

Fulfilling the Mystery of Israel - Part 1

by Art Katz

Art Katz explores the mystery of Israel's role in God's plan, emphasizing the church's responsibility to provoke Israel to jealousy through its faith and actions.

Duration: 49:11

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Romans 11:1-12

Topics: "Israel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the continuous nature of God and the importance of knowing, celebrating, worshiping, and loving Him. The speaker explains that loving God's judgments is the ultimate form of love, as it means recognizing His righteousness and understanding that His judgments have a redemptive purpose. The speaker also highlights God's presence and involvement in the trials and afflictions of His people, using the example of Jesus' journey to the cross. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the role of the church in moving Israel to jealousy, stating that a martyr church, one that lives for others and not for itself, is the key to achieving this. The speaker references various Bible verses, including Romans 11:12-32, to support their points.

Transcript

Are we ready to turn to Romans chapter 11, which commentators likely say is not an addendum, it's central to Paul's whole apostolic understanding of the faith, that the first eight chapters of his great book, which is the most systematic statement of his apostolic theology, is a preparation for 9-11, and what follows 12-16 is the aftermath, the outworking. Now, I beseech you to make your bodies a living sacrifice, and then he goes on from that to practical aspects of church life. But the heart of the matter is 9-11, and the capstone is 11 itself, so we'll go verse at a time, and we'll just interact over this and bring forth things that are rich.

So remember that Paul is answering the question of the Roman church, which they have very valid human reason to ask, is God finished with the Jew? Is the crucifixion of their Messiah the final event that proves their apostasy? They have forfeited their calling, and are we now the Israel of God? And we take to ourselves that designation that they are now cast out from these purposes, having forfeited them first by the stoning of the prophets, and now the crucifixion of their Messiah. That's a natural way to reckon, if your reckoning is predicated upon deservedness. They don't deserve, they have forfeited, they're exempt from the promises and blessings.

It betrays a mentality that still is with the church, and raises a natural question that Paul now is going to answer, not only for that generation, but for all generations. So I say then, has God cast away his people? God forbid, for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew.

What, do you not know that the scriptures says of Elijah, how he makes intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they've killed thy prophets, they've digged down thine altars, I am left alone and they seek my life. But what sayeth the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears they should not hear, unto this day. We can say, unto this day also. And David saith, let their table be made a stair, a trap, a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them.

Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always. I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Well, we'll stop there and pick up verse 11 in just a moment. Anything now in the introduction to this great theme? Paul's citing himself as an example that God has not forsaken his people, because he's saved.

And if he represents a remnant, then a remnant presages a later fulfillment. A remnant is a first installment of a later and greater harvest, in which he'll speak in this chapter when he says, all Israel shall be saved. So he's encouraging the church not to consider that Israel is finished.

He himself is a statement in his own conversion, that God yet has a place. And even though that remnant is small, even from the time of Elijah, 7,000 that have not bowed their knee, yet God has preserved that remnant, and the remnant then is always the encouragement of a later and greater fulfillment. So Israel has not found out which it has sought through works, because what has come now is grace.

The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. But that blindness, as we're going to read, is not a permanent and enduring disability. It's a temporary, historic, and momentary provision, and the genius of it is that it's a provision for Gentiles, that he has momentarily set aside his people.

That's what we're going to take up now in this key 11th verse. Have they stumbled that they should fall? Are they permanently out of it? This language, God forbid, in English, doesn't begin to express the depth of Paul's emphaticness. If language could be found to say, never in a thousand, never in a million years, don't ever consider that they're finished.

God forbid that the thought should even begin to empty your mind. No, you need to understand what they're being momentarily set apart for is part of the mystery, so that Gentiles who are far off can now be brought in. And then by their being brought in, they will exhibit the fruit of this relationship so as to move Israel to jealousy, so as to extend mercy that they may obtain mercy, and when their fullness comes in, then the deliverer will come out of Zion and take transgression from Jacob.

So there's a mystery now that is going to be unfolded to which we need to give remarkable heed because it essentially is lost to the church in this present day. How shall I say that? I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard from a notable man of God, men of international preaching ministries, that Romans 9-11 and especially 11 has been for them, all their Christian ministries, long a mystery, a conundrum they do not understand. They're adept and incisive and insightful in many aspects of the faith, but here, non compass mentis.

