trace their ancestry back to those who returned from exile; see Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 675. Against these, Schreiner states, "All of these suggestions should be rejected, for they stray from the main point of the argument by suggesting that Paul's inclusion in the tribe of

as a member of the believing remnant within ethnic Israel.<sup>25</sup> As Paul already emphasized through the citation of Isaiah 1:9 (Rom 9:29), the presence of a remnant confirms that God will not annihilate the nation of Israel. Thus, by leaving a believing remnant—of whom Paul is a representative—God shows that he has not abandoned his covenant with “his people whom he foreknew” (προγινώσκω, Rom 11:2). God’s foreknowledge of Israel speaks of his sovereign choice to set his covenant love upon the nation of Israel (cf. Amos 3:2). Paul used this term in the same way in 8:29–30 to express God’s sovereignty in conforming the elect into the image of the Son, whereby they will receive the future promise of glory.<sup>26</sup> By recalling Israel as the people whom God has foreknown, Paul reiterates Israel’s corporate election (9:4–5; 11:28) and God’s faithfulness to keep his promises to them (11:29). Significantly, then, God’s election of Israel is an election of salvation.<sup>27</sup> And this promise of salvation is what Paul emphatically denies has been revoked (11:29).

Furthermore, it’s noteworthy that the clause “God has not forsaken his people” reflects the wording of Psalm 93:14 (LXX) and 1 Kingdoms 12:22 (1 Sam 12:22 ET).<sup>28</sup> In the case of Psalm 93, there is division and conflict within Israel. The Psalmist cries out for God’s vengeance to judge the wicked who oppress the righteous (vv. 1–7). Yet the psalmist finds hope in the Lord’s discipline through his law (vv. 12–13), knowing that the

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Benjamin made him a candidate for God’s election. But Paul’s intention is not to distinguish among the various tribes of Israel, for that would suggest that it is not sufficient to be an Israelite to be chosen, and that the tribe from which one hails also plays a role in whether one is selected. Instead, the designations ‘offspring of Abraham’ and ‘tribe of Benjamin’ following ‘Israelite’ are merely intended to emphasize that Paul was truly descended from ethnic Israel.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 564.

<sup>25</sup>Some scholars misunderstand the force of Paul’s argument by suggesting that as an Israelite himself, he could never believe that God would reject Israel. See William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), 309; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 635; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 330.

<sup>26</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 668.

<sup>27</sup>Rightly Seifrid, “As in 8:29, then, ‘foreknowledge’ here is prospective in nature: in speaking of Israel as ‘those whom God foreknew,’ Paul has in view the coming salvation of his people.” Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 224; Moo, *Romans*, 692; Schreiner, *Romans*, 565.

Lord will not forsake his inheritance (i.e., Israel; v. 14). Regarding 1 Kingdoms 12 (1 Sam 12 ET), Samuel recounts how Israel has abandoned God as their king by asking for a king like the surrounding nations. Despite their rebellion, Samuel exhorts them to follow the Lord, knowing that “he will not cast away his people because of his great name” (v. 22). By alluding to these OT passages, Paul reimagines them around Israel’s current state of rebellion and division to recall the promise that God will not forsake his people whom he foreknew.

In the subsequent verses (vv. 3–7), Paul affirms God’s unwavering commitment to his promise by reiterating the remnant motif. Yet, some scholars suggest that Paul merely emphasizes the remnant to prove that God has not rejected Israel altogether; namely, that he will always have his elect among ethnic Israel. Merkle states,

The question is *not*, ‘Has God cast off ethnic Israel with respect to his special plan for their future?’ It seems, however, that this question is often subconsciously read that way. To ask the question in that manner misses Paul’s real question and prejudices one towards interpreting the rest of the chapter as advocating a special future for Israel. The nature of the question, however, does not anticipate a future mass conversion. The question Paul asks is, ‘Has God cut off ethnic Israel *altogether*?’ or, ‘Is there any hope for the continuation of a saving activity of God among Israelites?’<sup>29</sup>

From this perspective, the remnant motif is not evidencing that God will one day restore the nation as a whole, but merely that God will always have his Jewish representatives within the true people of God. While it is true that the remnant ensures that God will always have his elect within ethnic Israel (9:29), the conclusion Paul draws from the life of Elijah suggests more than this (cf. 11:11–15).

Rather, Paul unveils the mystery of the remnant through the experience of Elijah: “God’s way with the prophet in the past reveals his way with Israel in the present.

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<sup>29</sup>Ben L. Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 4 (2000): 713. See also Charles M. Horne, “The Meaning of the Phrase ‘And Thus All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Romans 11:26),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 4 (1978): 330; Christopher Zoccali, “‘And so All Israel Will Be Saved’: Competing Interpretations of Romans 11.26 in Pauline Scholarship,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30, no. 3 (2008): 305–6.

The former pattern is eschatologically repeated.”<sup>30</sup> In Romans 9:1–5, Paul lamented over Israel’s unbelief; now in 11:2, he recalls Elijah’s lament over Israel.<sup>31</sup> However, Elijah’s lament is more of a contention (ἐντυγχάνω) against Israel (κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ) implicitly calling for God’s judgment upon the nation.<sup>32</sup> 1 Kings 19:1–18 records the events after Elijah’s defeat of the prophets of Baal and how he was forced to flee from Jezebel for fear of his life (vv. 1–2). It is within this context that Elijah expresses his lament (vv. 3–14). Despite the triumph of YHWH over the prophets of Baal, Israel has forsaken YHWH; they have killed the prophets, destroyed the altars, and Elijah perceives that he is the only one left as they now seek his life (Rom 11:3; cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14).<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the divine response (ὁ χρηματισμός, Rom 11:4; cf. 2 Macc 2:4; 1 Clem 17:5) to Elijah is “I have left (κατέλιπον, cf. Rom 9:29) for myself 7,000 men who have not bent a knee to Baal” (cf. 1 Kgs 19:18).<sup>34</sup>

While Paul’s citation of 1 Kings 19:18 skips over the word of judgment (vv.

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<sup>30</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 668.

<sup>31</sup>Some see biographical parallels between Paul and Elijah. See Käsemann, *Romans*, 301; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 637; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1123–24. However, caution should be given before drawing such a parallel, especially since God has to correct Elijah’s understanding. Perhaps Paul sees parallels merely in the intercession and persecution components of Elijah’s life. But even this is speculation. See Wagner, *Heralds*, 234. Seifrid notes, “Elijah’s contention against the nation is not finally valid. He does not perceive the work of the merciful God, who in the midst of judgment has preserved a remnant for himself. Elijah’s implicit imprecatory petition against Israel is thus implicitly rejected. Hope for Israel remains.” Seifrid, “Romans,” 668.

<sup>32</sup>The verb ἐντυγχάνω can mean to appeal or plead on behalf (ὕπέρ) of someone else (cf. 8:27, 34). However, in 11:2 it takes a negative nuance as a contention or petition against (κατὰ) someone (cf. 1 Macc 8:32; 10:61, 63; 11:25; 3 Macc 6:37); in this case, Israel. Rightly, Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 636; Moo, *Romans*, 693.

<sup>33</sup>Paul cites from 1 Kgs 19:10, 14 (3 Kgdms 19:10, 14 LXX) with only minor changes. First, he inverts the first two phrases. Second, he abbreviates the rest of the verse. However, none of these changes affect the meaning of the verses. So why did Paul make these changes? Perhaps he wanted to emphasize the killing of the prophets for contemporary purposes (cf. 1 Thess 2:15; Käsemann, *Romans*, 299; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 636; Seifrid, “Romans,” 668)? Paul could be citing from an unknown Greek text (Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 150–58). Or Paul may merely be quoting from memory (Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:546).

<sup>34</sup>Paul’s citation deviates from 1 Kgs 19:18 (3 Kgdms 19:18) in significant ways. First, he changes the initial phrase from a second-person future (καταλείψεις) to a first-person aorist (κατέλιπον) with the reflexive pronoun ἐμαυτῷ. This change matches the MT which emphasizes God’s activity in preserving a remnant. Second, Paul again abbreviates the text by eliminating ἐν Ἰσραήλ and smoothing out the Greek of the LXX (Moo, *Romans*, 694n584). These changes are likely Paul’s own reflecting his interpretation and reading in light of Isaiah’s remnant theology (Seifrid, “Romans,” 668).

15–17) in order to emphasize God’s gracious election of a remnant, the perceptive reader will recall the entire narrative and see the thematic parallels with the Isaianic remnant theology (Rom 9:27–29). In fact, Paul interprets the Elijah narrative through the lens of Isaiah (cf. 11:7–8; Isa 29:10). Thus, as in Isaiah, God has come with judgment upon the nation, but has also chosen to spare a remnant as a seed of hope for the future.

Reflecting on Elijah—through Isaiah—Paul bridges the gap between the past and the present age of fulfillment in Christ concluding (οὖν), “Thus even at the present time (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ) there is a remnant (λείμμα) according to God’s gracious election” (Rom 11:5). Paul sees a climactic expression of Israel’s rebellion in the days of Elijah occurring at the present time. Israel not only rejected the word of Christ, but even put him to death. Perhaps, Paul also sees his own suffering at the hands of the Jews in like manner of Elijah (cf. 1 Thess 2:15). Nevertheless, unlike Elijah, Paul knows he is not alone.

As a mystery, Paul has reimagined the Elijah narrative in light of its present fulfillment in Christ. In the face of current judgment upon Israel, God has left a remnant for himself as a pledge of the nation’s future restoration.<sup>35</sup> Here Paul unites his previous argument concerning God’s “purpose according to election” (9:11) and the OT remnant motif (9:27–29; 11:1–4). The true Israel and offspring of Abraham are the remnant whom God has sovereignly elected according to his mercy and grace. Consequently, this election is not by works, otherwise it would not be by grace (v. 6; cf. 9:11–13). Paul then concludes by explaining that the righteousness which Israel sought by doing the law, it did not obtain; rather, the election (i.e. the remnant) obtained it (v. 7a).

Accordingly, Paul has taken God’s past word and reappropriated it for the present. By recalling the remnant motif of the OT (i.e., Isaiah and Elijah), he has focused

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<sup>35</sup>As Hafemann aptly states, “The point is the promise to Elijah and to the remnant of Paul’s day that their experience points forward to the salvation of a greater number. Rather than judgment on all the rest, the significance of the small, persecuted remnant is that their experience is a symbol of hope for the future of the people.” Scott J. Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl,” *Ex Auditu* 4 (1988): 49.

on the positive side of God’s electing purpose. As in the days of Isaiah and Elijah, God’s judgment would result in the diminution of the nation to a remnant; yet the remnant also served as a beacon of hope for the nation’s future. In the same way, Israel has undergone a judgment—a spiritual hardening—resulting in only a remnant being saved (9:27–28); nevertheless, this remnant anticipates Israel’s full number in the future (11:12). The remnant functions as the firstfruits of the harvest to come (11:16) and is the inauguration of Israel’s restoration. However, before exploring how the remnant serves as the firstfruits of Israel’s restoration, it is necessary to understand God’s purpose of calling the Gentiles in order to provoke Israel to jealousy.

### **The Inclusion of the Gentiles**

The calling of the Gentiles and Israel’s provocation are two sides of one coin in God’s redemptive purposes. In 11:25 when Paul speaks of the hardening that has come partially upon Israel, it is understood that in God’s judgment upon the nation he has left for himself a believing remnant (cf. 9:27–29; 11:1–7). However, Paul continues to explain that this hardening will continue “until the fullness of the Gentiles enters in” (ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ). A crucial matter for interpreting this clause hinges on the preposition ἄχρι and whether it should be taken in a temporal or terminative sense.

Some who reject an eschatological mass-restoration of Israel contend that the preposition ἄχρι is terminative, precluding any future change in Israel’s hardened state.<sup>36</sup> Although this prepositional phrase can be terminative, with no anticipated change in

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<sup>36</sup>Merkle comments, “This phrase is essentially terminative in its significance, implying the end of something. Yet, only the context can determine where the emphasis lies after the termination. Often the phrase is used in an eschatological context, where the termination envisioned contains a finalization aspect that makes questions concerning the reversal of the circumstance irrelevant. In other words, what is important is not what will take place *after* the event is completed, but *that* the event is eschatologically fulfilled.” Merkle, “Romans 11,” 715. See also Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1237; Simon J. Gathercole, “Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9–11,” in *God and Israel*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 135–36.

circumstance (cf. Matt 24:38; Acts 2:29; 23:31; 26:22; Rom 5:13; 8:22; 1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 3:14; Phil 1:5), more often it denotes a subsequent change in circumstance (cf. Luke 1:20; 4:13; Acts 1:2; 3:21; 7:18; 13:11; 20:6, 11; 22:22; 27:33; Rom 1:13; Gal 3:19; 4:2; Phil 1:6; Heb 3:13; 6:11; Rev 2:25, 26; 7:3; 15:8; 17:17; 20:3, 5).<sup>37</sup> Yet, a definitive answer cannot be decided by grammar alone. Context is the primary factor.

To this point, it is often argued that to perceive an eschatological change in Israel's hardened state would contradict Paul's argument from 9:1–11:10; namely, that only a remnant will be saved.<sup>38</sup> Wright argues, "It is highly unlikely that when Paul says 'I do not want you to remain in ignorance of this mystery' he is referring to a *new* 'mystery', a secret piece of wisdom or doctrine which he is about to reveal."<sup>39</sup> Wright continues to say, "The 'mystery' of Romans 11, in fact, is *the entire sequence of thought from 11:11 onwards*, building on the whole argument of 9:6–11:10, and drawn together in a single statement (11:25–27) at the start of its final subsection."<sup>40</sup> While I agree with Wright that the "mystery" (μυστήριον) of Romans 11:25–27 encapsulates what Paul has said from 9:6–11:24, such a conclusion does not negate an eschatological reversal of Israel's plight.

Rather, in continuity with the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, Paul has unveiled God's plan of redemption concerning Israel which was hidden in the prophetic writings. In fact, as I have already shown, the prophetic words of judgment given in the law, prophets, and the writings all end with a word of hope concerning Israel's subsequent salvation (Deut 32:36–43; Isa 29:22–24; 45:22–25; Joel 2:18, 26–27; Ps

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<sup>37</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 733n785. In this same note, Moo insightfully observes that of the twenty-five occurrences which ἀκρι clearly denote a change in circumstance, on fourteen occasions it is followed by an aorist; whereas of the ten occurrences which mean "right up to" are only followed by an aorist twice.

<sup>38</sup>Merkle, "Romans 11," 711–12.

<sup>39</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1232.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 1233.

68:36). Throughout Romans 9–11, Paul has reflected upon God’s prophetic word in the OT to show how God’s dealings with Israel in the past are recapitulated in the present in order to provide hope for the future. Therefore, Paul is not saying something new about Israel’s salvation in 11:25–27 that he hasn’t been saying since chapter 9. If this understanding of Paul’s argument holds true, then the exegetical decision concerning the preposition, ἄχρι, is cleared up: it communicates a subsequent change in Israel’s hardened condition after the fullness of the Gentiles.

Therefore, at the present time, Paul says Israel’s hardening—along with the salvation of a remnant—coincides with the bringing in of the Gentiles (τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ; Rom 11:25c). That is, Paul understands an allotment of both time and space for the Gentiles to join the new Israel and true children of God through faith in Jesus. The inclusion of the Gentiles then serves as the catalyst for provoking Israel to salvation as the present time. In this way, 11:25 climactically summarizes the ideas Paul introduced in 9:24–27, 10:18–21, 11:11–15, and 16–24.

