

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by My Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them."
(Matthew 18:19,20)*



LESSON 4

***How Was the Word Lost?
Can Gentiles Be Christians?
Is The Hellenized Church Under A Curse?***



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Today, few non-Jewish Christians realize that they are “Gentiles.” Before our trip to Israel, if someone had called us Gentiles, we would have responded, “So what?” According to Romans 3:9, “*Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.*” Addressing the subject of salvation, Paul writes that “*there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him*” (Romans 10:12).

At the same time, however, Romans chapter 11 differentiates between Jews and Gentiles: “*Because of [Israel’s] transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious*” (11:11); and, “*Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved*” (Romans 11:25,26).

Until we had completed our research in Israel, we hadn’t recognized that our understanding of the Bible had been derived from the patterns and methods of the Greek philosophers who had come into the church in the second and third centuries after Christ. We hadn’t considered as noteworthy the Hebraic thought patterns and relational practices of the God-trusting Jewish authors of the Newer Testament.

Before our time in Israel, our perception of the earliest Church had been based on the critique of the Greek words in the Newer Testament manuscripts by theologians over the centuries. It had never occurred to us, until we had completed our research, that many of the

earliest Church practices and understanding of their faith had been adapted from practices *already taking place* among the Jews who walked in obedient trust, those whom we call the ***Hebraic Stream*** in Judaism.

We had always connoted all of Judaism at the time of Christ to be as rigid and unyielding as the gospel descriptions of the priests, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin. But we found that this group whom Jesus called “*Hypocrites!*” did *not* represent all of Judaism. In fact, the groups whom Jesus criticized so sternly represented the ***Judaizing Stream.***

The lessons we have prepared in Section 1 of *How To Restore The Early Church* introduce you to the foundations and practices of the earliest Church. You’ll discover two important points:

1. The earliest Church did *not* spring up in a vacuum. To truly understand the earliest Church, you must see its foundations in the *Older Testament.*
2. All the faith practices of the Newer Testament were already part of the Hebraic Stream *before the coming of Jesus.*

It is our belief that these two factors formed the basis for the Newer Testament writers’ understanding of the foundations and practices of the Church.

For example: Did you know that many rabbis from the Hebraic Stream at the time of Jesus were *already* teaching that “you must be born from above”, that is, experience *spiritual* birth? Are you aware that men in the synagogues *already* served as apostles, evangelists, elders and deacons? Do you understand the influence that the purification of immersion in the *mikveh* waters had on the early believers as they realized their need for the baptism immersion? Do you really understand why Jesus insisted that John baptize Him in the Jordan?

[For more on this topic, see our newsletter: [2001/03 Family Of Melchizedek](#)]

Each of these points, and many more, are foundational to your faith pilgrimage. First, you need to remove the anti-Semitic veil that has covered the eyes of much of the church for so many centuries. Then you can relish your pursuit of what the Jewish writers of the Newer Testament understood these practices to signify.

Our Father is restoring the Jewish people to the land of Israel one last time in accordance with His Word (see Jeremiah 23:3,7,8, among numerous other references).

[For more on this topic, see Hebraic articles>Prophetic Insights: [Fulfilling Biblical Prophecy, Israel and the Jewish People Today](#)]

At the same time, He is restoring to the Gentiles around the world the heart-impelled obedience and relational practices of our Hebraic spiritual forefathers — those who walked in holy fear of God and trusted Jesus for their salvation. Men and women such as these were present to hear and respond to Peter’s message on Pentecost: “*Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5).

Over the centuries volumes of philosophical conjecture and argument have led believers to debate the meaning of Greek words. This wrangling has led to the myriad of divisions within Christianity. “*Accurately handling the word of truth*” as an approved workman (see 2 Timothy 2:15) should include the study and application of the Hebraic teachings and practices at the time of Christ that are now being revealed by our Father.

Think of the vitality that could flow in and through faith communities if believers expended as much effort in *living* what they’ve already learned as they do in seeking after more knowledge. *Applying* our full biblical heritage could unify followers of Jesus today to live in the spiritual power that was so evident in the Hebraic early Church.

“What is this Hebraic Restoration all about?” has been one of the most common questions we’ve been asked. “We have the Bible, God’s Word. So what is it that needs to be restored?” These questions must be partly answered with two more questions: “*Has God’s Word ever been lost to His people?*” and, “*What has occurred to restore His Word and His perspective of it?*”

How Was the Word Lost?