It's a remarkable omission. The thing that would concern me is that I should be in such a condition and not cry out to God? Why don't I see this mystery? Why don't I understand it? But instead of that cry, they just accept it as I don't get it. And because they don't get it, the church doesn't get it.

And because the church doesn't get it, it suffers its present condition. So verse 11, I say then, he's repeating himself, have they stumbled? That they should fall? Are they permanently out of the way? But even the word stumble indicates a momentary maladjustment, but not a permanent condition. God forbid, but rather through their fall, through this momentary stumbling, salvation has come unto the Gentiles for to provoke them to jealousy.

For if the fall of them be the riches of the world and the diminishing of them, the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? As he goes on to say later in verse 15, for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be? But life from the dead. So this is a great apical stratagem of God for the redemption of Gentiles, for the salvation of the world that somehow required the setting aside of the nation. Why would that be necessary? Couldn't Jews have received the Messiah and communicated the knowledge of him to the Gentile world and fulfilled their destiny that way? Would the Gentile world have received this message from a nation that had not first experienced a deep setting aside itself and a subsequent return? Would they have just looked upon it as Jews doing their thing and trying to bring us into their narrow Hebraic faith? The remarkable thing in the labors of Paul is that you never hear from the Corinthians or Thessalonians that he's trying to indoctrinate them into some narrow and provincial tribal deity known only to the Jews.

That would be a piece of chauvinism. That's a piece of racial and ethnic pride trying to recruit people into your ballpark. So something had to happen to free the Gentile world to consider the message of the Messiah not coming from Jews who are seeking their spiritual scalp, but as a grace from God that even required the setting side of the Jews in order to permit their entry.

Are you following me? We have to understand the minds of men that God would go this far. So what am I suggesting and it's just a suggestion because it's no way articulated, but we need to ask why the setting aside? Why the momentary stumbling and falling? For Paul says it's by that in verse 11 that salvation has come to the Gentiles. Is that to imply that that salvation could not have come except that there would have been this momentary setting aside of the nation except for, say, Bremen? And I'm suggesting yes, probably that's true.

That if the nation had just gone along, received the Messiah, and then commended their faith to the Gentiles, it would have been a kind of statement of a chauvinistic kind of racial ethnic pride trying to recruit Gentiles into their faith. And it probably would have been rejected. So God has opened the door in another way by first setting them aside and then in bringing them in, he will make them the key for Israel's own subsequent restoration.

There's a reciprocal relationship birthed for the first time between Israel and the church without which neither one can come into its full destiny. We're dependent the one upon the other in the genius of God, which you need to appreciate because what two peoples have been at a greater and more ancient enmity than Jews and Gentiles? You needed to meet my mother when she would spit out the word the goyim, the goyim, them, the other. It's so deep when we're talking all the way back through her London childhood and cute memories that either she fabricates or were real, but an anger, hatred even.

For God to make the one the agent for the other is a remarkable statement of grace and the mystery of God in his ultimate purposes. So dwell on that key 11th verse. It's the pulsating nub in order to be going off and on like a light.

Have they stumbled, they should fall, God forbid. Don't ever consider that. But rather through their fall or because of their fall, salvation has come unto the Gentiles and then this punchline, for to or so as to provoke them to jealousy.

This is so Pauline. Just where you think the statement should end and the period should be fixed, he adds one further phrase and that one further phrase turns the world upside down. Now he's giving the reason, the genius of God and the stratagem of the setting aside so that Gentiles should come in, not that they should come in for the purpose of receiving and enjoying the benefit of their salvation alone, but that it will serve a purpose for Israel itself.

So as to provoke them to jealousy raises the great question, what can Gentiles ever do or perform that will move a proud ethnic religious Jewish people to a jealousy of a kind to consider the gospel they would otherwise have repudiated or dismissed. Paul does not tell us. What I would have given for an asterisk, a footnote at the bottom of the page, how to move them to jealousy, he doesn't tell us.

So what do you think? Because the church and God and Israel is yet waiting for this fulfillment. We have a destiny, saints. We have a calling and if you have not considered that your salvation has a purpose for you beyond yourself, you've not considered it.

And until you've considered that, your salvation is not complete because the thing that will save you utterly is it being called to the destiny of another people outside yourself. There's something about us even in the church that is so egocentric, me, me, my mind, my fellowship, my ministry, my blah blah blah. What can God give so powerful as to break the orbit of egocentrism even of a spiritual and religious kind? Israel is that something.