### **Romans 9:24–27**

In 9:6–23 Paul expounded upon God’s purpose according to election in order to accomplish his redemptive plan (v. 11). In doing so, Paul reiterated a theme of reversal: a pattern of rejection and acceptance. Through this motif—particularly with Pharaoh—Paul upholds God’s complete freedom to harden and show mercy to whomever he wills (v. 18). And it is this hardening motif that Paul extrapolates to show how God’s hardening of Pharaoh did not result in immediate judgment but a raising him up in order to magnify God’s power and name (v. 17). Likewise, God has hardened the majority of Israel in order to make known his power and glorious riches (vv. 22–23). Yet, as with Pharaoh, God has not judged Israel at once; otherwise, there would be no time or space for the world (or the Jewish remnant for that matter) to repent and believe on Christ.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 642. See also Terence L. Donaldson, ““Riches for the



Instead, God has endured with great patience vessels of wrath in order to make known the glorious riches of his salvation upon vessels of mercy (v. 23).

Having explored God's purpose of election, Paul continues his argument in 9:24 identifying these vessels of mercy as those (οὗς, cf. v. 23) not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles. Thus, during this period of Israel's hardening, God is sovereignly calling his elect among the remnant of Israel (the Jews) and throughout the world (the Gentiles). What is striking is that Paul includes the Gentiles in a restoration passage concerning the northern tribes of Israel (Hos 2:25, 1 [LXX]).<sup>42</sup>

Paul's citation of Hosea 2:25 (LXX) reflects his interpretation of the passage in light of its current fulfillment in Christ. Thus, Paul makes several theologically motivated alterations to the text. First, he reverses the order of the clause in Hosea placing τὸν οὐ λαὸν μου at the head. By emphasizing this clause Paul sees in the announcement of Hosea the inclusion of the Gentiles.<sup>43</sup> That is, God's word of rejection toward Israel as "not my people" in effect characterizes them as Gentiles. This is a theme that Paul established in Romans 1:18–3:20 and most recently in 9:6–23. In this way, God's word of salvation is to call those who are not his people and make them his people. Second, Paul exchanges ἐρῶ for καλέσω to link Hosea with the theme of God's effectual call of both Jews and

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Gentiles' (Rom 11:12): Israel's Rejection and Paul's Gentile Mission," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112, no. 1 (1993): 94; Murray Baker, "Paul and the Salvation of Israel: Paul's Ministry, the Motif of Jealousy, and Israel's Yes," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2005): 478–79.

<sup>42</sup>There is much discussion about the legitimacy of Paul's appropriation of Hos. Some avoid the difficulty by arguing that Paul doesn't apply the text to Gentiles at all, but only Jews. See John A. Battle, "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:25–26," *Grace Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (1981): 115–29. But this can hardly be correct, since Paul's purpose in citing Hosea is to ground God's calling of the Gentiles in Scripture. Moo contends that Paul only intends to use the Hos citation to speak of the calling of the Gentiles because Paul sees a biblical theological trajectory whereby the people of God would ultimately be expanded to include the Gentiles (Moo, *Romans*, 633). While this trajectory is biblical (e.g., Isa 2:1–4; 11:1–12; 14:1; 19:19–25; 25:1–8; 49:6–8, 22–23; 56:3–8; 60:3–16; Zech 2:11; 8:22–23; 9:7–8; 14:16–21; Schreiner, *Romans*, 515), it doesn't limit the passage to the calling of the Gentiles, but affirms the restoration of Israel in calling both Jews and Gentiles; see Wagner, *Heralds*, 79–89; Seifrid, "Romans," 647; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 705–8.

<sup>43</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:499; Schreiner, *Romans*, 514.

Gentiles in verse 24.<sup>44</sup> Third, Paul uses ἀγαπάω rather than ἐλεέω.<sup>45</sup> The hermeneutical benefit from this change is that it links up with God’s electing love toward Jacob over Esau in 9:13.<sup>46</sup> Now those who are in the place of Esau (i.e. Gentiles) are given a new name: “beloved.” They are true children of promise, based on God’s gracious election. Therefore, Paul reads Israel’s Scriptures “as a testimony to the surprising reversal wrought by God’s grace, in which those apparently outside the scope of God’s mercy are included among the people of God as redeemed for himself.”<sup>47</sup> In this way, Paul does not merely make an argument by way of analogy,<sup>48</sup> nor does he carelessly change the meaning of Hosea;<sup>49</sup> rather, as a mystery, he reveals a typological pattern in Israel’s past which is recapitulated at the present time.<sup>50</sup> Paul sees an inauguration of Israel’s eschatological restoration occurring as God calls Gentiles along with a believing remnant of Jews.

That Paul understands Hosea 2 to speak of the inauguration of Israel’s restoration through the calling of both Jews and Gentiles is more apparent in Romans 9:26. Already, I have shown that Paul conflates Hosea 2:1a (LXX) with Isaiah 10:22 (Rom 9:27). In that instance, Paul emphasized Hosea’s announcement of judgment; whereas in here in Romans 9:26, he cites Hosea 2:1b to emphasize God’s divine call to salvation in the midst of judgment.<sup>51</sup> As a mystery, Paul perceives God’s ways in the past

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<sup>44</sup>Käsemann, *Romans*, 274; Moo, *Romans*, 632; Schreiner, *Romans*, 514.

<sup>45</sup>Some have suggested that Paul’s citation of the LXX follows a *Vorlage* not known to us; see Stanley, *The Language of Scripture*, 112. However, as with many of Paul’s citations, it’s best to see this change as coming from Paul himself; see Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 571; Wagner, *Heralds*, 82–83.

<sup>46</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 82; Schreiner, *Romans*, 514.

<sup>47</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 83.

<sup>48</sup>Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel,” 47.

<sup>49</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 159–60; Käsemann, *Romans*, 274.

<sup>50</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 646.

<sup>51</sup>Paul’s citation of Hos 2:1b is verbatim with the LXX. For matters concerning the textual

to be recapitulated in the present age of fulfillment. Thus, in Romans 9:26, Paul cites Hosea 2:1b which recalls the place where God’s word of judgment was spoken in the past and where God will call Israel again to himself. Now in the age of fulfillment, Paul sees an inaugural fulfillment of Hosea as the divine word in Christ is both an announcement of judgment and salvation (cf. 1:16–17; 9:33).

In other words, as a result of the Christ event, Israel has been largely cut off from God’s people, yet it is through the word of Christ which God will call all those “not his people,” “sons of the living God.” At the present time, Israel has undergone a new exile, effectively being made Gentiles (i.e., not my people). Consequently, Paul perceives an initial fulfillment of Hosea as God calls Gentiles to himself. And by calling believing Gentiles, “sons of God,” Paul identifies them with the true Israel.

How is Paul able to make such a bold assertion? Since Jesus is the true son of God (1:3, 4; 8:3, 29, 32) and all those in Christ are adopted as sons of God (8:14, 15, 19, 23), it is those united to Christ who make up the true and restored Israel.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Paul sees Hosea’s prophecy being initially fulfilled in Christ as God calls the Gentiles, along with a remnant of Jews (9:26b; cf. v. 24). However, the inclusion of the Gentiles within the reconstituted Israel in Christ, does not negate a future fulfillment of Hosea 2 for ethnic Israel. While Paul’s citation reveals that Hosea’s prophecy is being predominately fulfilled among Gentiles and not Israel as a whole; this surprising reversal gives renewed hope that God will one day call “all Israel” (11:26), who are now in the position of “not my people.” This reversal is this very reason why Israel is being provoked to jealousy (10:19; 11:11, 14).

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variant in this verse, see Wagner, *Heralds*, 84n126; Seifrid, “Romans,” 647.

<sup>52</sup>Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 705–8. See also P. Chase Sears, *Heirs of Promise: The Church as the New Israel in Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 12–38.

## Romans 10:18–21

Paul’s assertion that saving faith comes from “hearing the word (ῥήματος) of Christ” (v. 17) naturally raises the possibility that Israel’s unbelief is due to their lack of hearing (v. 18a).<sup>53</sup> However, Paul emphatically confirms (μενοῦνγε) that Israel has indeed heard the gospel.<sup>54</sup> He supports his answer by citing Psalm 18:5 (LXX), “Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words (ῥήματα) to the ends of the earth.”<sup>55</sup> With this citation, Paul now uses ῥῆμα for the third time; and in each case it refers to the message of Christ (cf. vv. 8, 17).<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the third person pronoun αὐτῶν (v. 18) is now applied to Christian preachers as the heralds of this message.

However, according to this reading, it seems that Paul has ripped Psalm 18 out of context for his own purposes.<sup>57</sup> In the context of Psalm 18, the voice and words are the heavens which anthropologically describe God’s general revelation in creation. So how can Paul now apply this Psalm to the proclamation of the gospel? One solution is to contend that Paul isn’t actually referring to the proclamation of the gospel, but rather to natural revelation in the creation.<sup>58</sup> In this way, Paul uses the Psalm according to its

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<sup>53</sup>Wright wrongly understands Paul as asking a universal question regarding whether the world (i.e., Gentiles) has heard the gospel. Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 668. See also Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 332. Others suggest Paul has both Jews and Gentiles in view. See Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary*, New Testament Monographs 37 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 202. However, Paul’s point about the worldwide proclamation of the gospel is to argue that if the Gentiles have heard it, then it must have already been proclaimed to Israel. Rightly, Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:537–38; Barrett, *Romans*, 191; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 599; Schreiner, *Romans*, 558.

<sup>54</sup>Harvey comments on μενοῦνγε saying, “the triple compound μενοῦνγε can correct or confirm. In 9:20 it corrects; here it confirms.” John D. Harvey, *Romans*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 261. See also Moo, *Romans*, 684n537.

<sup>55</sup>Paul’s citation follows the LXX exactly.

<sup>56</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 184–85.

<sup>57</sup>See Dodd, *Romans*, 170; Käsemann, *Romans*, 295.

<sup>58</sup>Seifrid contends, “The sense of his appeal to Ps. 19:4 is clear: God the Creator has already been (and continues to be) proclaimed to the nations. According to Paul, ‘That which is known of God is manifest among them’ (1:19). Paul has underscored, of course, that the idolatrous world has a ‘darkened heart’ that no longer gives glory or thanks to the Creator (1:21). The problem, however, lies with the fallen creature, not with the creation, which continues to announce the Creator’s glory according to the psalm” Seifrid, “Romans,” 663. See also H. L. Ellison, *The Mystery of Israel: An Exposition of Romans 9–11*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 70.

original meaning saying that all humanity has knowledge of the truth of God, and so no one is without excuse (cf. 1:20). Consequently, Paul is answering an objection that the word has not gone out to the nations.<sup>59</sup> To this objection he responds, the word has already gone out to the nations, because God has made himself known in the creation. How then does Psalm 18:5 LXX relate to the preaching of the gospel (Rom 10:17)? Seifrid concludes,

The words of the heavens concerning the Creator anticipate the word of Christ (10:17–18). His identification of Christ as the one who descended from heaven to the depths of the grave and has been raised and exalted as Lord and God informs his appeal to Ps. 19. Christ, the righteousness of God, is identified as Creator, and the Creator thus is identified with Christ.<sup>60</sup>

This reading is attractive because it sees God’s communication in the past as proleptic of God’s speaking through Christ in the present. It also reconciles Paul’s use of Psalm 18 with the original context. However, despite these strengths it’s difficult to reconcile this reading with Paul’s argument as it began in 9:30.<sup>61</sup> It’s difficult to see how Paul’s argument would be furthered if he’s not answering an objection concerning Israel’s relationship to the gospel.<sup>62</sup> This reading fits best as Paul asserts that saving faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (10:17), a word which Israel has indeed heard, but stubbornly disobeyed (v. 21).

Wagner proposes a promising solution, which not only maintains the mystery component but also upholds the original context of Psalm 18. Wagner persuasively argues that Paul’s question (*μη̄ οὐκ ἤκουσαν*, v. 18) serves as a possible allusion to Isaiah 40:28 (*εἰ μὴ ἤκουσας*).<sup>63</sup> In Isaiah 40 the Lord announces the good news of salvation and

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<sup>59</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 663.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>See Schreiner who gives a critique of this view. Schreiner, *Romans*, 557–58.

<sup>62</sup>Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 95; Schreiner, *Romans*, 557.

<sup>63</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 180–85. For this reason, Paul is probably doing more than using the text analogically. Contra Moo, who says, “[Paul’s] application probably rests on a general analogy: as God’s

his return to Zion. As a result, God’s glory will be seen by all flesh (πᾶσα σὰρξ, v. 5). Isaiah declares that this word (ῥῆμα) of salvation is sure because it remains forever (v. 7). On this basis, the herald of good news is to ascend a high mountain and call out to Israel “Behold, your God” (v. 9)! However, it appears that this message is received with skepticism, calling God’s wisdom and justice into question. Consequently, the prophet asserts God’s infinite wisdom and power, which no one can comprehend, has been manifested in God’s work of creation (vv. 12–26). Therefore, Israel cannot plead ignorance to God’s creative power and his declaration of deliverance (vv. 21, 28). To do so merely reveals their refusal to listen.<sup>64</sup>

This allusion to Isaiah 40 is strengthened by the fact that Paul has already cited from Isaiah 52:7 and 53:1, two thematically parallel passages.<sup>65</sup> Quite likely then, Paul has established a “web of *intratextual* connections stretching between chapters 40 and 52 within the book of Isaiah” to explain Israel’s disobedience to the word of Christ.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, like Isaiah, Paul also appeals to God’s revelation in creation in response to the question “did they not hear” (Rom 10:18). He asserts that the message of God’s salvation has gone out in to all the earth (Ps 18:5), even unto the Gentiles (cf. Col 1:6). This reality demonstrates that the creator of the ends of the earth (Isa 40:28) has indeed acted in bringing his promised salvation near to his people. In other words, Paul makes the point that since the Gentiles have heard and believed, certainly Israel has heard his word.<sup>67</sup>

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word of general revelation has been proclaimed all over the earth, so God’s word of special revelation, in the gospel, has been spread all over the earth.” Moo, *Romans*, 685.

<sup>64</sup>John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 66.

<sup>65</sup>Wagner notes, “In both Isaiah 40 and 52, the herald announces God’s triumphant return to Zion: ‘Here is your God’ (Ἴδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν, 40:9); ‘Your God shall reign’ (Βασιλεύσει σου ὁ θεός, 52:7). Likewise, in both passages, all people—‘all flesh’ (πᾶσα σὰρξ, 40:5); ‘all nations’ (πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν, 52:10) ‘all the ends of the earth’ (πάντα τὰ ἄκρα τῆς γῆς, 52:10; cf. 40:28)—witness the saving deeds (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, 40:5; cf. 52:7, τὴν σωτηρίαν σου) wrought by God’s ‘arm’ (βραχίων, 40:10–11; 52:10). Wagner, *Heralds*, 184.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Schreiner cogently states, “Paul affirms that Israel has certainly heard the gospel. The proof

This conclusion leads to another possibility for Israel’s lack of faith: perhaps they did not understand the message (Rom 10:19)?<sup>68</sup> In what follows, Paul delves deeper into the “nature of Israel’s hearing.”<sup>69</sup> Specifically, Israel cannot plead ignorance “that God could very well act in such a way that the preaching of Christ would result in the inclusion of the Gentiles and in judgment upon Israel.”<sup>70</sup> To substantiate this claim, Paul provides a two-fold answer from Moses (Deut 32:21) and Isaiah (Isa 65:1–2) to demonstrate that Israel did know this from their own Scripture; they just refused to obey (10:19–21).