The Bible lists a number of occasions in which God’s Word was lost for a period of time. In some cases the text of the Law (or *Torah*, which literally means *instruction*) had been misplaced or hidden. In other instances the interpretation of the Word had been marred by men who had tried to put their own laws and writings on par with God’s. Let’s examine some of these situations and note how the past *restorations* took place.

Loss #1:

After the death of King David, a series of monarchs ruled. Some followed the way of the Lord while others worshiped Baal and Ashtoreth, among others. At one point following a spiritually low era for Judah, King Josiah, whose heart was for the Lord, came to power: *“He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left”* (2 Kings 22:2).

Josiah ordered the priests to set about rebuilding and purifying the temple, which had become a mess of decay from lack of use. Hilkiah the priest discovered amid the rubble the holy scrolls of God’s Word.

*When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes... He gave these orders: “Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this **book that has been found**.”*

*Great is the Lord’s anger that burns against us because **our fathers have not obeyed** the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”...Tell the king of Judah...: “Because your **heart was responsive** and you **humbled yourself** before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you **tore your robes and wept** in my presence, **I have heard you, declares the Lord**”...*

*Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem... He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and **renewed the covenant** in the presence of the Lord—to **follow the Lord and keep his com-***

*mands, regulations and decrees with **all his heart and all his soul**, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then **all the people pledged themselves to the covenant** (2 Kings 22:11-23:3).*

When the righteous king recognized the disobedience of his people, his heart was as torn as his clothing. He humbly repented. Then he called the elders, who represented the family leaders of the people, to hear the Word and renew the covenant with their Lord. *Restoration* led to repentance and rededication, a profound lesson for us today.

Loss #2:

Some of the Israelites with Nehemiah and Ezra returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity of Israel. After rebuilding the temple and walls of the city, these people wanted to renew their covenant with God:

*All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to **bring out the Book of the Law of Moses**, which the Lord had commanded for Israel...They read from the Book of the Law of God, **making it clear** and giving the meaning so that the **people could understand** what was being read (Nehemiah 8:1,8).*

For seventy years, the people of Israel had been exiled from their land. Two generations had grown up without experiencing the cleansing and forgiveness that came from the sacrifices whose death substituted for the punishment each person deserved.

The Word of God essentially held little meaning for them when so much of it could not be fulfilled during their captiv-

ity. More important to the people than the mere recitation of the words was the *clarification* of God's instruction so that it could be applied. Nehemiah recognized that *understanding* God's Word was vital if Israel were to walk in obedient trust.

Loss #3:

Prior to the first coming of Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes who represented the Judaizing Stream earnestly endeavored to keep the Jewish people from violating God's law by establishing *other* laws and rules as "fences". Their original intent was noble, for they were trying to ensure that disobedience didn't bring God's wrath upon them as a nation.

Sadly, the added demands and "traditions of the elders" fostered a religion of rule keepers. Burdensome subjugation displaced the trusting obedience that their father Abraham had enjoyed in relationship with God.

Slavish submission fostered an atmosphere of *self-justification* as each tried to prove his own worthiness. And those in the public eye as religious leaders made sure everyone observed just how accurately they kept each rule. The key truth of relating to God as Father, Husband, and Lord, however, was nullified. Therefore, few relied in absolute dependence on His faithful mercy and love.

By the time of Jesus, the manmade laws and traditions of the Pharisees and scribes had acquired a hallowedness all their own. The vested interests of those at the top rung of the religious hierarchy caused the religious leadership to treat man's laws and practices as if God had given them. Their *own* laws and traditions actually blinded the Pharisees from seeing the Messiah as the fulfillment of the very Scriptures that they thought they were upholding.

Confronting this third "loss of God's Word", Jesus chastised the Pharisees:

Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.

You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!... Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that' (Mark 7:6-13).

The Pharisees upheld their laws and traditions but missed the most basic and vital of God's commands: to **love the Lord wholeheartedly** and to **love your neighbor** as yourself. Love abides in the heart of people who truly relate to God and others as He desires. Self-justifying rule-keepers then as well as now will always be blinded.