An object for our consideration which we ourselves would never have chosen and a difficult object because he says, in the same chapter, they are the enemies of the gospel for your sake. I'm not giving you Apache people, they're not a pushover. I'm giving you the most obstinate, the most operant, they've caused me fits, they're stiff-necked from the beginning right to the last, but this is your baby and you're the one to move them to jealousy.

And he doesn't tell us how. Well you need to know that the first time I ever preached this, after a 14 month sabbatical silence, and the whole history here of Ben Israel where the Lord cut down, shut down the community for three years and that's when I was put in a seminary and the Lord began to open the mystery of Israel. And in the 14th month of that, I was forbidden to speak publicly.

I got an invitation from Sacramento, California on the telephone, Archidon me, I'm pastor so and so, we have been praying here that God wants you to speak to us a seminar on Israel and the church in the last days. Which was exactly the phrase that had come into my heart after the opening of an understanding of that subject in that period of time. So I went to California 10 days in advance, fasting and prayer, and we commenced that seminar.

People paid to attend. They had this, the tape recorders to catch every word. And not being a teacher, the prophetic man who brings the back of envelopes and scraps of paper and lays it out there and somehow something's got to come together, I began.

And the first message, I raised this question, why what means shall the church move Israel to jealousy? And I never answered it. Went on for six messages after which the pastor said it was a historic occasion. Went to bed Saturday night, Sunday morning is the final message, not yet having answered the question.

And at three o'clock in the morning, as I'm fond of saying, not 259 and 301, exactly at three, I lurched out of bed with a jump, God gave me a word, martyrdom. And my final message was the church that will move Israel to jealousy is a martyr church. And it's implied, martyr for their sake.

So Paul doesn't spell it out, but as we come closer to the end of the age and see the realities that are converging, this is a very reasonable word to imply. But the key, the issue is the church is the key to Israel's deliverance and salvation. By what we exhibit, it moves them to jealousy, by the mercy that they will obtain through our mercy, by the fullest which God waits for us to come.

So the chapter, the whole chapter, as we shall see, puts the premium not on Israel, for Israel will be reduced to complete ineptitude, inner, beyond and beside itself for anything out of itself. Why is that important? Because what is the Jew but the statement of human self-sufficiency? And that self-sufficiency has got to be reduced to nil, N-I-L, zero, no capacity whatsoever, down and out, dry bones. And unless someone else addressed those bones, those bones remain eternally, millennia dead.

But what does he say? What shall the return be but life from the dead? But what affects that return, not Israel itself, the church, but a church of what kind? An ultimate kind and a martyr kind. And I don't know that this is the occasion to launch into a discussion of martyrdom, but we have it on tape. I often say martyrdom is not a way to die, it's a way to live.

It's a mode of being. It's not just a statement of a final moment. It's a statement of all your moments, that the true believing life is a continually surrendered, martyred life that is not being lived for itself but for others.

So, if the four of them be the riches of the world, why is it the riches of the world? Because the Gentiles have now been invited in. And the diminishing then the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, and as much as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my office, if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are of my flesh, and might save some of them. For if their casting over them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? The implications of Israel's return is immeasurable.

This can be contemplated in many ways. It's a people coming into their destiny and calling. It's a nation of priests that enlightened the world, actually functioning in such a way as to bless all the families of the earth.

Because only the priest can teach the people the difference between the sacred and the profane. And until they teach it, the world continues to become increasingly profane. That one factor alone will be life from the dead.

If the blessings that we have received from Jews in their unsaved condition out of the realms of medicine, science, physics, Einstein, we can mention the geniuses of the 20th century have been to so great a part beyond their number in the population Jewish, what will the blessing be to mankind in their redeemed state, in the fulfillment of their calling to mankind? Jews are not intended for themselves but for the nations. But to bring them to that destiny is the task of the church. Why do you think it is that Paul was made the apostle to the Gentiles? Isn't that a fluky thing? That God takes a fisherman, Peter, and makes him the apostle to the circumcision and takes the great student of the rabbi Gamaliel and all of his rabbinical knowledge would be an ace for the circumcision and makes him the apostle to the Gentiles.

What a role reversal. But there's a significance in this that we need to understand. What do you think? Why was Paul made the apostle to the Gentiles? And he says, if you see in me a man out of time, I'm a foretaste, my whole conversion is a statement of God's intention for the nation.

My apostolic role pictures Israel's apostolate to the nations. If the nation has a role to the nations, then I have a role to the Gentiles presently. And what a role Paul had.