Paul’s first piece of evidence is drawn from the testimony of Moses in the latter half of Deuteronomy 32:21 (LXX).<sup>71</sup> I already gave a brief overview of the context of Deuteronomy 32 (see ch. 3), but it bears summarizing again. Deuteronomy 32 concludes Moses’s final exhortation to Israel beginning in 27:1. Moses has presented blessing for covenantal obedience (27:12; 28:1–14) and cursing for covenantal disobedience (27:13–26; 28:15–68). Yet, because the hearts of Israel have not been circumcised, they will disobey experiencing all the curses, including judgment at the hand of a foreign nation (28:45–57). Nevertheless, Deuteronomy 27–31 reveals a fourfold sequential plan concerning Israel’s judgment and ultimate restoration: (1)

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of this is that the gospel has even been proclaimed to the gentiles. If the gospel has been proclaimed to the gentiles—in fulfillment of the OT prophecies that the kingdom of God would encompass the whole world—then the age of fulfillment has dawned, and Israel has certainly heard the good news that Isaiah (52:7) foretold would be proclaimed.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 559. Such a conclusion, however, does not communicate that every Gentile and every Jew has physically heard the gospel. Paul is speaking in hyperbole. See Moo, *Romans*, 685.

<sup>68</sup>Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 99; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:539; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 625; Moo, *Romans*, 685; Schreiner, *Romans*, 559.

<sup>69</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 685. See also Bell who says “there is not so much a *change* in subject but rather a *concentration* of subject.” Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 96.

<sup>70</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 686.

<sup>71</sup>Paul’s citation is essentially identical to that of the LXX. He only makes two minor changes in order to apply the text to Israel’s current situation. He changes *καὶ γὰρ* to *ἐγὼ*; and he switches from the third person plural pronoun (*αὐτοὺς*) to the second person plural (*ὑμεῖς*). These changes sharpen the address and brings Israel in direct contention with their God. Rightly, Seifrid, “Romans,” 664.

Israel's judgment by a foreign nation; (2) Israel left to only a remnant which includes foreigners; (3) Israel is shown mercy and restored; and (4) Israel is vindicated as judgment is meted out upon their enemies. Deuteronomy 32 recounts the Song of Moses and serves as a summary of Israel's "latter-day" plight and restoration detailed in chapters 27–31.

By learning the Song, Israel was to remember what God had said so as not to be without excuse when the judgment comes upon them (31:19–22). It is in this Song that God promises to make Israel jealous (*παραζήλω*) by a foolish nation as they experience judgment at their hand (32:21, 22–38; cf. 28:45–57).<sup>72</sup> Yet it is according to this judgment that God will bring purification (*ἐκκαθαριεῖ*) to "his land and his people" (32:43b).<sup>73</sup> In this way, after Israel is brought to nothing, God will bring them back to life (30:3–6; 32:36).

By citing Deuteronomy 32:21 Paul specifically recalls God's promise to provoke Israel to jealous anger by means of a no-nation (*οὐκ ἔθνη*), because Israel had provoked him to anger by unfaithfully following after a no-god (*οὐ θεῶν*).<sup>74</sup> In doing so, Paul reimagines Israel's past rebellion to God in light of the present rejection of Christ who is God over all. Paul sees Moses's prophetic word to the latter-day Israel as fulfilled at the present time as Gentiles receive the mercy of God in salvation (cf. 9:24–26). Thus, in a surprising fashion, the mercy dispensed upon the Gentiles serves as a punishment upon Israel causing them to remain in unbelief.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, though Israel has been judged, God will not abandon them forever.

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<sup>72</sup>Bell notes that in Deut 32:21 means "provoke to jealous anger." Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 39.

<sup>73</sup>Rightly, Scott J. Hafemann, "Eschatology and Ethics: The Future of Israel and the Nations in Romans 15:1-13," *Tyndale Bulletin* 51, no. 2 (2000): 180.

<sup>74</sup>The language of "no people" resumes the theme from Hos and God's calling of "not my people." Rightly Seifrid, "Romans," 664; Moo, *Romans*, 686.

<sup>75</sup>Seifrid, "Romans," 664.



Therefore, Paul evokes the heart of the Song of Moses which is based upon God's unwavering commitment to his elect people Israel (cf. Deut 32:4, 36, 43). As Wagner states, "Paradoxically it is this lover's ploy to win Israel back that manifests God's fidelity and demonstrates his enduring commitment to the covenant Israel has so brazenly violated. God shows favor to another ἔθνος in order to provoke in Israel feelings of jealousy and renewed desire for the God they have spurred."<sup>76</sup> However, it won't be until Romans 11:11–15 that Paul explains how Israel's judgment has brought about the salvation of the Gentiles and of which will in turn bring about Israel's restoration.

The second witness Paul draws upon is the prophet Isaiah. He does so by citing Isaiah 65:1–2 (LXX),<sup>77</sup> a passage which has numerous parallels with Deuteronomy 32.<sup>78</sup> Paul notes that Isaiah makes a "bold" (ἀποτολμάω) statement (Rom 10:20a). Likely this boldness emphasizes the shocking reversal which will occur amongst Israel. The context of Isaiah 65:1–2 is the Lord's response to the prophetic lament recounted in Isaiah 63:15–64:12. Isaiah cries for mercy because Israel's heart has been hardened so as not to fear YHWH (63:17). Effectively, Israel has become like the Gentiles, those who are not called by YHWH's name (v. 19). No one in Israel calls upon his name, because he has hidden his face from them, giving them over to their iniquities (64:7).

In light of the Isaianic contexts, the question is once again raised, has Paul run over the original meaning of the text? This problem arises because Paul applies Isaiah 65:1 to Gentiles where in its original context it seems to speak of Israel.<sup>79</sup> Yet, as in

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<sup>76</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 198.

<sup>77</sup>Paul inverts two phrases in his rendering of Isa 65:1–2. Instead of opening with ἐμφανῆς ἐγενόμην, Paul brings forward εὐρέθη from the second half of the verse. Paul also appears to add the ἐν preposition, possibly to temper his claim concerning the Gentile reception of the Gospel. In other words, God has been found "among" (ἐν) the Gentiles, not by all the Gentiles. *Pace* Ibid., 207.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 203–4.

<sup>79</sup>Byrne, *Romans*, 327; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 636; Moo, *Romans*, 687. However, Moyter argues that a reference to Gentiles in Isa 65:1 fits the pattern of the thematic construction of Isa 65–66. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 523. See also Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah*, 228–29.

Romans 9:25–26 (cf. Hos 2:1, 23), Paul seems to find hermeneutical warrant in the phrase “τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ζητοῦσιν.”<sup>80</sup> In other words, it is precisely in their hardened condition, whereby Israel has become like the unbelieving nations, that Paul sees room for the inclusion of the Gentiles. God’s salvation will occur amongst a people who were not seeking him, which is precisely what is occurring in the Gentile mission (cf. Rom 9:30). Paul’s emphasis upon the Gentiles here is also confirmed in the latter half of Isaiah 65:20 where the Lord says, “Behold I am’ to a nation (τῷ ἔθνει) who has not called my name.” Furthermore, by juxtaposing Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1, Paul sees these texts as mutually interpretive of one another.<sup>81</sup> Israel’s own Scripture stands as witness against them that they did know the gospel would go out to the nations. The irony is that the gospel came to them first, but they rejected it.

Paul turns his attention specifically to Israel’s obstinacy in Romans 10:21 by citing Isaiah 65:2. In doing so, Paul shares the Lord’s response to Israel’s similar complaint in the past. In the preceding passage (Isa 64:12), Israel laments that God has stood silent and ambivalent toward them. Yet YHWH responds, “I have stretched out my hands all day long to a disobedient and contrary people (λαός, 65:2). By citing this response, Paul explains Israel’s unbelief as willful disobedience. Not a disobedience for accepting Gentiles into the people of God;<sup>82</sup> but a christological disobedience in rejecting Jesus as their Messiah.<sup>83</sup> By fronting the phrase “all day long” Paul emphasizes God’s abiding love for Israel in the present<sup>84</sup> and demonstrates that the problem is not with God’s faithfulness, but with Israel’s.

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<sup>80</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 687.

<sup>81</sup>Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah*, 229–30.

<sup>82</sup>Contra Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 311–12; Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, 333.

<sup>83</sup>Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah*, 230–31.

<sup>84</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 667.

Therefore, Paul again understands God’s ways with Israel in the past as recapitulated in the present. As a mystery, Paul discerns a pattern in Israel’s history which is now being repeated. Israel has experienced a judgment whereby the nations have been shown favor by God; however, this mercy to the Gentiles will serve to provoke Israel to jealousy and lead them back to the Lord.

### **Romans 11:11–15**

The dual purpose of Israel’s provocation and the calling of the Gentiles is explicitly spelled out in 11:11–15. Paul resumes his diatribe style to ward off any false conclusions that Israel’s hardening is permanent (cf. 11:7–10).<sup>85</sup> Consequently, he asks, “Israel has not stumbled in order that they should fall, have they?” (v. 11a)? Paul emphatically responds, “By no means” (μη γένοιτο)! Picking up again the athletic metaphor (9:31; 10:4; 11:7), Paul counters the notion that ethnic Israel has been permanently disqualified from the race. Rather (ἀλλά), Israel’s stumbling has served a two-fold purpose.<sup>86</sup> First, it is by means of their transgression<sup>87</sup> that salvation has come to the Gentiles (v. 11b).<sup>88</sup> Second, the salvation of the Gentiles serves the purpose (εἰς) of

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<sup>85</sup>Most scholars agree that Paul’s question concerns whether Israel’s plight is permanent. See Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 653; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:553; James W. Aageson, “Scripture and Structure in the Development of the Argument in Romans 9–11,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1986): 282; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 611; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 680; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 427; Moo, *Romans*, 703; Schreiner, *Romans*, 577. Wagner perceptively notes the significance of Paul’s “introductory performative λέγω οὖν in Romans 11:11, which stands parallel to the formula used in 11:1. The question in 11:11 is no less vital for Paul’s defense of the trustworthiness of God than is his query in 11:1. For Paul, the preservation of a ‘remnant’ apart from ‘all Israel’ is not sufficient to secure the vindication of God’s fidelity to Israel.” Wagner, *Heralds*, 266.

<sup>86</sup>In v. 11, Paul counters the idea that Israel’s stumbling had the purpose (ἵνα) of their permanent fall. Some take the as result (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 321; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:554), but the overall context retains the idea of God’s sovereign purposes being carried out. For this reason, it should bear the idea of purpose. Rightly, Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 111; Käsemann, *Romans*, 304; Moo, *Romans*, 705; Schreiner, *Romans*, 577.

<sup>87</sup>Παράπτωμα should be understood in light of Paul’s usage elsewhere, especially Rom 5:15–21. As a result, it should be translated “transgression” in reference to the sin of Adam, rather than “to fall aside.” Rightly, Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:555; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 653; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 112; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 681; Moo, *Romans*, 705; Schreiner, *Romans*, 578. Contra Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 321; Ellison, *The Mystery of Israel*, 80; Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 118; Barrett, *Romans*, 197.

<sup>88</sup>The dative construction τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι could be either causal or means. Since Paul’s

provoking Israel to jealousy (v. 11c). In this way, Paul resumes the provocation motif of Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 65 (Rom 10:18–21) to demonstrate that Israel’s current plight is not the end of their story.<sup>89</sup> However, whereas in 10:19 *παραζήλω* carried a negative connotation, here in 11:11 it becomes positive.<sup>90</sup> That is, Israel is provoked to jealous emulation of believing Gentiles.<sup>91</sup>

Paul continues to elaborate upon this two-fold purpose in 11:12 by making an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the trespass (*παράπτωμα*) and failure (*ἥττημα*) of Israel brought about the salvation of the world, *how much more* will their fullness (*πλήρωμα*) bring?<sup>92</sup> In God’s wise plan of redemption, Israel’s stumbling has become the means by which salvation has come to the Gentiles. This salvation is what the parallel phrases “riches for the world” (*πλοῦτος κόσμου*) and “riches for the Gentiles” (*πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν*) convey (cf. 2:4; 9:23; 11:33). Thus, like the hardening of Pharaoh which brought about the redemption of Israel (9:17), so Israel’s hardening and trespass has brought about the riches (*πλοῦτος*) of God’s glorious salvation upon vessels of mercy (9:22–24; cf. 10:12).

Wright identifies a close parallel between 11:11–12 and 5:15–17. In Romans 5, Paul also makes an argument from the lesser to the greater; namely, if Adam’s trespass

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emphasis in Rom 9–11 has been the unfolding mystery of God’s plan of redemption for Israel, this construction should be viewed as a dative of means. Rightly Schreiner, *Romans*, 577. Contra Moo, *Romans*, 705.

<sup>89</sup>Seifrid, “Romans,” 672; J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 182.

<sup>90</sup>Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 96, 113, 155–56; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 680.

<sup>91</sup>Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 158–59.

<sup>92</sup>It’s possible that *ἥττημα* could mean diminution rather than defeat or failure, see Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Röm 6–11*, vol. 2, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Zurich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 243; Barrett, *Romans*, 198; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 680. However, Schreiner is correct when he says, “Insisting that *ἥττημα* (defeat) is a precise antonym to *πλήρωμα* (fullness) also ignores that it functions in parallelism with *παράπτωμα* (transgression), and since this latter word refers to the sin of Israel, it is likely—given the usual meaning of the word *ἥττημα* (defeat)—that this term does the same” (Schreiner, *Romans*, 580). See also Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:557; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 611; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 114; Jewett, *Romans*, 676; Moo, *Romans*, 706.

(παράπτωμα) brought the reign of death, how much more will those who receive the gift of righteousness in Christ reign in life?<sup>93</sup> While the grammatical construction is similar, the comparison is not exactly the same. In 11:11, Paul shows the *positive* benefits from Israel's trespass, whereas in Romans 5:15 and 17 he extrapolates the *negative* consequences of Adam's transgression. Nevertheless, the use of παράπτωμα in both verses does make an important theological connection: Israel, like the rest of humanity, is in Adam (5:12). In fact, Israel is a corporate Adam, and in their case where sin abounded in the rejection of Christ; the riches of God's grace have abounded all the more to the Gentiles (cf. 5:20).<sup>94</sup>

Consequently, if such riches have come to the Gentiles because of Israel's rejection of the gospel, how much more blessing will come from Israel's fullness? It is here that Paul begins to tease out Israel's future salvation as prefigured in Deuteronomy 32. The dispensing of God's riches of salvation upon the Gentiles is the means by which God is provoking Israel to jealous emulation (Rom 11:11); a jealousy anticipating Israel's "fullness" (πλήρωμα, v. 12). Paul's use of "fullness" (πλήρωμα) should be understood in the same way it is used in 11:25 when he speaks of the full number of the elect among the Gentiles entering the people of God.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, Paul anticipates an even greater blessing to be realized with the salvation of the full number of Israel; namely the renewal of the world.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 681.

<sup>94</sup>For more on Israel as a corporate Adam, see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 18–40; Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 52–58; Sears, *Heirs of Promise*, 14–17.

<sup>95</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:79; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:558; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 611; Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 681; Schreiner, *Romans*, 581. Moo not only understands πλήρωμα in a quantitative sense, but also a qualitative. He states, "We need not choose between the qualitative and quantitative options. While pleroma probably has a qualitative denotation—'fullness'—the context and the parallel with v. 25 suggests that this 'fullness' is attained through a numerical process." Moo, *Romans*, 707–8.