[For more on this topic, see our video: [Certain Of What We Do Not See, Satan's War Against Us \(Part 3\)](#)]

Paul too endeavored to keep the Galatians, who were being plagued by Judaizers, true to the faith of the Hebraic Stream. He urged his children in the faith, "*For in Christ Jesus... The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*" (Galatians 5:6).

Loss #4:

After the time of Christ God's Word was lost for over eleven hundred years when it was hidden in Latin, which only the religious hierarchy were taught to read. At long last, during the

Reformation the Bible began to be translated into the language of the people.

Several of the reformers attempted to restore some of the Hebraic foundations to a church system that had distanced itself from such biblical truths as *sola fides* — by faith alone; *sola scriptura* — by the Bible alone; *sola gratia* — by grace alone. We'll discuss these vital foundations in a later lesson.

Keep in mind that many of today's practices and church traditions emanate from a Greek, or *Hellenistic*, understanding of the early Newer Testament manuscripts. It is generally thought that the original texts were written in Greek, although some scholars speculate that portions were originally penned in Hebrew. The Newer Testament authors, however, were definitely Jewish, either by birth or by conversion, as may have been the case with Luke.

Beginning in the second century, anti-Semitism was increasing as the converted Greek philosophers influenced the church. The original Hebraic understanding of the text as it had been apperceived from the Older Testament was discarded in favor of a Hellenistic cognitive mindset.

The loss of the Hebraic root of love-grounded obedient trust has robbed Christianity of the full richness of the faith as a *unified whole* from Creation to the last days.

Can Gentiles Be Christians?

***“I am not ashamed of the gospel,
because it is the power of God
for the salvation of everyone who believes:
first for the Jew, then for the Gentile”***

(Romans 1:16).

In the centuries just prior to the com-

ing of Jesus, the Hebraic Stream in Palestine were clinging resolutely to the foundations of their faith despite the infiltration of the Greek lifestyle and philosophical ideas into the society around them. They feared that if they gave in to this Greek influence, they would dilute the faith of their fathers.

The Greek (Hellenistic) concept of religion held that *no one belief system was absolute*. You can therefore understand how repugnant the trust of the Jews in the One True God was to the dominant culture outside Israel.

Following the conquests by Alexander the Great during the fourth century BC, almost everyone spoke Greek, the language of culture and trade. The Hebrew Bible had been translated into a Greek version, the Septuagint, for a broader appeal to the diverse population.

Hebrew was understood by relatively few outside Palestine. By making the Hebrew Scriptures available in the language most widely used, God was preparing the way for the early Church to take His truths throughout the Greek-speaking world.

The interweaving of Jews who held firmly to Hebraic tradition and those who had been influenced by Hellenism forced the fledgling Jerusalem Church into an early confrontation. A not-so-subtle form of racism was threatening division in the body:

*Around this time, when the number of disciples was growing, the **Greek-speaking Jews** began complaining against **those who spoke Hebrew** that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called a general meeting of the disciples and said, “It isn’t appropriate that we*

*should neglect the Word of God in order to serve tables. Brothers, **choose seven men from among yourselves** who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint them to be in charge of this important matter” (Acts 6:1-3,CJB).*

The Hebraic believers’ willingness to cooperate with the Hellenist Jews regarding food distribution affirmed their desire to maintain unity despite differences in their cultural fabrics. It was more important that they all be reconciled as brothers in the Messiah than to let ethnic differences divide them (see Colossians 3:11).

Notice that the criterion for qualification of the seven selected men was that they be *“known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”* In the eyes of the early Church, evidence of the overflowing presence of the Holy Spirit was a priority. As these men had lived out their faith in righteous obedience that was empowered by God, each had earned a spiritual reputation that was irrefutable.

The stoning of Stephen (see Acts 7) and subsequent persecution of believers compelled the early Church to carry the Gospel beyond Jerusalem, fulfilling Jesus’s words that they would be witnesses to *“all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (see Acts 1:8).

God wanted the good news of the Kingdom to penetrate every nation, but most of the believers in Jerusalem were devout Jews, and uncomfortable with the idea of interacting with Gentiles. Notice in the book of Acts how God enabled the Church to meet this command:

And Saul was there, giving approval to [Stephen’s] death. On that day a

*great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and **all except the apostles were scattered** throughout Judea and Samaria...*

*Those who had been scattered **preached the word wherever they went.** Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there (Acts 8:1,4,5).*

Philip, one of those who had been selected to oversee food distribution in the Church, was among the Hellenist believers. As such, he had probably interacted on a wider basis with non-Jews and was less likely to have innate prejudices against them.