And what a devotion the Gentile believers had taught him that there's nothing more touching than to read again Paul's call to the elders of Ephesus when he tells them you'll see my face no more. And they meet with him and they bow down and pray on the beach and hang on his neck and weep that they will see his face no more. And he reviews with them, you know what I've been to you, night and day with tears from public place, from house to house.

I never withheld the whole counsel of God. I never exploited you. I never drew from you.

Paul is such a statement of what Israel will be to the nations. He's a model already of the millennial future. So can you picture a day in which Gentiles will be hanging on the necks of Jews? Well, we read that Gentiles will hang on the skirt of Jews and say, take us to your God for you know him.

The Gentiles of 10 nations will clutch the skirt of a Jew. That Jews will be such a blessing who today are such a, what's the word, irritant and a threat of vexation to the peace of the world. One day will be purest blessing to the nations, which was God's intention ever from the first.

We can't say enough for Paul. I don't know who I want to meet in heaven more, but what he represents, what he is in himself for me to live as Christ, that remarkable apostolic career and saying who is sufficient for these things and being to the church, being to his own people, suffering the bodily things and scars that he did for the faith and being entrusted with the mysteries of the faith as a great steward because he's less than the least of all saints. And Paul is not just being deferential and polite here.

He heartily truly believes he's less than the least of all saints. He's deserving of nothing. He was a murderer and persecutor.

Anything that comes to him is purest grace for which he'll always be grateful. So we're indebted to the dear man for communicating the insight that he is exclusively his. For if the first fruits be holy, verse 16, the lump is also holy and if the root be holy so are the branches.

If some of the branches be broken off and you being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches, but if you boast, you bear not the root, but the root thee. And you'll say then the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Okay, but because of unbelief they were broken off and you stand by faith, be not high minded, but fear.

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God on them which fell severely, but toward thee goodness. If you continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shall be cut off.

And they also if they abide not still in unbelief shall be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these which be the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? This is a remarkable analogy, is that the word? Symbolic way of expressing this mystery that is uniquely Pauline, using natural and organic things. You Gentiles were wild branches, you were incapable of fruit.

Don't boast now that you've been grafted into another tree, because your boasting is unbecoming and will even void the benefit that would otherwise be yours by the receiving of the sap that rises from its root, because your lack of humility and gratitude will nullify the benefit of being grafted in. Nowhere do I find scriptures that support that statement. I'm going out on my own limb, but I feel pretty confident about this, that unless we are grateful recipients for being grafted into another tree, we do not receive its benefit.

In the same way that a wife who is only nominal in her submission to her husband will not receive the benefit that flows to her through the head, and that's why we see independent entities living under the same roof. So to receive the benefit of what this organic connection from the head to the body, from the root to the branches, requires an attitude of humility and gratitude, that we who were wild and cut off have now been privileged to be placed into the one tree, which is the redemptive planting of God. It may not be outwardly an attractive tree, it's gnarled, it's gone through quite a history, and it's despised in the world, but we're privileged to find a place in its branches by their being broken off.

So if we have been grafted in being wild, what's the prospect of them being grafted in having first been broken off? If he can graft in a wild branch, how much more can he graft in the natural branch? So that my first service of God pastor was astounded at my progress. I took notes like they were going out of style, the first six months, every word out of his mouth, and after that I was off. He had never seen a convert more readily soak up the faith than I. It was not that I have some particular ability, but I was a statement of the natural branch being grafted into its own root and sucking up what was natural to me.

And maybe for that reason the Jewish believers have less resistance to the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the baptisms of the Spirit than other believers. It seems to be a more natural mode of being for us. So it's something about the natural branch being grafted into its own root.

But Paul says, don't boast against them, but rather fear. Contemplate the goodness and the severity of God. Goodness toward you, but severity toward them.

And I believe that the absence or the loss of fear in the church, which is a distinguishing factor that is becoming to the church, is altogether the absence of this acknowledgment. We do not fear God because we have not recognized his severity toward Israel. When we see how far will God with his own, because

what has it meant for us to be broken up off of our own tree? What has it meant for us to be set aside for two thousand years? What mishap, what mischief, what great catastrophes of history from the Spanish Inquisition to the Holocaust have befallen us in the new America, the new Spain.

We were burned at the stake in Mexico City in the 1500s as Jews. Wherever we have gone, we've been persecuted. We've been knocked from pillar to post.