<sup>96</sup>Rightly Wagner, *Heralds*, 266–67. Contra Murray who states, "The fulness of Israel will involve for the Gentiles a much greater enjoyment of gospel blessing than that occasioned by Israel's unbelief. Thus there awaits the Gentiles, in their distinctive identity as such, gospel blessing far surpassing anything experienced during the period of Israel's apostasy, and this unprecedented enrichment will be

Paul will go on to express what this greater blessing entails in 11:15, but first he briefly deviates from his main argument to explain how he views his ministry to the Gentiles as a catalyst for Israel's salvation (vv. 13–14).<sup>97</sup> Speaking directly to the Gentiles in Rome (ὕμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, v. 13a), Paul reminds them yet again of his distinct calling as an apostle to the Gentiles (1:5; cf. 15:16). As most commentators note, Paul's aim in glorifying his ministry (v. 13b) speaks of his diligence to complete the ministry which he has been entrusted by God.<sup>98</sup> Certainly, Paul doesn't see the Gentiles merely as a means to an end (cf. v. 12), but he does perceive the unique role of the Gentile mission within God's redemptive plan. Paul wants his Gentile audience to comprehend the great mercy God has bestowed upon them by calling them to salvation (cf. 11:30–32). Far be it that the Gentiles see themselves as the replacement of Israel; rather, they have been incorporated into the new Israel in Christ. Yet, this inclusion of the Gentiles is precisely what will make ethnic Israel jealous.<sup>99</sup> Thus, on this basis, Paul wants his Gentile ministry to succeed, because in doing so it may (πῶς) provoke his flesh (σάρξ) to jealousy and save some of them (σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν; v. 14).<sup>100</sup>

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occasioned by the conversion of Israel on a scale commensurate with that of their earlier disobedience. We are not informed at this point what this unprecedented blessing will be. But in view of the thought governing the context, namely, the conversion of the Gentiles and then that of Israel, we should expect that the enlarged blessing would be the expansion of the success attending the gospel and of the kingdom of God." Murray, *Romans*, 2:79.

<sup>97</sup>Cranfield notes that δὲ signals a slight shift in thought (Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:558). See also Moo, *Romans*, 708–9.

<sup>98</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:80; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:560; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 656; Schreiner, *Romans*, 579.

<sup>99</sup>Contra Mark Nanos who claims that it's not the salvation of the Gentiles that actually provokes Israel's to jealousy, but Paul's ministry to the Gentiles which signals the hope of Israel has come in Christ. Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 248–50. Nanos wrongly separates salvation in Christ from the promises of Israel. The salvation of the Gentiles means they are united to the Christ and recipients of Israel's promises.

<sup>100</sup>Munck suggests that τινὰς should be understood as a large number rather than a small few. Consequently he contends that Paul believed his ministry would succeed in bringing about the full salvation of Israel (Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 123–24). However, this reading is unlikely for two reasons. First, while τινὰς can refer to many (3:3; 11:17), contextual markers accompany such an understanding, markers which are absent in 11:14. Second, the presence of πῶς suggests a level of uncertainty tempering Paul's expectations for the salvation of Israel in his life time. Rightly, Longenecker, *Romans*, 887; Moo, *Romans*, 710n667.

But how can Paul speak of Israel's provocation in such positive terms when in 10:19 is spoke of Israel's provocation to anger? Some suggest Paul doesn't present Israel's provocation positively for salvation. Rather, the jealousy motif as drawn from Deuteronomy 32 is a mark of Israel's hardening.<sup>101</sup> While this interpretation is initially attractive because of its consistency, it's difficult not to read the *καὶ* as making a direct correspondence between Israel's jealousy and the salvation of the "some."<sup>102</sup> Therefore, Bell is on target when he argues that Paul is tapping into the larger narrative of Deuteronomy 32 which anticipates Israel's final restoration. In this way, it is "mistaken to drive a wedge between the salvation of Israel through the Gentile mission and the salvation of Israel at the parousia."<sup>103</sup> Thus Paul envisions two parts to Israel's restoration based on Deuteronomy 32. In other words, Paul understands that Israel's provocation to anger presupposes the salvation of the Gentiles (10:18–21), and their salvation will produce positive jealousy among the Jewish remnant whereby "some" will be saved.

However, a minority of scholars see Paul's explanation of his ministry as evidence that he does not anticipate a future eschatological salvation of Israel. Merkle states, "Does Paul's hope of provoking the Jews to jealousy imply a future mass conversion? The answer to this question must be 'no' since Paul uses his own ministry as the means of provocation. That is, Paul's hope for the salvation of 'some of them' comes through his own ministry."<sup>104</sup> Along the same lines, Merkle contends that Paul's summary statement in 11:30–31 shows that his emphasis throughout Romans 11 is on the

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<sup>101</sup>Baker, "Paul and the Salvation of Israel," 474–77, 484.

<sup>102</sup>Rightly Kruse, *Romans*, 431–32; Schreiner, *Romans*, 579n13.

<sup>103</sup>Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 165.

<sup>104</sup>Merkle, "Romans 11," 714. See also Benjamin L. Merkle, "A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion View," in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 173–74, 178–80. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1945), 700–702; Zoccali, "Interpretations of Romans 11.26," 305.

present (i.e., the threefold “now” [νῦν]) not the future.<sup>105</sup>

The difficulty with Merkle’s interpretation is threefold. First, it asserts too narrow an understanding of Paul’s remnant theology, merely seeing a remnant in every age being saved.<sup>106</sup> But the remnant serves as a pledge of hope for the restoration of the nation.<sup>107</sup> In other words, the remnant and “the rest” (11:7) are not “coterminous entities.”<sup>108</sup> Instead, the present remnant—the some provoked to jealous emulation—promises a greater fullness among Israel in the future. Second, it does not square with the pattern of Israel’s judgment, exile, and restoration as presented in Deuteronomy 27–32. As in the Song of Moses, so Paul understands that Israel’s salvation will occur after their provocation to jealousy by the Gentiles (Deut 32:34–42).

Third, Romans 11:30–31 does not necessarily limit Paul’s focus to the present. In these verses, Paul does describe the present reversal whereby the Gentiles have now (νῦν) received mercy because of their (i.e., Israel’s) disobedience. And thus, Israel has now (νῦν) become disobedient for the sake of the Gentiles. Paul then explains that this reversal has taken place, so that (ἵνα) Israel may “now” (νῦν) receive mercy.<sup>109</sup> In light of

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<sup>105</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 714; Merkle, “A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion,” 183. Wright similarly says, “Paul envisages the salvation of ‘all Israel’ as something to be achieved within the present dispensation, rather than as something only to be accomplished in a sudden last-minute divine action, perhaps at the *parousia*.” Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1252n714.

<sup>106</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 714; Horne, “The Meaning of the Phrase ‘And Thus All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Romans 11:26),” 330, 333.

<sup>107</sup>Das rightly notes, “Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the remnant within Israel was always a sign of hope for Israel as a whole (Gen 7:23; 2 Kgs 19:30–31; Isa 11:11–12, 16; 37:31–32; Mic 2:12; 4:7; 5:7–8; Zech 8:12).” A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews*, Library of Pauline Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 108. So also Longenecker who states, “*The gathering of the remnant is not the final goal of God; rather it is the re-adoption and salvation of all Israel.* The remnant will become the totality. It is therefore a productive number, not an unchangeable minority.” Longenecker, “Remnant Theology,” 252.

<sup>108</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 273.

<sup>109</sup>NA<sup>28</sup> notes a textual variant in 11:31 where the νῦν is replaced by ὑστερον or it is sometimes omitted altogether. While either one of these variants would strengthen the view espoused here, as most scholars contend, it is best to see the νῦν as original to Paul. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:585; Käsemann, *Romans*, 316; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 628; Jewett, *Romans*, 694; Seifrid, “Romans,” 677; Moo, *Romans*, 727n760; Schreiner, *Romans*, 612.



Paul’s entire argument, this “now” should be understood salvation-historically.<sup>110</sup> In other words, Israel’s state of unbelief and disobedience “now” (νῦν) places them in position to receive mercy from God.<sup>111</sup> In this way, 11:30–31 merely reiterates 11:11–15 anticipating a greater reality of blessing to come when Israel is shown mercy. The immediate context of 11:11–12 presupposes that Paul expects something greater than what is currently transpiring within Israel. For these reasons, the argument cannot be sustained that Paul merely perceives Israel’s salvation in terms of a small remnant saved in every generation.

Furthermore, verse 15 confirms that Paul awaits a greater reception of Israelites in the future. Commentators have rightly identified the parallels between verses 12 and 15, whereby the reconciliation of the world (v. 15a) corresponds with the dispensing of God’s riches of salvation upon the Gentiles (v. 12a).<sup>112</sup> Likewise, Israel’s reception (v. 15b) corresponds with their “fullness” (v. 12b). Consequently, both verses argue from the lesser to the greater signaling a superior salvation among Israel than what is presently occurring among the “some” (v. 14). As important as this observation is, two other features in verse 15 cannot be overlooked.

First, Paul presents verse 15 as an explanation (γάρ) of what he said in verses 13–14 and further develops his argument that Israel will experience a fullness of salvation in the future. He does so by describing Israel’s plight christologically.<sup>113</sup> Whereas verse 12 described Israel’s plight from the perspective of their own sinful disobedience in Adam; verse 15 describes Israel in terms of their relationship to the Christ according to the flesh (σάρξ; 9:5; 11:14). Specifically, Paul says “If Israel’s rejection (ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν) brings the reconciliation (καταλλαγή) of the world, then

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<sup>110</sup>For a defense of this interpretation of 11:30-31, see Moo, *Romans*, 747–54; Schreiner, *Romans*, 612.

<sup>111</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 750.

<sup>112</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 580.

<sup>113</sup>Contra Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 111–12.

what will their reception (ἡ πρόσλημις) mean except life from the dead” (v. 15).<sup>114</sup> As Wright has observed, this verse finds a striking parallel in Romans 5:10.<sup>115</sup> There Paul sees the rejection of Christ (through his death) accomplishing reconciliation (καταλλάσσω), and his acceptance (resurrection) achieving eschatological salvation. Significantly, Paul will use crucifixion language again to describe the breaking off of Israel in 11:21 (cf. 8:32). Kirk also notes, “In both instances, ‘God’s not sparing’ leads to the salvation of others.”<sup>116</sup> This observation affirms Paul’s perception of the mystery of Christ as the template or pattern for discerning God’s redemptive plan. Since Christ is Israel’s representative, whereby Israel’s life is summed up in him, it is no surprise that Paul would then liken Israel’s story to that of Christ’s.

Yet, Wright sees this parallel with 5:10 as evidence that Israel’s reception is only “like” a resurrection. Therefore, the phrase “life from the dead” is not talking about the general resurrection, but the conversion of Jewish Christians.<sup>117</sup> In support of this view, Wright turns to Romans 4:17 suggesting that the phrase “God who makes the dead alive” refers to the Jews “being raised from their ‘dead’ state within Abraham’s family.”<sup>118</sup> Whereas the second phrase, “and calls things that are non-existent into being,”

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<sup>114</sup>Most scholars rightly understand the genitive αὐτῶν as an objective genitive expressing God’s rejection of Israel. See Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 699–700; Murray, *Romans*, 2:81; Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 126; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:652; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 682; Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 182–84; Eckhard Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*, vol. 2, Historisch Theologische Auslegung (Witten: SCM R.Brockhaus, 2016), 454–55; Moo, *Romans*, 711; Schreiner, *Romans*, 580. Contra Donaldson, “Riches for the Gentiles,” 93n50; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 612; Jewett, *Romans*, 680–81.

<sup>115</sup>Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 682. See also Kirk who states, “What commentators have too often frequently missed is that God’s hand in bringing life out of death superintends the outcome of both. Just as God (the Father) brought resurrection life to Jesus, so too will he bring resurrection life to Israel. The resurrection of Jesus is giving Paul a lens through which to view Israel’s present story: it is a death, but just because it is a death occurring within a cosmic drama that turns on the death and resurrection of Christ, Israel’s death itself is a subplot that must turn from death to life.” Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 185.

<sup>116</sup>Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 187.

<sup>117</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1199–1200. See also Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 700–702; Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 190.

<sup>118</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1200.

speaks of the salvation of the Gentiles.<sup>119</sup> Some commentators agree that the second phrase may look ahead to the salvation of the nations;<sup>120</sup> however, Wright's interpretation of the former phrase in reference to the Jews is not as obvious.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, even if Wright's interpretation is correct, it doesn't necessarily negate any notion of a physical resurrection. After all, Paul will later compare Abraham's faith in the God who raises the dead with the faith of those who believe in the one who raised Christ from the dead (v. 24–25). The themes of resurrection in Romans 4 speak of physical resurrection, not merely spiritual.

Another piece of evidence for Wright is Romans 6 which speaks of the new life of the believer as being “dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ” (v. 11). This text certainly communicates the believers' newness of life in Christ having already experienced the power of Christ's resurrection. However, this is the experience of all believers, both Jew and Gentile. Yet, in 11:15, when Paul speaks of Israel's acceptance, he seems to anticipate something far greater in scope to emerge. Furthermore, in 6:5 Paul may also have the future in mind, grounding the present reality of resurrected life in the certain future of the physical resurrection at the end of the age.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, even if Romans 6 only speaks of spiritual life in the present, Paul most often uses the phrase “from the dead” to speak of physical resurrection (Rom 4:24; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11; 10:7, 9; 1

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<sup>119</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1200.

<sup>120</sup>Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 386; Moo, *Romans*, 306–8.

<sup>121</sup>Jewett remarks on this phrase, “While interpreters have drawn profound connections within the context of Christian theology between creation and justification, between conversion and creation, the latter with particular reference to the inclusion of converted Gentiles, there is no indication in the text itself that Paul wishes to do more than provide a widely acceptable framework for interpreting the story of the seemingly impossible progeny from ‘the deadness of Sarah's womb’ (4:19).” Jewett, *Romans*, 334.

<sup>122</sup>Käsemann, *Romans*, 169; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 318; Jewett, *Romans*, 401–2; Schnabel, *Römer*, 2:44; Moo, *Romans*, 395. However, this point is debated. Some see ἐσόμεθα as a logical future rather than a genuine future. See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 435; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 539; Schreiner, *Romans*, 314. A similar discussion can be had regarding the future in Rom 6:8.

Cor 15:12, 20; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Phil. 3:11; Col 1:18; 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Tim 2:8).<sup>123</sup>

Beyond these reasons, there's another difficulty with Wright's interpretation of the phrase "life from the dead" in Romans 11:15, and it has to do with the conclusion he draws from the parallel in 5:10. In 5:10, Wright correctly notes that Paul argues from the lesser to the greater showing a contrast between the present reconciliation accomplished in Christ's death and the future salvation secured by Christ's life (i.e., resurrection).<sup>124</sup> Yet, when he interprets 11:15, he abandons the eschatological parallel in 5:10, opting to spiritualize the phrase "life from the dead." If the texts are truly parallel, Israel's rejection corresponds with Jesus's death resulting in reconciliation; and also, Israel's acceptance corresponds with Jesus's resurrection resulting in eschatological salvation.

Furthermore, Wright also breaks the symmetry of 11:15 by interpreting the phrase "life from the dead" *introspectively* of Israel as describing the conversion of the "some" (v. 14). The phrase "life from the dead" is what Israel's acceptance *will bring about*. In this way, Israel's rejection by God *brings* reconciliation to the world and Israel's acceptance by God *brings* the resurrection of the dead. In other words, "life from the dead" corresponds with Israel's acceptance, but it goes beyond Israel to include the renewal of the entire creation (8:18–25). It is in this way, that Israel's story of plight to restoration, mirrors Christ's death and resurrection.

If this interpretation is correct, a question to be answered is how does verse 14 fit into Paul's argument? Specifically, why does Paul only anticipate Israel's provocation to result in the salvation of "some" (v. 14)? Paul explains his ministry in light of the present hardening and provocation of Israel. At the present time, Paul understands God's mercy is primarily shown to the Gentiles, while only *some*—a remnant—among the Jews will be saved. Yet, as patterned in Deuteronomy and Isaiah, it is the "some" which

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<sup>123</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 582.

<sup>124</sup>Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 519.

anticipates Israel's fullness and reception in the future.<sup>125</sup> Paul will develop this theme of Israel's future restoration with the imagery of the olive tree (vv. 16–24) and contend that the reconstituted Israel in Christ ensures ethnic Israel's full incorporation with their own flesh.