The Samaritan communities were especially despised by the Jews because they were a mixed race of heathen and Israelite blood. As an intermediary in the faith, however, Philip could minister among them and prepare the way for the devoutly Hebraic apostles Peter and John to come: *“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that **Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them”** (Acts 8:14). This action confirmed to the Hebraic believers at large that non-Jews could also be evangelized.*

God was sovereignly working through both the Hebraists and the Hellenists to bring to pass His plan that *“**repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**”* (Luke 24:47). God’s call to Paul (see Acts 9) was yet further confirmation that Jews were to share the Gospel message as they went, *wherever they went.*

As the early Church grew in number, it became increasingly pluralistic due to the large Gentile influx. Jewish believers needed to first accept, and then wel-

come, the new work God was performing to reach the Gentiles.

The writings referred to as the “Newer Testament” weren’t available to the earliest believers. Most of these documents were not even written until decades after Jesus’s ascension. For both Jew and Gentile, the “Bible” meant the *Hebrew Scriptures*, now called the “Older Testament.”

Every believer recognized the Hebraic roots of the faith. Though diverse in membership, the early Church agreed on the *Messiahship of Jesus*. Prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures had prepared them to look for His coming.

Early believers, Jew and Gentile alike, shared a common experience as they yielded to the *Lordship of Jesus*, sought guidance by the *Holy Spirit*, and relied on the *Hebrew Scriptures* as their teaching source.

Is the Hellenized Church Under a Curse?

***“The Lord had said to Abram,
‘Leave your country, your people and your
father’s household and go to the land
I will show you.
I will make you into a great nation and
I will bless you;
I will make your name great, and
you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever
curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you”***
(Genesis 12:1-3).

One point often comes up regarding the pervasive influence of Hellenism on the Church:

“How could God ever let so much of Christianity be taken over by such a demonic influence as Hellenism for all these centuries?”

To answer this we need to look at God’s everlasting promise to Abraham:

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you
Genesis 12:2,3).

As mentioned earlier, many of the converted Greek philosophers were *fanatically anti-Semitic*. For centuries afterward their writings persuaded the Church to abuse and even murder Jews under the banner of serving Christ. This persecution continued all the way to this past century’s pogroms, ghettos, and holocaust massacre.

In response to the afflictions that much of Christianity has heaped upon the Jewish people, God has kept His promise to Abraham. His curse has fallen on many in Christendom because of its broad embrace of anti-Semitism.

Beginning in the fourth century the curse becomes most noticeable. Since that time Christianity has been dominated by the demonic influence of **Hellenistic thought** and **Roman organization**. When you study the foundations of the majority of denominations in Christendom, an anti-Jewish prejudice that was initiated by anti-Semitic church councils over the centuries filters through.

Two especially sinister influences of Hellenism have impacted the Christendom of today:

1. The Older Testament is virtually ignored or greatly downplayed, if not completely set aside. The Hebraic foundations of the Gospel, as well as the relevance of so many prophetic truths, have for the most part been minimized.

2. *Replacement theology* has convinced many that the Church has replaced Israel in all of God's divine plans. Many passages that pertain to the Jewish people are now "spiritualized" to be blessings to the Church, while any of God's curses pertain to the Jew.

A number of followers of Jesus who have recognized these demonic influences have repented and renounced them. A sampling of the combined effects of Hellenist syncretism and anti-Semitism may surprise you:

- Christmas (not observed by the earliest Church, but developed as a conglomeration of pagan cultural practices);
- Easter (a substitute for Jewish Passover, often incorporating pagan spring rituals and practices that obscure the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus);
- Treating the first day of the week like any other, except for time spent at services;
- Branding the Jews "Christ-killers" when it's *our* sins that cost Him His life, as prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Today, an increasing number of the followers Of Jesus are returning to God's Word, past centuries of the church's anti-Semitism, to discover what the Christian's relationship to the Jewish people should be. They are finding Paul's words to be true: "*This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 3:6).