We've suffered for the want of the blood of Messiah. They're covering the protection. They're keeping power.

We have been open and vulnerable to every oppressive thing calculated for our disaster. It has cost the Jewish people plenty to be cut off from their own tree, to be set aside. That's the severity of God.

It was judgment, deserved judgment, but we need to recognize and not be offended by the severity of God. That his judgments are always redemptive. They're never vindictive.

It's never a God who's out of sorts and taking advantage, not a rub of salt into an open wound. It's a severity in proportion to justice, to righteousness, calculated finally toward a repentance and a return. But for us to fail to see the severity of God and to dismiss the Holocaust as a historical accident, an aberration of history, the rise of a character by the name of Hitler, and not to see God's hand in the suffering of the Jewish people, and what it has cost us to be set aside, is not to see God.

To see God in judgment is to see God in full. There's something about it that makes us uncomfortable because how do we reconcile a God who is severe, a God who judges, with a God whom we know also to be merciful, kind, and loving? Is he contradicting himself? Or are his judgments compatible with his mercies? And in the last analysis, if you see deeply enough, you can even say his judgments are his mercies. So the issue of Israel, again, is the issue of God.

And the Church suffers from an inadequate knowledge of God, an inadequate awe of God, an inadequate reverence, because it has not noted what Paul is here specifying, the severity and the goodness of God. Don't major on his goodness alone, and exclude his severity, because when they crucified Jesus, they had to gamble for his tunic, his garment, because it was without a seam. It could not be parceled in part.

There were no parts, it's all continuous, and so is God himself. And that's the God that we need to know, celebrate, worship, and love. And when you love his judgments, it's ultimate love.

To love God in his judgments is to love him in his righteousness, and to see that even in his judgment, it's not a cruel and vindictive God, but that his judgment always has ultimately a great and redemptive end. He's not abusing his power just for the enjoyment thereof. And what does it say? That in all of our trial, all of our affliction, he also is afflicted.

He's not standing aloof, watching what falls upon his people. He's with them, and that's why Jesus wept at Jerusalem on the way to the cross. He knew what was ahead for the Jewish people in their history, having missed the day of their visitation, and what it would cost.

But he's been with them in their expulsion. You need to read about the Spanish Inquisition. I forgot how short a period, 30 days? I forgot, maybe a few months or less, where Jews had to either convert to Catholicism or pick up and leave.

Having lived for centuries in Spain, having been established, having been a viable part of the whole Spanish civilization, uprooted and cast off, who knows where, into North Africa, into Portugal, where, even after a short time, they would be expelled there, into the New World, where they'd be burned at the stake in Mexico City and places in the southwest of America. It's heart-rending. It's an ache.

It's an agony. It's a long travail, the severity of God. It's a moot question to ask whether we can move Jews to jealousy without exhibiting the fruit that can only come through the operation of the sap that issues from the root of this tree.

You're not following me? Unless you're consciously and gratefully grafted in and partake of the fat and the substance of the root, which is the life of God, how can you be fruit-bearing? And it's that this fruit that moves Jews to jealousy, because it's fruit of a distinctive kind, and from a branch that hithertofore has never borne fruit. It's been fruitless, being wild. Now it exhibits and issues in a fruit that can only be the result of a special substance that flows out of the root of this tree, which is nothing less nor other than the life of God itself.

And I'm saying, unless we are gratefully grafted in, we cannot partake of that substance. We're in technically, but the sap doesn't come to us because it's a proportion to a faith, which is humility and gratitude. So God is reconciling all of these historic entities and differences in the whole symbolism of this tree.

And that if he was able to graft you in, who by every reckoning are wild, how much more can he graft his own natural people again into their own tree? And when he does, what will it be? Nothing less than life from the dead. Isn't it just like God to get at Gentile pride and say, you can never be what you ought independent of that tree. I know you want to be an independent entity, a church in and of itself, accomplishing great deeds.

But unless you're grafted into that particular tree, that loathsome and repulsive thing that you want to avoid, there's no prospect for fulfillment. I'm nailing you. You want to be independent and find your own fulfillment independent of them.

But I'm saying, no, you'll find it in them and with them, or you'll not find it at all. Eat your heart out. This is my genius.

This is my design. So make peace with it and receive it with gratitude. However ugly that tree is, however much you would avoid it, it is the one rooted, planted thing in which my life flows.