### **Romans 11:16–24**

Paul's olive tree metaphor (11:16–24) beautifully illustrates how the mystery of Christ has united the people of God spanning both ages of salvation history and now includes the Gentiles. Paul's purpose is two-fold. First, to guard the Gentiles from boasting over unbelieving Jews by reminding them of their place within God's redemptive plan. Second, and related to the first, to show that since God has done the harder thing by including Gentiles among the people of God, how much easier would it be for him to restore Israel again to their own family. In so doing, Paul further supports a future restoration of ethnic Israel.<sup>126</sup>

Verse 16 serves as a transition between verses 11–15 and verses 17–14,<sup>127</sup> enabling Paul to move from the implicit remnant motif to the Jewish foundation of the new Israel. Paul makes this move by employing the metaphors of the firstfruits (*ἀπαρχή*) and the root (*ρίζα*). While the identification of these two images is highly contested the overall point Paul makes in 11:16 is largely agreed upon: the lump (*φύραμα*) and the branches (*κλάδοι*) both speak of unbelieving Israel who though hardened under God's judgment remains holy and beloved.<sup>128</sup> What exactly this means for Israel and their

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<sup>125</sup>Byrne, *Romans*, 345.

<sup>126</sup>Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 716.

<sup>127</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:563; Käsemann, *Romans*, 307; Barrett, *Romans*, 200; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 652; Moo, *Romans*, 715; Schreiner, *Romans*, 583.

<sup>128</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:564; Barrett, *Romans*, 216; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1211–12; Moo, *Romans*, 717. However, Dunn takes a unique position contending that the whole lump and the branches speaks of Abraham's spiritual seed, including believing Gentiles. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 659.

salvation depends on other factors, including the significance of the “firstfruits” and “root” imagery.

Scholars have offered several suggestions as to what these two word pictures represent: (1) both refer to the Jewish remnant;<sup>129</sup> (2) both refer to Abraham and the patriarchs;<sup>130</sup> (3) both refer to Christ;<sup>131</sup> (4) the firstfruits refer to the Jewish remnant and the root refers to the patriarchs;<sup>132</sup> or (5) the firstfruits refer to the Jewish remnant and the root refers to Christ.<sup>133</sup> A decision is difficult, because Paul’s use of these two metaphors evokes picturesque language which is not overly precise. Perhaps, Paul intends a bit of polyvalence in the metaphors to communicate multiple ideas which are prevalent throughout Romans 9–11. After all, there’s significant theological overlap between the patriarchs, Israel, the Christ, and the remnant. This is especially true when considering the “seed” motif Paul introduced in 9:7 (cf. 1:3; 9:29; 11:1). For this reason, any of these interpretations do not undermine the overall argument put forth here.

Nevertheless, I lean toward interpreting the firstfruits as the believing remnant

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<sup>129</sup>Barrett, *Romans*, 200; Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel,” 51.

<sup>130</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:85; Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 127; Käsemann, *Romans*, 308; Otfried Hofius, “Das Evangelium und Israel: Erwägungen zu Römer 9–11,” in *Paulusstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 186; Moo, *Romans*, 717–18; Schreiner, *Romans*, 584; James M. Hamilton Jr. and Fred G. Zaspel, “A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 113. Barclay takes a nuanced view that the root is “not *the patriarchs themselves*, but *the calling or election of God* that constituted them as patriarchs, and thereby constituted Israel as a whole. The root is the unconditioned favor of God on which Israel’s existence depends. John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 550. It is unclear what Barclay thinks about the firstfruits.

<sup>131</sup>Svetlana Khobnya, “‘The Root’ in Paul’s Olive Tree Metaphor (Romans 11:16–24),” *Tyndale Bulletin* 64, no. 2 (2013): 257–73.

<sup>132</sup>Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 151; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:564; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 614; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 123; Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 387; Schnabel, *Römer*, 2:460–62; Michael J. Vlach, “A Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, ed. Andrew D. Naselli and Jared Compton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 44–45. Wright has revised his interpretation seeing the firstfruits as the remnant and the root as the patriarchs. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1212.

<sup>133</sup>Wright at one time held this view (Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 683), but he now interprets the root as the patriarchs. See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1212.

of Israel and the root as Christ.<sup>134</sup> There are several reasons for taking this interpretation. First, as it concerns the firstfruits, the imagery is likely drawn from Numbers 15:20 where the initial offering of dough was presented to the Lord whereby the rest of the batch would be deemed holy.<sup>135</sup> The same idea is present when Moses commands Israel to offer to the Lord the firstfruits of the harvest (Exod 22:29). Consequently, “the sacrifice of the part effected the blessedness of the whole.”<sup>136</sup> Paul sometimes uses this metaphor to speak of the first converts in a particular region. These firstfruits of the gospel anticipate a greater harvest to come (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13). Similarly, Paul speaks of Christ as the firstfruits of the resurrection. Christ serves as a forerunner of believers’ eschatological resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23). Another usage concerns the firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom 8:23), where the gift of the Spirit to believers guarantees the full inheritance to come at the end of the age. Clearly each of these usages serves to illustrate that the part anticipates the greater blessing. Considering that Paul has just spoken of the conversion of “some” (i.e., the remnant) it is most natural to see these initial converts among the Jews as the firstfruits of Israel’s fullness.<sup>137</sup>

Second, the dominance of the remnant motif in Paul’s argument (9:24–29; 10:18–21; 11:1–15) makes it difficult to see how Paul could subtly switch to speak of the patriarchs without any indication he’s done so.<sup>138</sup> This is especially true since he’s already spoken of the provocation of the remnant as anticipatory of Israel’s fullness

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<sup>134</sup>It’s certainly possible that Paul did not intend to communicate different, but complementary ideas. If both of these images are parallel, the interpretation that both are a reference to Christ seems to be the most promising option. See Khobnya, “Paul’s Olive Tree Metaphor,” 257–73.

<sup>135</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 681–82; Khobnya, “Paul’s Olive Tree Metaphor,” 262.

<sup>136</sup>Gary A. Burge, “Firstfruits, Down Payment,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 300.

<sup>137</sup>Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel,” 51.

<sup>138</sup>Though the reference to the patriarchs in 11:28 certainly contributes to Paul’s overall argument, it’s too far removed from 11:16 to outweigh the themes found in the immediate context. Rightly Ellison, *The Mystery of Israel*, 86; Khobnya, “Paul’s Olive Tree Metaphor,” 270.

(11:12–15). As Hafemann remarks,

Realizing that his ministry will thus have an effect on only a small number of Jews, Paul is not forgetting the future of his people or the final redemption of the creation. Just the opposite! For Paul knows that the remnant is God's "down payment" on the future salvation of his people and the final fulfillment of God's promises to his creation.<sup>139</sup>

Therefore, the context is ripe for understanding the remnant as the firstfruits, which sanctifies the rest of Israel. However, the extension of holiness to the whole of Israel does not mean every Israelite is saved. Rather, it reaffirms God's preservation of the nation whereby he will keep his saving promises. This interpretation also fits well with the olive tree analogy and corresponds to the natural branches that were not broken off due to unbelief (v. 17).<sup>140</sup>

Third, concerning the root metaphor, Paul later explicitly identifies Jesus as the root (ἡ ρίζα; Rom 15:12).<sup>141</sup> Paul cites from Isaiah 11:10 to show that Christ is the promised Davidic king who has arisen to rule over the nations in fulfillment of God's promises to Israel (see ch. 3). Interpreting this text christologically, Paul exhorts the church in Rome to live in unity as the people of God understanding how God has called them to salvation—both Jew and Gentile—in Christ. As Paul often does in his letters, the parenetic sections are applications of previous theological ground he has laid. If this is the case in Romans 15, the only other place the idea of the root has been established is in Romans 11. This is substantial evidence that the olive tree metaphor presents both Jew and Gentiles united to the nourishing root of Christ (11:17).

Furthermore, it's important to keep in mind that throughout Romans 9–11 Paul has explained Israel's plight and restoration through a christological lens. Therefore,

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<sup>139</sup>Hafemann, "The Salvation of Israel," 51.

<sup>140</sup>Note that Paul says, only some of the branches were broken off (v. 17). The remaining branches—among whom believing Gentiles are also grafted into—serve as a pledge of Israel's future grafting in to the people of God.

<sup>141</sup>Khobnya, "Paul's Olive Tree Metaphor," 265–67.



though Christ is not explicitly mentioned in these verses, one should not quickly abandon a christological reference.<sup>142</sup> As a mystery, Paul has shown how the Christ event unveils God's plan of redemption hidden in the prophetic Scriptures: particularly Deuteronomy and Isaiah. Thus, Christ is the *telos* of which the law and prophets have culminated (10:4; cf. 3:21) and he is the one who will ultimately deliver his people according to the flesh (11:26–27; cf. 9:5). The olive tree metaphor encapsulates Paul argument that the Christ event explains the fulfilment God's redemptive purposes hidden in the past.

Specifically, by evoking the tree metaphor, Paul again taps into the Isaianic narrative which likened Israel's judgment and hardening to the chopping down of a tree so that only a stump remains (Isa 6:13a; cf. 5:1–7; 10:33–34; 11:1–10).<sup>143</sup> Yet, the remaining stump is the holy seed from whom the tree of Israel will grow again (Isa 6:13b; 11:1, 10; 27:1–6; 37:31). As Nielsen states, "The tree image made it possible to handle the paradox which is characteristic of the Isaianic message: Yahweh has planned both judgment and salvation for his people. And the image has made it possible to vary the situation. The tree must certainly be destroyed, but it can sprout again."<sup>144</sup> In like manner, Paul reappropriates the Isaianic tree metaphor to communicate Israel's judgment and future restoration in light of the coming of Christ. Just as Jesus is the foundation stone of the new Zion (Isa 8:14; 28:16; Rom 9:33; 10:11), so he is the root of the new Israel (Rom 15:13) which includes believing Jews and Gentiles.<sup>145</sup> As a result, those who do not believe in Christ are crushed (9:33) and broken off (11:20a); and those who believe are

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<sup>142</sup>Khobnya, "Paul's Olive Tree Metaphor," 267.

<sup>143</sup>In the ANE trees represent kings and kingdoms. This symbol is used throughout the OT (2 Kgs 14:9–10; Pss 1:3; 37:35–36; 52:10 (ET 52:8); 92:13–16 (ET 92:12–15); Ezek 17:1–4), particularly in Ezek 31. See also Kirsten Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOT 65 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), 144–53; John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 223; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 233.

<sup>144</sup>Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree*, 71.

<sup>145</sup>Contra Vlach, "A Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion," 45–48.

not put to shame (9:33b; 10:11) but grafted in (11:20b, 23). Thus, both Isaianic metaphors contain an element of hope: there is a new foundation for Zion to rebuild and a root remains from which Israel will grow again.

Consequently, as it concerns ethnic Israel, Jesus constitutes the inauguration of the believing remnant of Israel. Through faith in him, believers are counted as holy seed (Isa 6:13; cf. Rom 4:16; 9:6–8, 29). In the case of the believing remnant of Israel, they are the firstfruits (11:16a) which guarantees a greater harvest in the future. In the same way, Christ is the root (v. 16b) which guarantees the future restoration of his flesh (σάρξ, 9:5). Thus, 11:16 is truly transitional moving from Paul’s discussion of the remnant in 11:1–15 to the climactic expression of the people of God in Christ (11:17–24).

Having determined the two referents in 11:16, the metaphor as a whole is easier to explain. In 11:17–18, Paul reminds Gentile believers that they are unnatural branches who have been grafted into the reconstituted Israel in Christ. They now share in blessings which flow from the root (i.e., Christ), namely the promises to the patriarchs (cf. 15:8–9).<sup>146</sup> Thus, Paul is repeating what has already stated (9:24, 30; 10:4–13); yet now with the purpose of squelching Gentile pride: they do not support the root of Israel, but the root upholds them (v. 18). Jesus remains Israel’s Messiah (9:5; 11:16b) and the Gentiles do not have sole possession of him.

Paul continues by issuing a strict warning about such pride (vv. 19–22). While it is true that branches (i.e., unbelieving Israel) were cut off from the root (i.e., Christ; cf. 9:3) in order to make space for the inclusion of the Gentiles (11:19; cf. v. 11); they were cut off because of unbelief (v. 20a; cf. 3:3; 9:30–33). Essentially, Paul warns the Gentiles about falling into the same prideful unbelief of Israel (cf. 2:17–24) and to remember that

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<sup>146</sup>The phrase τῆς ῥίζης τῆς πλιότητος τῆς ἐλαίας is difficult to explain, particularly the second genitive (τῆς πλιότητος). Some suggest that it is appositional, defining the root as the richness of the olive tree (Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:567; Schreiner, *Romans*, 588). However, it’s probably qualitative describing the richness of the root which nourishes the olive tree. See Murray, *Romans*, 2:86; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 685; Moo, *Romans*, 719n719. For this reason, the root can hardly be the remnant, because the branches are grafted into the root. Contra Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel,” 52; Barrett, *Romans*, 200.

“God shows no partiality” (2:11). Therefore, they must continue in faith; otherwise, God will not spare the Gentiles either (11:21). They must not forget the gracious kindness of God which was shown toward them or they too will be cut off from Christ (v. 22; cf. 2:4).

Having given this warning, Paul returns to the fate of ethnic Israel (vv. 23–24). He reminds the Gentiles that Israel is now in the same place they once were. Consequently, if they do not continue in unbelief they too will be grafted in again (v. 23a). Significantly, Paul does not rest Israel’s hopes of restoration upon themselves, but on the power of God to grant them faith (v. 23b). In other words, Paul envisions God’s lifting of their stupor (v. 8) putting an end to their hardening. This is the “acceptance” of Israel that Paul spoke about in 11:15. Paul then concludes his olive tree metaphor by again presenting an argument from the lesser to the greater (cf. 11:12, 15). If God has done what is unnatural—namely including the nations among the new Israel in Christ—then how much more will God do the natural thing by grafting Jews into their own olive tree (v. 24).

## **Conclusion**

In this section my aim has been to explain the mystery of the OT remnant motif in light of Christ’s death and resurrection. Specifically, Israel’s story from plight to restoration, mirrors Christ’s death and resurrection. As primarily foretold in Deuteronomy and Isaiah, Israel would experience a judgment which would lead to their ultimate salvation. This judgment would dwindle Israel to a believing remnant. Coinciding with Israel’s diminution, God is calling the Gentiles by faith in order to provoke ethnic Israel to a jealous emulation, resulting in the salvation of the remnant. However, this is not Israel’s final state: the remnant of Israel serves as the firstfruits of the nation’s final restoration.

Paul climactically expresses this mystery through the olive tree metaphor which represents the new Israel reconstituted in Christ. With the Christ event, the tree of Israel

has been chopped down in judgment, but a new shoot has arisen along with a believing remnant. As in Isaiah, this remnant anticipates Israel's full inclusion within the people of God. Until that day, the Gentiles are shown mercy being brought into the tree of Israel through faith in its root, Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, even though the majority of Israel has been spiritually cut-off from Christ and the tree, they remain the people of the Messiah according to the flesh and are holy. Thus, playing out the story of their Messiah, they too will be resurrected and accepted again.

### **The Mystery of Israel's Restoration**

The final component to the mystery concerns Israel's eschatological restoration.<sup>147</sup> Consistent with an apocalyptic mystery schema, Paul discerns that God's ways in the past have been recapitulated in the present in order to give hope for the *future* (Dan 2:28–29; 12:4; 1Q27 1 I, 3–4; CD 3:12–20; 3 Bar. 16:4; T. Levi. 2:10). Not surprisingly then, this sequence of understanding God's redemptive plan can broadly characterize all of Romans 9–11. Chapter 9 primarily concerns the past, chapter 10 the present, and chapter 11 the future.<sup>148</sup> Taking in consideration the function of mystery in 11:25, Paul has had Israel's eschatological restoration in view since 9:1. As a mystery unveiled in the gospel (9:5; 9:30–10:17; 11:11–16; cf. 16:25–26), Paul interprets Israel's plight and restoration through the lens of Christ's death, resurrection and parousia. Therefore, the final component of the mystery expressed in 11:26–27 anticipates Israel's restoration to coincide with the return of Christ. In what follows I will substantiate this

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<sup>147</sup>By labeling the view presented as Israel's eschatological restoration, I do not affirm the dispensational interpretation that Israel's restoration includes a literal fulfillment of the land, temple, and rule over the Gentiles. Contra Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 177–201; Vlach, "A Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion"). For a thorough critique of that interpretation in Romans 9–11, see Richard J. Lucas, "The Dispensational Appeal to Romans 11 and the Nature of Israel's Future," in *Progressive Covenantalism*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 235–53.