To understand God's perspective regarding the Christian's relationship to the Jews, examine Romans 11:1-31. Paul

wrote this section to specifically address the relationship of Jew and Gentile:

[1] I ask then, Did God reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. [2] God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew.[5] So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. [6] And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. [7] What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened...[11] Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. [12] But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! [13] I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry [14] in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

[15] For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? [16] If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. [17] If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, [18] do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

[19] You will say then, 'Branches

were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' [20] Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, **but be afraid.** [21] For if God did not spare the natural branches, He **will not spare you either.**

[22] Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, **provided that you continue** in His kindness. Otherwise, you also will be **cut off.** [23] And if they do not **persist in unbelief,** they will be **grafted in,** for God is able to graft them in again. [24] After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, **how much more readily** will these, the **natural branches,** be grafted into their **own olive tree!**

[25] I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a **hardening in part** until the **full numbers of the Gentiles** has come in. [26] And so **all Israel will be saved,** as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. [27] And this is **my covenant with them** when I take away their sins.'

[28] As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as **election** is concerned, they are **loved on account of the patriarchs,** [29] for God's gifts and His call are **irrevocable.** [30] Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, [31] so they too have now become **disobedient** in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of **God's mercy to you.** [32] For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all.

Set aside the revisions of *replacement* (also called supersessionist) *theology* that the converted Hellenist philosophers introduced in the centuries after Christ. Then you can more clearly recognize what would have been understood from this passage at the time Paul wrote it.

"Replacement" doctrines teach that God has permanently rejected the Jewish people and that the Church has replaced them; that all of the promises God made to the Jews now apply to the Church. (Many believers today hold to this concept without even knowing that it has a doctrinal title!) But what you find from examining the above passage of scripture is that:

- God did *not* reject the Jews. "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!" (v. 1). Salvation comes only by trust in the sacrificial work of Christ. However, God still has a plan and purpose for His Jewish people to be unveiled in His timing when the Messiah is revealed to them.

- God has maintained a remnant among the Jews. "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (v. 5). These too have not "bowed the knee to Baal" but are awaiting the promised Messiah. At this point most don't realize that He has already come and *will return!*

- It was part of God's plan for the Jew *not* to receive Jesus as Messiah so that salvation could come to the Gentile: "Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to **make Israel envious**" (v. 11).

God had chosen the people of Israel to be His precious bearers of truth. They rejected His plan and were, for the most part, led astray. However, when the Jews

of today see followers of Jesus *truly living out* their relationship with Him, they will long for that intimacy with God and repent. One rabbi has said that if those who claim to follow Jesus would just live out the Sermon on the Mount, the Jewish people would see that He was truly the Messiah Who changes lives!

- The metaphor of the olive branch best captures the relationship of Christians with Jews. *"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root"* (v. 17). A thorough study of the Scriptures written prior to Jesus's incarnation, the Older Testament, will enrich your understanding and appreciation of the "sap" of your Hebraic heritage.

- The natural branches will be grafted in again in accordance with God's plan: *"After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!"*(v. 24). God has already shown through His prophet Zechariah *how* He will regraft the Jewish people into the olive tree:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity

(Zechariah 12:10,13:1).

Through the work of the Holy Spirit the Jews will understand the truth of the Gospel and proclaim Jesus as the promised Messiah and Lord.

- We Christians need to put away the arrogance of past centuries that the church has demonstrated toward the Jews. *"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in"*(v. 25). God initiates the relationship between Himself and an individual: *"No one can come to [Jesus] unless the Father draws him"* (John 6:44).

The hardening of Israel is only in part; there are hundreds of thousands of Jewish followers of Jesus worldwide. When the full number of Gentiles who will enter the Kingdom of God have done so, God will then draw in the elect among His Jewish people who have thus far been hardened.

- God has purposed for both Jew and Gentile to be shown His mercy: *"For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all"* (v. 32). Since no one deserves the mercies of God, neither can anyone judge another person or group of people and think, "They had their chance and blew it." God will have mercy on those for whom He will have mercy.

- All of the promises presented in Romans 11 will be fulfilled because God's Word cannot be revoked: *"For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable"* (v. 29). What a comfort to know that His plans will be fulfilled in His timing, by His power, and according to His will for Jew and Gentile alike!