We need to contemplate, what is the root of antagonism of the Jew against Jesus that required his death? What was the offense? What did he represent that they found so threatening that there would be no answer but to extirpate it, to remove his life? You need to consider that. I'll just throw this out for a teaser. I don't think that I can myself on the spot explicate it.

The root of antagonism against Jesus is the threat to self-righteousness that he's introducing an alternative to a Judaism by which one's salvation is affected by one's own effort, one's own conduct, one's own being. Now it's the grace by which everything is given and you receive by faith in which you cannot boast for even that is a gift. Can you believe that men would be so antagonized to be robbed of the prospect of self-righteousness that they will kill to retain it? That I believe is at the nub of the antagonism against Christ, and it's a nub that remains to this day.

That the deep need for men to establish themselves by their own rectitude, their own behavior, their own conduct in which they could boast is at the very heart of the matter. It's necessary for the nation that one man die. The charge of blasphemy was a legal claim.

I'm getting at the thing that is under the surface. The depth of the antagonism is that the basis for self-realization, self-righteousness is *itso facto* removed by the advent of Christ in a grace of salvation freely given by faith which is not of yourself. Well that's an insult, what about me? And men will die and kill to be self-righteous and in killing reveal that their self-righteousness is ultimate fraud.

So now we get to the heart of this great chapter. Having been set up by Paul, you see the logic as it's being unfolded to fit us now for the punchline, verse 25, for I would not brethren you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceit, that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel they are the enemies for your sake, but as touching the election they are beloved for the father's sakes, for the gifts and callings of God, are without repentance for it, and you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy, for God has concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all.

It's almost impossible to break into any single verse of Paul, like the one verse flows into the next, it's like a continuum of a divine logic that insinuates itself in Paul's statements. It's remarkable, it's beyond prose, it's beyond any conventional use of language, it's a man luxuriating in the revelation of God and finding expression by the spirit to instruct the church of all ages in the heart of this mystery that all Israel shall be saved as it is written, but because it is written it's incumbent upon God to perform it, because if he cannot perform what is written, if he cannot perform what he has covenanted, how is he God? So the church ought to have the greatest jealousy for the fulfillment of what Paul is now speaking, not only for Israel's sake but more especially for God's sake, that he is God, that he honors what is written, he honors the covenant that he has spoken, and that Israel is the test of that divinity and that faithfulness, and we should not be ignorant of this mystery lest we become wise in our conceit. Well, I believe what Paul warned has fallen.

If anything characterizes the church today, it's the absence of the fear of God and the marked characteristic of a hubris of pride, a presumption that has taken many forms, not the least of which is kingdom now. Doesn't have to wait for the king's coming, the church itself will establish the kingdom, the church itself will take over the institutions of society and so on and so forth, when it can't even fight its way out of a paper bag, its own houses are demoralized, and yet it talks about the presumption of being itself the kingdom. So exactly what Paul warned has befallen us, because the only thing that would have prevented this kind of presumption and pride is the humility of being tempered by the subject of Israel itself.

Something comes into the believer and into the church of a tempering kind when it recognizes the mystery of the severity and the goodness of God. And if that is lacking, then we will necessarily slip into forms of presumption and arrogance, which the Jews have historically, I call the church, the arrogant kingdom. Is that something? That far from revealing the nature of the lamb, Jews have seen as the arrogant kingdom, because we have exhibited the very pride of which Paul said would befall us if we will remain ignorant of this mystery.

The mystery is calculated for our good, is given to us to temper us, to hallow the church, to bring dimensions of a modifying kind without which the church becomes disfigured. That's the mystery is so potent in itself, that it alone has the power to bring this modifying and modifying influence to pass for the church. But if it's absent, we will necessarily suffer the pride that Paul foretells.

And in fact, it's not an excessive question to raise to what degree is in fact the church cut now? To what degree have those branches either been broken off or allowed to remain, but to remain only as a stick, still a dead stick, still a wild stick, still not fruit bearing. And his condition is so pathetic, it doesn't even know it. So if that's the lamentable condition of the church, how is it to be remedied by coming back into the appropriation of the mystery and the things that are set forth here? And how will the church obtain this? Who brings that message? Is it going to come from its own pastors who are gainsayers and have their own careers to pursue? It's got to come from someone outside them.

It's got to come from a prophetic voice that brings and communicates the mystery of this faith. So the question is, where are such men? How are they being groomed? And who's receiving them? May be the real key issue of our hour. The formation of prophetic and apostolic men to whom alone are given the credentials and the authority to communicate mystery.