<sup>148</sup>Wright notices this same general layout of Rom 9–11; though I differ with him as to the nature of Israel's future. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1181.

claim by exploring the manner and the basis of Israel's eschatological restoration.

### **Romans 11:25–26a**

Crucial to understanding the mystery of Israel's restoration is the adverbial clause *καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται* (v. 26a). It's specifically this phrase that draws most attention from interpreters.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, the following questions must be answered: (1) how should *καὶ οὕτως* be understood; (2) who does *πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ* refer; and (3) what is the timing of their salvation?

Concerning the first question, scholars have proposed four basic options for understanding *καὶ οὕτως*. Some see the phrase temporally signifying that *after* the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, *then* all Israel will be saved.<sup>150</sup> While this rendering of the phrase is not as far-fetched as some have claimed, it remains rare.<sup>151</sup> The same could be said for the logical rendering of the phrase which presents the salvation of all Israel as the consequence of 11:25.<sup>152</sup> But as Moo points out, only four of the seventy-four occurrences of *οὕτως* in Paul carry such a meaning.<sup>153</sup> Still others assign a correlative meaning to the phrase connecting *οὕτως* with *καθώς* whereby the Scriptural citation of 11:26b–27 explicates the salvation of all Israel.<sup>154</sup>

Each of the above options are possible grammatical renderings of the phrase,

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<sup>149</sup>Moo says, "The first clause of v. 26 is the storm center in the interpretation of Romans 9–11 and of NT teaching about the Jews and their future." Moo, *Romans*, 734.

<sup>150</sup>Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 136; Barrett, *Romans*, 223; Käsemann, *Romans*, 313; Jewett, *Romans*, 701; Bird, *Romans*, 392.

<sup>151</sup>See Peter W. van der Horst who examines extra biblical examples where *οὕτως* has a temporal force. Pieter W. van der Horst, "'Only Then Will All Israel Be Saved': A Short Note on the Meaning of Καὶ Οὕτως in Romans 11:26," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 3 (2000): 521–25.

<sup>152</sup>Otfried Hofius, "'All Israel Will Be Saved': Divine Salvation and Israel's Deliverance in Romans 9–11," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 11 (1990): 35; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 622–23; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 136.

<sup>153</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 735n796.

<sup>154</sup>Peter Stuhlmacher, "Zur Interpretation von Römer 11:25–32," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad Zum 70 Geburtstag* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 559–60; Wagner, *Heralds*, 279–80.

but it is far more likely that οὕτως signals the manner by which “all Israel will be saved.”<sup>155</sup> For this reason, some contend that Paul does not place Israel’s salvation in the future but coinciding with the inclusion of the Gentiles.<sup>156</sup> However, such a reading does not square with the mysterious christological pattern of salvation detailed in 11:11–15. At the present time ethnic Israel’s rejection and hardening has resulted in the reconciliation of the Gentiles, but ethnic Israel’s fullness will result in the resurrection of the dead (v. 15). Therefore, as a mystery revealed in Christ, the manner of Israel’s salvation involves a sequential process of rejection and acceptance which necessarily places Israel’s fullness (i.e., their acceptance) in the future.<sup>157</sup> Salvation only occurs after judgment (i.e., hardening) and the complete number of the elect among the Gentiles has been grafted into the people of God. Only then, will Israel receive mercy and be grafted back into their own olive tree (v. 23). In this way, Israel’s salvation corresponds with the end of the age and the renewal of the cosmos (v. 15).

Having explained the sequential manner of Israel’s restoration, it naturally follows that πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ must refer to the whole of ethnic Israel and thus cannot refer to: spiritual Israel made up of believing Jews and Gentiles (i.e., the church) or the believing Jewish remnant throughout history.<sup>158</sup> Yet there are further reasons to reject each of these interpretations, especially in light of the function of Paul’s mystery schema.

Those who identify πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ as the redefined people of God in the church are correct that Paul presents the church as the new or true Israel.<sup>159</sup> After all, Paul has

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<sup>155</sup>Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 335; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:576; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 681; Byrne, *Romans*, 354; Moo, *Romans*, 735; Schreiner, *Romans*, 602.

<sup>156</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1241; Merkle, “A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion,” 187–88.

<sup>157</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 701; Moo, *Romans*, 735; Schreiner, *Romans*, 602.

<sup>158</sup>I’ve provided a fuller explanation of the various interpretations in ch. 1. Also see Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 289–313.

<sup>159</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1241–52; Charles Lee Irons, “Paul’s Theology of Israel’s Future: A Non-Millennial Interpretation of Romans 11,” *Reformation and Revival* 6, no. 2 (1997):

redefined the identity of a true Jew (2:28–29) and affirmed that it is spiritual Israel who will inherit the promises of God, not Israel according to the flesh (9:6–8; cf. 1 Cor 10:18). Furthermore, as Wright perceptively notes this redefinition of the people of God is central to Paul’s argument, whereby all God’s promises are fulfilled for those in Christ.<sup>160</sup>

However, though I theologially agree that Paul presents the church as the new or true Israel, there are several reasons why such a meaning is not intended in Romans 11:26. First, if Paul’s climactic answer to the problem of Israel’s unbelief is simply that Israel has been redefined, this conclusion would hardly temper Gentile boasting over the Jews (11:18–22, 25).<sup>161</sup> Second, it would introduce a new meaning to how Paul has used the title “Israel” throughout chapters 9–11. As Das cogently states, “While the apostle certainly does apply the term ‘Israel’ with different senses through Romans 9–11, he never uses the term in a way that includes Gentiles. By ‘Israel’ he always means either the Jewish people as an entire group or a believing remnant within that people.”<sup>162</sup>

Third, such a redefinition of Israel unexpectedly introduces a new meaning to the term distinct from how it is used in 11:25. In 11:25 Paul states that a partial hardening has come upon ethnic Israel, clearly distinguishing ethnic Israel from the Gentiles. This distinction is maintained in 11:28–31 as Paul precisely identifies ethnic Israel as God’s “enemies” for the sake of the Gentiles (v. 28) and describes Israel’s disobedience in relationship to the mercy given to the Gentiles (vv. 30–31).<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, Paul’s citation of Isaiah 59:20 supports an ethnic meaning to the term with the reference to Jacob (Rom 11:26; cf. Gen 32:28; Isa 45:4).

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<sup>160</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 924–25.

122. <sup>161</sup>Moo, *Romans*, 736; Hamilton Jr. and Zaspel, “A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion,”

<sup>162</sup>Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 706. See also Moo, *Romans*, 734–35.

<sup>163</sup>Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 107; Schreiner, *Romans*, 598.

Finally, a view which defines *πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ* as the church and true Israel fails to adequately account for how the mystery of Christ functions to unveil the pattern of God's redemptive plan for ethnic Israel. From the outset, Paul has determined to explain Israel's plight in light their corporate election and flesh relationship to Christ (9:1–5). Specifically, he perceives that even though the nation is spiritually alienated from the Messiah (9:3, 32–33; 10:1; 11:15), they remain the people of the Messiah (9:5; 11:1–2, 28–29). And this reality continues to have significance for understanding their current plight and future restoration. The mystery of Christ reveals that just as Israel's history of rejection and restoration prefigured the Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection), so now Christ's death and resurrection serves as the pattern or paradigm for understanding the fate of the nation. In other words, as a revealed mystery, there remains a corporate solidarity between the nation of Israel and the Christ (see ch. 4). For this reason, Paul plays up Israel's corporate election and flesh relationship with the Christ to explain the mystery of God's redemptive purposes for Israel (9:1–5; 11:28–29). Thus, like Christ, ethnic Israel has been rejected for the sake of the world, but they will also be accepted again ushering in the new creation (11:15). For these reasons, it's unlikely that Paul would so subtly redefine the referent for Israel. Instead, 11:25–26 serves as summary of the unveiled mystery of Christ concerning the salvation of “all Israel,” Christ's people according to the flesh.

However, there is another view which seeks to avoid these interpretive challenges by understanding *πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ* as the Jewish remnant saved throughout history.<sup>164</sup> Thus, this view rightly maintains Paul's usage of the term “Israel” does speak of ethnic Israel. However, this position still suffers from some of the same deficiencies of the previous position. It fails to account for how the mystery of Christ functions to explain Israel's eschatological hope. In fact, Merkle emphatically states that Paul is

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<sup>164</sup>Merkle, “A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion,” 167–69; 194–97.



merely concerned with the “now” and not the future.<sup>165</sup> Merkle is correct that “now at the present time there is a remnant according to God’s gracious election” (11:5), but he misunderstands how Paul’s remnant theology affects the argument.<sup>166</sup> As a mystery, Paul presents God’s past dealings with the remnant as recapitulated at the present time. Thus, in light of the apocalyptic event of Christ, Israel’s historical exile and hope of restoration has been resituated to explain the present spiritual exile and hope of restoration. As in Deuteronomy 27–32 and Isaiah 9–11 (cf. Rom 10:18–21; 15:9–12) the remnant represents hope for restoration after judgment. This narrative poses serious challenges to the view that Israel’s restoration hope only involves a tiny remnant.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, just as the remnant signaled the hope of the restoration of “all Israel” in the past, so “now” the remnant is a seed of hope for the restoration “all Israel” in the future.

Another argument put forth to defend the believing remnant view is that the hardening of Israel corresponds to that of Pharaoh’s hardening (9:17–18). Since the hardening of Pharaoh was permanent, so God’s hardening of Israel is permanent.<sup>168</sup> On the surface this argument is partially correct in seeing the parallel between Pharaoh and Israel. Furthermore, Paul nowhere indicates that God’s hardening is reversible (9:18, 21–23; 11:7–10). One is either a recipient of God’s merciful salvation or hardened by him (9:18); either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath (vv. 21–23). One is among the elect or they are hardened (11:7–10). Therefore, on an individual basis it is true that the

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<sup>165</sup>Merkle, “Romans 11,” 713.

<sup>166</sup>Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 108.

<sup>167</sup>It is precisely this point that Merkle objects by suggesting that the remnant does not promise a subsequent restoration. However, the remnant motif must be understood in light of its two-fold meaning of judgment and restoration. While it may not be clear within the Isaianic narrative that the remnant specifically entails a future mass conversation, it does hold out hope that God’s judgment upon Israel will not last forever and the nation will then be restored. This two-fold pattern of judgment then restoration is the same pattern Paul upholds as he speaks of Israel’s present judgment/hardening. To insist that Israel’s restoration only involves a remnant throughout history interrupts the prophetic expectation of that judgment being lifted before the nations is restored. Contra Merkle, “A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion,” 180–83.

<sup>168</sup>Zoccali, “Interpretations of Romans 11.26,” 307.

hardening is not reversed. God did not spare the natural branches who were broken off from the people of God (v. 21).

Yet, Paul's analogy with Pharaoh was not intended to be parallel of Israel in every sense. Paul's purpose in eliciting Pharaoh was to show how God has hardened individuals in the past to accomplish his saving purposes. When speaking of Israel corporately, it's interesting that Paul does indicate a reversal of their hardening (11:15, 24).<sup>169</sup> Corporately Israel has been rejected, but corporately Israel will one day be accepted (11:15). God has broken off ethnic Israelites from the people of God, but he is able to graft ethnic Israelites back in again (vv. 17, 23). The only way to make sense of this hardening motif is to distinguish how the hardening functions on an individual and corporate level. Individually, the hardening lasts forever; never to be reversed. Corporately, the hardening is partial and is not permanent. In this way, the believing remnant and the future generation of Israel to be saved receive mercy according to God's gracious election and were never hardened to begin with.<sup>170</sup> It also explains how Israel's pattern of rejection and acceptance is mirrored after the death and resurrection of Christ.

This conclusion naturally leads to the question of the timing of Israel's salvation. All parties agree that whatever Paul meant by *πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ*, the full salvation of ethnic Jews remains in the future from his vantage point.<sup>171</sup> For this reason, Paul's use of the future (*σωθήσεται*) hardly settles the issue. The heart of the question is over how this salvation will occur. Will it happen slowly over the course of history culminating in the full number of the elect Jews being saved; or will Israel experience God's merciful

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<sup>169</sup>A failure to understand Israel's dual status as both enemies of God and beloved has contributed to the idea that God will retroactively save every Israelite throughout history (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 335; Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 136; Hofius, "All Israel Will Be Saved," 35; Franz Mussner, "Ganz Israel wird gerettet werden (Röm 11:26)," *Kairos* 18, no. 4 (1976): 241–45; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 623; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 140–41; Jewett, *Romans*, 701–2.). However, like Pharaoh, God's hardening of individual Israelites will not be reversed.

<sup>170</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 597.

<sup>171</sup>Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1244.

salvation at a specific time in the future? Based upon Paul's sustained argument throughout Romans 9–11, that the current state of Israel is not their final state, the latter view is overwhelmingly supported.

By way of review I present the cumulative evidence for a future salvation of ethnic Israel at the end of history. First, Paul has argued that Israel's hardened state places Israel in the position to receive mercy (11:25; cf. 30–32). Like their Messiah, Israel has suffered the judgment of God's wrath and now awaits the merciful grace whereby they will be accepted again (11:11–15). Second, the believing remnant is the inauguration of Israel's restoration. Just as Christ's resurrection inaugurated the new age of the Spirit and the reception of the Spirit inaugurated the new creation to come, so the remnant are the firstfruits of Israel salvation to come (v. 16). Third, at the present time Israel's rejection by the Lord has brought salvation to the Gentiles (vv. 11–12). Only after the full number of the Gentiles enters into the people of will Israel be accepted again (v. 26). Fourth, when God accepts Israel again, this event will bring about the cosmic renewal of the world (v. 15). Therefore, for these reasons the salvation of "all Israel" is not occurring at the present time, but as an apocalyptic mystery it awaits fulfillment at the end of history when Jesus returns. It is to this last point that Paul bases Israel's future salvation in the prophet Scripture which anticipates the Lord returns (vv. 26b–27).

### **Romans 11:26b–27**

As Paul has done throughout chapters 9–11 he supports a theological conclusion with an OT quotation.<sup>172</sup> In this case, he enforces his argument for Israel's eschatological salvation with a composite citation of Isaiah 59:20–21 and 27:9.<sup>173</sup> Both

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<sup>172</sup>Paul uses the formula five times in Rom 9–11 (9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26). It's used in the letter as a whole sixteen times.