A teacher cannot do it. Once it's broken, once the foundational thing is conveyed by men of that kind, then the teacher can come and draw out the implications for the church of that locality and what they have been given. But he himself cannot bring the foundational word.

It must come from foundational men. So we're back again to the question of true and false apostles and prophets, which is probably the great question of our hour. And count on it that the true men will be denounced as false and the faulties will be celebrated as true.

So it's a real internal struggle of great moment and consequence for the church. Just as Paul does not tell us in detail what it takes to move them to jealousy, he doesn't tell us in detail what it means for the fullness of Gentiles to become men. We can only surmise it means dimensions of an ultimate spiritual kind.

And can those dimensions be fulfilled without the embrace of this mystery and the identification with people and the willingness to share in their suffering and even in their judgments? That when a church itself voluntarily embraces that identification and suffering, that is the fullness. So it's remarkable what he leaves unsaid and allows us to draw out from the heart of God and the implications by the spirit. But that word fullness must imply a taking to ourselves the destiny, the calling of Israel, their suffering, their shame of their last days, apostasy, their expulsion.

But when that identification is true in us who have no reason to embrace it because it's entirely voluntary, then the deliverer will come out of Zion. The Lord knows when the conditions have been fulfilled. He's waiting for something in the church.

And so therefore the deliverer shall come out of Zion when? When the fullness of the Gentiles become men. It's not going to be a fullness that's cheaply obtained without suffering. In fact, it's just fair to expect it will be obtained through suffering.

And so whereas there are people who will volunteer, make themselves candidates for suffering in order to obtain a fullness by which the deliverance comes out of Zion and saves Israel from their sins. It's not to be expected. It confounds or contradicts any natural reckoning of what can be expected by man.

But it's a testimony that a people, Gentiles, have come into such a union with God as to share his heart, his mind, his very constitution and makeup that that fullness is the fullness of the Lord himself now expressed in the body by a people who have voluntarily submitted themselves as candidates from suffering to obtain it. Priests who have no requirement to do so. They could have played church for the rest of their days and have their Sunday services and their programs.

No, they put themselves in a place of a special vulnerability. They announce to the Lord and make clear to the powers of darkness. We're willing for this fullness, whatever the cost to ourselves, whatever the sacrifice, whatever the suffering.

That very thing, that very announcement causes such a fear in the powers of darkness as to violently shake their whole kingdom of darkness. That there's a people in the earth willing to suffer for suffering is the antithesis of the spirit of the world and the mentality of the powers is the avoidance of suffering. It's the pursuit of pleasure, self-aggrandizement, me, me, me, for people to turn their back on that false wisdom and basis for life and to embrace the cross, which is suffering for another sake so that the deliverer can come out of Zion through transgression from Jacob, according to the covenants made with them.

That Gentiles will do this for Jews, it's unheard of. Why would they? There's no natural reason to expect it or to request it. That they are willing voluntarily to do so is itself a mystery and an ultimate statement of the redemptive work of God, who has taken a people off the donkey and made them to sit with the princes of this people.

He's given them their mind, his mind, his heart, his what he is in himself has become what they are in themselves. And because they are that, they are not only the key to Israel's redemption, they are the bride for the bridegroom, because such a bride is appropriate for the bridegroom and for which the Lord waits to have a bride adorned for the bridegroom, means a companion fit for the king. And so by the process of our identification with Israel and the suffering to which we make ourselves candidate, that final fullness can be formed by which the mystery of Israel is fulfilled, but also our graduation as the bride of Christ eternally.

So all of the mysteries are comprehended at the end, but the modus vivendi, the means by which they are obtained is the crisis of Israel as it is presented to the church, which may be the reason why the church is ignorant of the mystery, because they sense it means suffering. This is not something for the coffee table clutch that you can show yourself clever and you know the mystery of Israel. To open yourself to the mystery is to make yourself a candidate for its fulfillment through your suffering.

So you're wise to avoid it and well I don't understand, I don't want to understand, but it's the statement of ultimate devotion to the Lord. Why? Because this chapter ends for of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. We're willing for this offering because nothing else will glorify the Lord forever than the fulfillment of the mystery of Israel.

And because we're jealous for that eternal glory and know that it will not be obtained in any other way except through the fulfillment of this mystery, we're making ourselves in the last days candidates for that fullness.

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