<sup>173</sup>Since the NT authors connect the idea of forgiveness of sins with the new covenant there is likely an allusion to Jer 31:31–34 as well. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:579; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 625; Seifrid, "Romans," 677; Kruse, *Romans*, 444–45; Bird, *Romans*, 393; Schreiner, *Romans*, 602.

citations closely follow the LXX, but one variation is particularly significant. The text of Isaiah 59:20a reads, “The deliverer will come *on account* [ἐνεκεν] of Zion,” whereas Paul renders the text to say, “The deliverer will come *from* [ἐκ] Zion” (Rom 11:26b). Scholars have offered several possibilities to explain this change: (1) that the change is pre-Pauline and he is quoting from a form of the LXX we no longer possess;<sup>174</sup> (2) Paul wishes to communicate that the redeemer now comes from the Jewish people (9:5);<sup>175</sup> (3) Paul has assimilated other OT texts (Deut 33:2; Isa 2:3)<sup>176</sup> or (Ps 13:7 LXX)<sup>177</sup> that present the Lord coming from Zion; (4) Paul anticipates that Christ will come from the earthly Zion (i.e., Jerusalem) out into the world;<sup>178</sup> or (4) the change reflects Paul’s anticipation that Christ will come from the heavenly Zion (Pss 9:11; 50:2; Joel 3:17; Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12; 21:2).<sup>179</sup>

Paul’s alterations of other citations (Rom 10:15 [Isa 52:7]; Rom 9:26 [Hos 1:10]) suggest that this change is also theologically motivated.<sup>180</sup> Scholars typically see Paul’s alteration as either a reaffirmation of the redeemer’s promise to deliver ethnic Israel from their new spiritual exile,<sup>181</sup> or as an emphasis upon the Gentile mission

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<sup>174</sup>Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 69 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 175–78. Stanley suggests that the change originates from the Diaspora Jewish traditions. Christopher D. Stanley, “‘The Redeemer Will Come Ἐκ Σιών’: Romans 11:26–27 Revisited,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 133–36.

<sup>175</sup>Murray, *Romans*, 2:98n54; E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 162–63; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 625; Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 110.

<sup>176</sup>Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 250–51; Christopher R. Bruno, “The Deliverer from Zion: The Source(s) and Function of Paul’s Citation in Romans 11:26–27,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 59, no. 1 (2008): 119–34.

<sup>177</sup>Barrett, *Romans*, 207; Seifrid, “Romans,” 674; Moo, *Romans*, 743n827; Schreiner, *Romans*, 603.

<sup>178</sup>J. R. Daniel Kirk, “Why Does the Deliverer Come Ἐκ Σιών (Romans 11.26)?,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 1 (2010): 81–99.

<sup>179</sup>Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:578; Käsemann, *Romans*, 314; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 682; Jewett, *Romans*, 704; Moo, *Romans*, 742–43; Bird, *Romans*, 393; Schreiner, *Romans*, 603.

<sup>180</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 285–86; Seifrid, “Romans,” 674.

<sup>181</sup>As Moo states, “The deliver cannot come ‘to Zion’ to rescue Israel because Israel is not

reiterating how the Gentiles would be saved along with the Jews.<sup>182</sup>

Those who take the position that Paul emphasizes the Gentile mission find support for this reading in Isaiah 2:3. In this passage, the prophet anticipates the day (i.e., the latter-days) when God's mountain will be established as the highest of all mountains (v. 2). Like Daniel 2:44–45, the mountain of the Lord represents the establishment of God's kingdom above all other kingdoms. When this establishment occurs, Isaiah (cf. Mic 4:2) predicts that Torah will go ἐκ . . . Σιῶν (Isa 2:3) into the world. If Isaiah 2:3 accounts for Paul's alteration of 59:7 then Paul has created a "new prediction that the redeemer (not Torah) will come out from (not 'on behalf of') Zion. These are all passages which speak of the final great renewal of covenant, the overcoming of exile, and the blessing which will then flow to the nations as the result of the vindication of Israel."<sup>183</sup> Wright sees this conflation of text closely paralleling the truths of Romans 9:30–10:13. In this way, "what the Torah could not do is now done in Christ and the Spirit."<sup>184</sup> In other words, Wright understands the restoration of Israel to have already occurred in Christ's resurrection. Consequently, the gospel is now going out from Zion to the Gentiles.

Bruno makes a similar argument when he states, "For Paul, the defeat of YHWH's enemies ultimately entails the defeat and removal of sin. Thus, the prophecy of a redeemer coming to Zion and removing the sin of Jacob was fulfilled in Christ, and now the message of Christ is going out from its source among the Jews."<sup>185</sup>

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located in 'Zion': the people of Israel have rejected the deliverer who has already come, sending them into a new, spiritual exile." Moo, *Romans*, 742. See also Stanley, "'The Redeemer Will Come Ἐκ Σιῶν,'" 135; Wagner, *Heralds*, 286–98; Schreiner, *Romans*, 603; Seifrid, "Romans," 674.

<sup>182</sup>Reidar Hvalvik, "A 'Sonderweg' for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25-27," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 93; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1250–51; Bruno, "The Deliverer from Zion," 128; Merkle, "A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion," 198.

<sup>183</sup>Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 250.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>Bruno, "The Deliverer from Zion," 128.

Consequently, as Isaiah 2:3 anticipates, the nations are flowing to the restored Zion. Paul's conflation of texts signals this salvation-historical shift: the redeemer has already come to Zion, and now is going out to the nations.

Despite the initial strength of this argument there are several reasons for rejecting it. First, while this position correctly emphasizes the significance of Christ's death and resurrection in accomplishing redemption in the past, it overlooks the eschatological dimension of the mystery. For instance, though God has triumphed over the cosmic powers of the age through the apocalyptic event of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 5:12–21; 6:5–11), these powers still remain (6:12–13; 8:38–39), and those under their rule await final destruction (2:1–3, 6–11; 16:17–18, 20). In the same way, though the Christ event has ushered in the blessings of the new covenant,<sup>186</sup> the ratification of the covenant doesn't negate a greater future reality of these things when Christ returns (2:6–10; 8:23–25; 13:11). As a mystery, the Christ event is proleptic of the coming redemption to be wrought at the consummation of all things (Rom 2:6–10; 8:12–18; 13:11; 16:20). Therefore, Paul's allusion to Jeremiah 31:33 in Romans 11:27 does not relegate its meaning exclusively to the past. Rather, Paul envisions a future realization of the new covenant applied to ethnic Israel whereby at the appearing of Christ God will take away their sins.<sup>187</sup>

Second, the allusion to Isaiah 2:3 is not abundantly clear, nor does it appear to support the conclusions made by Wright and Bruno. Concerning this allusion, the evidence is scant, merely hanging upon the two words *ἐκ* and *Σίων* which in the text

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<sup>186</sup>These blessing include: (1) the gift of the Spirit (Rom 2:29; 5:5; 7:6; 8:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 23, 26; 14:17; 15:13, 16, 19, 30; cf. Joel 2:28–29; Isa 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26–27); (2) the circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:5, 29; cf. Jer 31:33; 32:39, 40; Ezek 11:19; 36:26, 27); (3) the ability to obey the law (Rom 2:26–27; 3:27–31; 8:1–4; 13:8–10; cf. Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:27); and (4) the forgiveness of sins whereby God's people would be justified (Rom 2:13; 3:24, 26, 28; 4:5, 6, 9 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30; 9:30; 10:10; cf. Isa 53:11; Jer 31:34; Ezek 36:25).

<sup>187</sup>Bird, *Romans*, 393.

actually separated by γὰρ.<sup>188</sup> This is an obstacle not faced by those who see an allusion to Psalm 13:7 LXX. However, even if it could be proven that Paul alludes to Isaiah 2:3, the passage as a whole may actually undermine their argument. Overlooked by both Wright and Bruno is Isaiah 2:5 which reads, “And now, O house of Jacob, let us go to the light of the Lord.” Some see these words as an invitation to Israel to join the nations who have *already* come to the Lord.<sup>189</sup> In so doing, the prophet presents the Gentiles as an example to stir Israel up to return to the Lord. If this reading is correct, it actually supports the pattern of salvation put forth by Paul in Romans 11.

Third, this reading fails to see how Paul has reappropriated the hope of Israel’s return from exile. The entire argument of Romans 9–11 presupposes that Israel has undergone a judgment of spiritual exile and hardening (9:27–29; 32–33; 10:18–21; 11:7–10). In this way, Israel is experiencing the curse of exile as foretold in Deuteronomy (Deut 27:13–26; 28:15–68, 45–57, 62, 64) and prefigured in the Babylonian captivity (e.g., Isa 1:9; 6:9–13; 8:14; 9:8–10:4; 10:20–26; 28:1–3, 22; 29:1–10). While it could be argued that Isaiah 59 and 27 don’t explicitly mention the exile motif, Paul’s cumulative use of Isaiah throughout Romans 9–11 reveals his dependence upon the prophet’s larger story of exile and restoration.<sup>190</sup> Besides, Isaiah 59 reveals that Israel’s fundamental problem is their own sin (v. 2). As in Isaiah 6:10–13, where God’s message of judgment is given because of Israel’s obduracy, so in this passage, Israel’s sins have separated them from their God and he has turned away from them showing no mercy (τοῦ μὴ ἐλεῆσαι, 59:2).

This spiritual separation (i.e., exile) is exactly the predicament Israel is now in

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<sup>188</sup>Rightly, Kirk, “Why Does the Deliverer Come ἐκ Σιών (Romans 11.26)?,” 85.

<sup>189</sup>Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39, Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 38–39; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 118–19.

<sup>190</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 287. Also, Schreiner, *Romans*, 603.

as it concerns their relationship to Christ (Rom 11:8–10). As in the days of Isaiah, so now Israel’s trespass and stumbling (11:11) have caused them to be rejected by God without mercy (9:18, 22–23; 11:15). Yet, Isaiah 59 anticipates when God’s mercy (ἐλεημοσύνη) will be shown upon them again (v. 16).<sup>191</sup> It is at this time of mercy, “the redeemer will come for the sake of Zion” (v. 20a). Similarly, Isaiah 27 follows the same basic narrative looking to the day of vindication whereby God will come again to reign: judging Israel’s enemies (vv. 1–8), forgiving Israel of their sins (vv. 9–11), and gathering those who have been scattered among the nations (vv. 12–13).<sup>192</sup> Wagner aptly notes, “In both Isaiah 24–27 and Isaiah 59–60, God’s victory is complete. Israel is finally reconciled to their God, nevermore to stray, never again to suffer the judgment of foreign oppression and exile.”<sup>193</sup>

Therefore, Paul has reappropriated the Isaianic promise of the coming redeemer in light of Israel’s current plight and hope of restoration. While the “redeemer” in Isaiah 59:20 is undoubtedly the Lord YHWH, Paul’s identification of Christ as the Lord throughout Romans (cf. 1:4; 10:13; 14:11) demands that Christ be identified as the coming “redeemer” (cf. 1 Thess 1:10).<sup>194</sup> Since ethnic Israel has been hardened, experiencing spiritual exile from Christ, they are now in a position to receive mercy once again (Rom 11:31). While it is true that Christ has already come to Zion (9:33), the

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<sup>191</sup>Wagner, *Heralds*, 289.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., 295.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid.

<sup>194</sup>Rightly, Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 337; Munck, *Christ and Israel*, 137; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:578; Käsemann, *Romans*, 314; Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 142–43; Jewett, *Romans*, 704–5; Seifrid, “Romans,” 674; Moo, *Romans*, 743; Schreiner, *Romans*, 603. Others agree that Paul identifies Jesus as the redeemer, though they deny a reference to the parousia. See Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel,” 92–95; Byrne, *Romans*, 355; Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 692; Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 110; Bruno, “The Deliverer from Zion,” 126–28; Kirk, “Why Does the Deliverer Come Ἐκ Σιών (Romans 11.26)?,” 89–92; Gathercole, “Locating Christ,” 137–38; Merkle, “A Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion,” 197–99. Contra Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 143; Stanley, “‘The Redeemer Will Come Ἐκ Σιών,’” 137–38; Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 281.



mystery of Christ still anticipates a future fulfillment when he comes from the heavenly Zion. Thus, even for Paul, ἡξεί (Rom 11:26) remains a genuine future anticipating Christ's parousia.<sup>195</sup>

Concerning this point, there is an enlightening parallel in 1 Corinthians 15:50–55 where Paul similarly explains the mystery of the resurrection. He cites Isaiah 25:8 LXX and Hosea 13:14 LXX anticipating Christ's return when death will finally be defeated. Certainly, it could be said that death was already defeated at the cross and resurrection, but as a mystery it awaits its consummation in the future. Paul's argument in Romans 9–11 functions the same way: the cross and resurrection signals the inauguration of Israel's restoration, whereby a remnant is being saved; but Israel's full restoration will not be realized until Christ's return. Only at that time will it come to pass that the redeemer "will banish ungodliness from Jacob" (11:26b) and "all Israel will be saved" (v. 26a).

Yet, does this reading suggest that Israel has a special way (*Sonderweg*) of salvation apart from faith in Christ? Some say yes, arguing that there is an intentional absence of christological language in Romans 11.<sup>196</sup> Consequently, Israel will not be saved through faith in Christ as required of the Gentiles; but Israel will be saved based on Mosaic covenant. But such an interpretation is foreign to the apostle Paul who is distraught over Israel's separation from Christ (9:1–5). He is in anguish, deeply desiring that Israel would be saved (10:1); namely, that Israel would confess Jesus as Lord and

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<sup>195</sup>Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 682; Schreiner, *Romans*, 603. Contra Hvalvik, "A 'Sonderweg' for Israel," 93; Byrne, *Romans*, 355.

<sup>196</sup>Mussner, "Ganz Israel," 245–53; Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 4; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 147–49; John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 261–62. For a refutation of this reading and the idea that Rom 9–11 is not christological, see Hvalvik, "A 'Sonderweg' for Israel," 87–107; R. David Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community: Jew and Gentile in Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 184–88; Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11*, 176–205; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1128–1449; Gathercole, "Locating Christ," 115–39.

believe God raised him from the dead (v. 9). Only then, will Israel be grafted into the one tree of the people of God (11:23). Only then, will their sins be forgiven (v. 27).

However, Paul's explanation of the mystery does suggest something unique about Israel's ultimate salvation. Israel will experience God's mercy in an analogous way to Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. In other words, ethnic Israel will be saved, "by direct revelation of God's messiah apart from human preaching."<sup>197</sup> Yet, the hope of this extraordinary event should not deter the church from preaching the gospel to the Jews (Rom 11:13–14).<sup>198</sup> Thus, whether during the present time or at their end-time conversion, Israel must still place their faith in Jesus as the risen Christ.

### Conclusion

From the outset of this chapter, I have sought to examine how Paul relates the mystery of Christ to the salvation of "all Israel" (11:26a). To this end, I first examined how Paul reappropriates the remnant motif to explain why Israel's current plight is not the end of their story (9:27–29; 11:1–7). Rather, as a mystery hidden within the prophetic writings of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Hosea, and Kings the remnant of Israel serves as a seed of hope anticipating the nation's restoration. Specifically, Paul describes the remnant as the firstfruits of the nation's restoration (11:16). That is, God's effectual calling of the remnant inaugurates Israel's eschatological restoration, just as Christ's resurrection inaugurates the restoration of the cosmos (cf. Rom 5:18–21; 8:11, 18–25, 29; 15:12)

Second, I explored how God is not only calling a remnant from Israel but has abundantly poured out the riches of his salvation toward the Gentiles to provoke Israel to

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<sup>197</sup>Susan Eastman, "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-Reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9-11," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 392. See also Schreiner who says, "The conversion of the Jews here is similar to Paul's conversion, when Jesus appeared to him; conversion comes through the coming of Jesus, and Jews are converted, as Paul was, through faith in Christ." Schreiner, *Romans*, 604.

<sup>198</sup>Rightly Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 354–55.

jealousy (9:24–27; 10:18–21; 11:11–15). While most of ethnic Israel has been cut off from the promises of Christ, this act of judgment has resulted in mercy extended to the Gentiles (11:11–12). As patterned in Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1–2, so at the present time, Israel’s judgment coincides with the saving of both a remnant and the nations (Rom 10:20–21). Yet, even more remarkable, is the fact that like their Messiah Israel too has been rejected for the reconciliation of the world (11:15; cf. 5:10). And like Christ, they too will be raised from the dead.

Nevertheless, Israel’s acceptance will not occur until Christ returns (11:26–27). As during the exile, Israel awaited deliverance from the Lord (Isa 59:20; 27:9), so now Israel awaits deliverance from spiritual exile when Christ descends from the heavenly Zion. Paul interprets Israel’s Scriptures in light of the mystery of Christ, a mystery which sees God’s ways in the past as recapitulated in the present to give hope for the future. Once the fullness of the Gentiles has entered into the olive tree, the new Israel reconstituted in Christ (11:17–24, 25b), then—and only then—will Christ return, and the nation of Israel will be awakened from their stupor and behold him for their salvation. At this time, Israel’s acceptance by God through faith in Christ will bring about “life from the dead,” the consummation of all things (11:15). In sum, the mystery of Christ serves not only as the basis of Israel’s redemption, but the *paradigm* for it (see Table 2).

Table 2. Christological paradigm for God's redemptive plan of Israel

	Judgment (Past)	Inaugurated Salvation (Present)	Consummated Salvation (Future)
Christ	Judgment of death (3:23–25; 4:24–25; 5:6–10; 6:5, 10; 8:3, 32, 34; 9:32– 33; 10:9; 14:9, 15; 15:3, 8).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (1:4; 4:24– 25; 5:18–21; 6:4, 5, 9, 10; 8:11, 29, 34; 10:9; 14:9, 11; 15:12).	Revealed righteousness and glory of Christ (2:5, 7, 10 16; 8:18; 12:19; 16:20).
Israel	Judgment of death (9:3; 32–33; 10:1; 11:7–10, 11, 12, 15, 25, 30–31).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (11:16; cf. 9:24, 27–29; 11:5, 7).	Resurrection and glory (11:12, 15, 26–27, 31).

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

While there is no shortage of treatments on Romans 9–11 and the climatic phrase, “and in this way all Israel will be saved;” few have explored how Paul’s conception of mystery impacts his argument concerning God’s redemptive plan for Israel. For this reason, the aim of this study has been to demonstrate that Paul’s mystery motif in Romans is rooted in Jewish apocalypticism reflecting a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. Specifically applied to Romans 9–11, I contend that this mystery reimagines Israel’s history around the death, resurrection, and parousia of Christ to unveil God’s redemptive plan surrounding Israel’s plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures (11:25–27; cf. 16:25–27).

#### Summary

The heart of this study began in chapter 2 which investigated mystery language within the OT and Second Temple literature. By surveying mystery language within Daniel and select texts from the DSS and Pseudepigrapha I identified a coherent Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema. Specifically, these mysteries were apocalyptic in the sense that they were mediated revelations disclosing matters in the temporal and spatial realms to reorient an individual’s perspective in light of heavenly realities. In Daniel, mysteries were apocalyptic revelations of God’s previously hidden—but now made known—wisdom concerning the establishment of his eternal kingdom in the last days (Dan 2:28; 12:4). Each mystery in Daniel unveiled God’s sovereign *plan* to judge the kingdoms of this world, restore Israel as his covenant people, and establish his eternal kingdom.

Within the DSS, God's mysteries were mediated through the Teacher of Righteous, in whom the streams of God's wisdom flowed (1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:4). Through this authorized interpreter, the mysteries of the cosmos, history, and the Scriptures are uncovered. Consistently it was shown that God's acts in the past are recapitulated in the present, thus giving insight to the future (1Q27 1 I, 3–4). God's ways with Israel of old were viewed as prefigurations of his present dealings with the elect, giving hope for eschatological deliverance (CD 3:12–20). Even the Scriptures themselves concealed God's mysteries and pertain to the present generation of the elect (1QpHab 7:10–14).

In the Pseudepigrapha, mysteries were apocalyptic revelations of God's hidden plans of eschatological redemption. Mysteries required mediated interpretations through angelic intermediaries (3 Bar. 1:4–6), dreams (Apoc. Moses 3:12), or heavenly journeys (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1:7; 1 En. 14:9–16:3; T. Levi. 3:1–4:6). Often these revelations reimagined past events or historical figures of Israel as prefigurations of eschatological realities. In this way, the hope of eschatological deliverance was offered to God's people in light of their current plight. Overall, it was shown that the OT and Jewish literature presents the mysteries of God as divine wisdom and schemes which guide the unfolding of history. Therefore, by devoting oneself to these divine mysteries, one may discern God's unfolding pattern of redemption in history, producing hope that God's covenantal promises to Israel would be realized.

In chapter 3, I turned to Paul's use of mystery in Romans showing its continuity with the Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema. Like the OT and Second Temple literature, the Pauline mystery reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God's hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. This mystery schema is initially apparent as Paul describes his gospel as “the revelation [ἀποκάλυψιν] of the mystery [μυστηρίου] hidden [σεσιγημένου] for long ages past (16:25). Significant for this study is that Paul presents the advent of Christ as an apocalyptic event whereby God's hidden wisdom is “now manifested” (φανερωθέντος δὲ

νόη, v. 26a; cf. 1:16–17). Paul effectively casts the entirety of Romans as a mystery revealed with 16:25–27 summarizing the central themes of the letter. Specifically, Romans is a revealed mystery which reorients one’s perspective of reality around the Christ event. As with the Jewish mystery schema, so the Pauline mystery looks forward to a future fulfillment (cf. Dan 2:28–29; 12:4; 1Q27 1 I, 3–4; CD 3:12–20; 3 Bar. 16:4; T. Levi. 2:10). Romans reveals that God’s ways in the past are being recapitulated in the present, in order to give hope for the future (Rom 15:7–13). God’s ways are definitively understood in the past death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This apocalyptic event “now” prefigures the eschatological redemption of God’s people and the cosmos (Rom 6:1–4; 8:18–25). Christ’s death and resurrection serve not only as the basis of God’s redemption, but the *paradigm* for it. In other words, Christ is the apex which unifies God’s redemptive plan throughout history and into the eschaton. The Christ event lifts the veil over the OT, retrospectively revealing countless prefigurations of that event. Through faith in Christ, God’s people now see their eschatological hopes prefigured in him being incorporated to God’s unfolding narrative of redemption.

Chapters 4 and 5 give attention to the mystery motif of Romans 9–11. In these two chapters, I argue that Paul’s use of *μυστήριον* in 11:25 elicits the same christological *paradigm* it carries in 16:25–27 to unveil God’s hidden wisdom concerning Israel’s present unbelief and future restoration. Specifically, the mystery of 11:25–27 summarizes all of Romans 9–11 whereby Paul reimagines Israel’s history around the death, resurrection, and parousia of Christ to unveil God’s redemptive plan surrounding Israel’s plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures. Paul begins his expositions of the mystery by upholding Israel’s elect status as testified by their relationship to the patriarchs and even the Christ himself (9:5; cf. 11:28–29). Though at the present time Israelites are cut off from the blessings promised to the patriarchs (9:3; 10:1; 11:7, 17, 25), Paul insists that it is for the sake of the patriarchs that God will not allow the present plight to remain (11:28–29). Paul also features Israel’s special

relationship to the Christ whereby he upholds a level of corporate solidarity between the them (9:5b). Paul plays up Israel's corporate election and flesh relationship with the Christ to explain the mystery of God's redemptive purposes for the nation. Consequently, Paul presents Israel as Messiah-shaped from beginning to end. In this way, Paul positions himself to discuss Israel's destiny christologically. As Israel's history proleptically anticipated the Christ event (i.e., death and resurrection), so now that event serves as the paradigm for what is happening and will happen to ethnic Israel.

This christological paradigm provides the framework for understanding the significance of Israel's hardening, the role of the remnant, the inclusion of the Gentiles, and how each of these motifs anticipate the nation's eschatological restoration. As a mystery revealed in Christ, Israel has undergone the judgment of God experiencing a divine hardening (11:25; cf. 9:3, 32–33; 10:1; 11:7–10, 11, 12, 15, 30–31). Like their Messiah, Israel has suffered the judgment of God's wrath and now awaits the merciful grace whereby they will be accepted again (11:11–15). Furthermore, Israel's rejection by the Lord has brought salvation to the Gentiles (vv. 11–12). In God's wise plan of redemption, Israel's stumbling has become the means by which salvation has come to the Gentiles. It is in this way, that Israel's story of plight to restoration, mirrors Christ's death and resurrection. Israel's rejection by God *brings* reconciliation to the world and Israel's acceptance by God *brings* the resurrection of the dead (11:15).

While the majority of ethnic Israel has been rejected, God has also kept from himself a believing remnant from among the Jews (9:24, 27–29; 11:5, 7). Paul presents this remnant as the inauguration of Israel's restoration. As Christ's resurrection inaugurated the new age of the Spirit (1:4; 5:18–21; 6:4, 5, 9, 10, 8:11) and the reception of the Spirit inaugurated the new creation to come (8:1–11, 23), so the remnant are the firstfruits of Israel salvation to come (11:16). Thus, when God accepts Israel again, this event will bring about the cosmic renewal of the world (v. 15). As an apocalyptic mystery, Israel's restoration culminates God's redemptive purposes at the end of history



when Jesus returns (vv. 26–27; see table 3).

Table 3. Christological paradigm for God’s redemptive plan of all things

	Judgment (Past)	Inaugurated Salvation (Present)	Consummated Salvation (Future)
Christ	Judgment of death (3:23–25; 4:24–25; 5:6–10; 6:5, 10; 8:3, 32, 34; 9:32– 33; 10:9; 14:9, 15; 15:3, 8).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (1:4; 4:24– 25; 5:18–21; 6:4, 5, 9, 10; 8:11, 29, 34; 10:9; 14:9, 11; 15:12).	Revealed righteousness and glory of Christ (2:5, 7, 10 16; 8:18; 12:19; 16:20).
Church	Judgment of death (6:3–4, 5, 6, 8; 7:4).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (5:9–11; 6:4, 6, 11, 13; 7:4, 6; 8:1–2, 9–11, 23).	Resurrection and glory of God’s sons (5:2, 5; 6:5, 8; 8:17, 18, 19, 21, 23–25, 28–30; 13:11; 14:10–12; 15:13).
Creation	Judgment of death (5:12–13; 8:20, 22).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (8:23).	Resurrection and glory of the creation (8:21).
Israel	Judgment of death (9:3; 32–33; 10:1; 11:7–10, 11, 12, 15, 25, 30–31).	Firstfruits of the resurrection by the Spirit (11:16; cf. 9:24, 27–29; 11:5, 7).	Resurrection and glory (11:12, 15, 26–27, 31).

### Suggestions for Future Studies

To date, the only other canonical books to receive an extensive treatment on their use of *μυστήριον* include Ephesians<sup>1</sup> and 1 Corinthians.<sup>2</sup> While these works have significantly contributed to scholarship’s understanding of the Pauline mystery, more work could be done exploring how mystery may functions to explain God’s redemptive

<sup>1</sup>Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mysterion: Meaning and Content* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

plan in Christ. In other words, is Paul's use of mystery in Romans consistent with how it is used in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians? I identified a significant parallel between how it is used in Romans 9–11 and 1 Corinthians 15, but does this hold throughout the Pauline corpus? In light of the current study, future studies should take in account that Paul views the mystery of Christ as the *paradigm* through which he views reality and the eschatological hopes of God's people.

Another area of study that needs more attention concerns the remnant motif. The subject of the remnant is a particular point of contention between the various views concerning Israel's salvation. While I've argued that the remnant serves as the firstfruits of the whole; others, such as Merkle, expressly deny that the remnant signals this expectation.<sup>3</sup> While several studies have explored the remnant motif,<sup>4</sup> there does not seem to be a consensus on its significance for the hopes of Israel. For this reason, the field is ripe for a fresh biblical theology of the remnant.

In this study, I acknowledge that the significance of the remnant in Isaiah is not readily evident. However, what is evident is that the presence of the remnant speaks to the ongoing reality of judgment anticipating the day when God's judgment will end. In Romans, Paul identifies the judgment as hardening (11:7, 25) and thus the presence of the remnant must mean Israel's full restoration as not yet occurred. In other words, I argue that Paul's remnant motif signals a two-fold pattern of judgment then restoration. In this

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<sup>3</sup>Ben L. Merkle, "Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 4 (2000): 713.

<sup>4</sup>It's been nearly fifty years since Hasel's dissertation was published. Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1972). See also R. E. Clements, "A Remnant Chosen by Grace' (Romans 11:5): The Old Testament Background and Origin of the Remnant Concept," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald Alfred Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 106–21; M. W. Elliot, "Remnant," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 723–26; Andrew M. King, "A Remnant Will Return: An Analysis of the Literary Function of the Remnant Motif in Isaiah," *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 4, no. 2 (2015): 145–69; Richard Longenecker, "Remnant Theology and Rhetoric," in *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 247–53; Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 803–10.

way, when the judgment is over, the blindness placed upon the nation will be lifted so that they may believe on Christ for salvation. However, does Isaiah himself indicate such a mass restoration of all Israel after judgment? Thus, a fresh and exhaustive exegetical treatment of Isaiah's remnant motif or an entire biblical theology of the remnant would contribute significantly to future studies on the mystery of Israel's salvation.

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## ABSTRACT

### MYSTERION AND THE SALVATION OF “ALL ISRAEL” IN ROMANS 9–11

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The aim of this study is to build upon the emerging consensus that the Pauline mystery is rooted in a Jewish apocalyptic context, reflecting a “once hidden, now revealed” schema. For Paul, this mystery schema divides history into distinct ages of concealment and revelation. This study will explore how a Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema impacts Paul’s use of mystery in Romans 11:25–27, along with the greater argument of chapters 9–11. Therefore, the thesis of this study is that the Pauline mystery of 11:25–27 recalls a “once hidden, now revealed” schema whereby Paul reimagines Israel’s history around the advent of Christ, unveiling God’s redemptive plan concerning Israel’s plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures.

Chapter 1 provides a history of research, reviewing the various interpretations of the Pauline mystery of Israel’s salvation in 11:25–27. I offer an evaluation of how contemporary scholars have engaged the Pauline mystery and provide a way forward in the discussion.

Chapter 2 argues that mystery in the OT and Second Temple literature is apocalyptic, reflecting a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. This technical use of the term is prominent in the book of Daniel, the DSS, and Pseudepigrapha. Recognizing a consistent Jewish apocalyptic mystery schema, the foundation is laid to compare it with Paul’s use of *μυστήριον* in Romans.

Chapter 3 shows that the Pauline mystery in Romans is rooted in Jewish apocalypticism. Particularly, like the OT and Second Temple literature, the mystery reflects a “once hidden, now revealed” schema for interpreting history and previous revelation to unveil God’s hidden plan of redemption in the eschaton. Specifically, the hidden eschatological realities of Israel’s salvation and the judgment of the wicked are made known through the gospel of Jesus Christ for everyone who believes. Christ’s death and resurrection serve not only as the basis of God’s redemption, but the *paradigm* for it. In other words, Christ is the apex which unifies God’s redemptive plan throughout history and into the eschaton. The Christ event lifts the veil over the OT, retrospectively revealing countless prefigurations of that event. Through faith in Christ, God’s people now see their eschatological hopes prefigured in him being incorporated to God’s unfolding narrative of redemption.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the mystery motif of Romans 9–11. These two chapters argue that Paul’s use of *μυστήριον* in 11:25 elicits the same christological *paradigm* it carries in 16:25–27 to unveil God’s hidden wisdom concerning Israel’s present unbelief and future restoration. Specifically, the mystery of 11:25–27 summarizes all of Romans 9–11 whereby Paul reimagines Israel’s history around the death, resurrection, and parousia of Christ to unveil God’s redemptive plan surrounding Israel’s plight and eschatological restoration concealed in the prophetic Scriptures.

Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion providing a synthesis of this study showing that Paul explains Israel’s plight and future restoration as a mystery unveiled in Christ. Furthermore, this chapter suggests a couple of avenues for future studies on Paul’s mystery motif and the salvation of Israel.

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