Romans 11 pt. 2 Israel's Restoration

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, May 24, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 11; 1 Kings 18; Isaiah 29; Psalm 69; Deuteronomy 4; Isaiah 43; Romans 12
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:53:53 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Israel was not chosen instead of the nations in order to *have* salvation. They were chosen to *carry* it. So when Paul talks about their return, he is not only talking about them being saved — he is talking about them being restored to the job, and about the fact that everyone currently doing that job is doing it by mercy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Romans 9–11 is not an appendix bolted onto the letter. It is the same argument Paul has been making since chapter 1: righteousness by faith, for Jew and Gentile alike, from a God whose covenant loyalty outlasts our unfaithfulness.
- Election is a commission, not a private rescue. Israel was a kingdom of priests, chosen to bring blessing to all the families of the earth — a means, not an end.
- There is rejection in Romans 11, but it runs one direction only. It is Paul's kinsmen rejecting their Messiah, not God rejecting his people.
- The hardening was a verdict, not an ambush. Read the passage Paul is quoting: the hearts were already far off before the stupor was poured out.
- Restoration, not just salvation, is what Paul is eager for — ethnic Israel back on the field carrying the name of Jesus to the nations, and an even greater harvest coming out of it.
- We benched ourselves as easily as they did, and we are only playing by mercy. An arrogant attitude about being included is the one response the chapter forbids.

- Reading Israel as blessed-only-to-be-blessed is usually us projecting. We assume we are the protagonist and God is a supporting character in his own story.
- God's promise does not hang on our performance. He has never needed our help — being allowed to help is the gift.

▶ 0:53:53

Matt has been reading Romans under two rules he announced at the start, and he restated them before opening chapter 11 again. First, Paul is a Christ and him crucified man, so however tangled the grammar gets, the theology does not drift. Second, Romans is about one idea. “If what we end up having is a weird soup of random and somewhat unrelated micro sermons, we didn't get it.”

1. One letter, one argument

▶ 0:56:16

Paul is writing to real people — Jewish believers and Gentile believers in one room in Rome, after the expulsion and the return, working out an identity question that will not sit still. Do Jews have to stop being Jewish now that they are in Christ? Do Gentiles have to level up and become more Jewish? Paul's answer is union with Christ, and he threads the needle by insisting that God was never wrong and has not changed his mind — everything is fulfilled, not abandoned.

▶ 0:58:28

Which is why chapters 9 through 11 are not a detour. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The advantage of being Jewish was real — glory, oracles, covenant — and their faithlessness never nullified God's faithfulness. He is God of Gentiles too, and if the heirs are the law-keepers then faith is null and the promise void. Same tune, all the way through.

2. What “all Israel” was doing at the end of the chapter

▶ 0:59:30

Matt started last week at the end, with “all Israel will be saved,” and he stood by that reading here. In the Old Testament and in first-century Judea the phrase is close to a technical term — the complete tribal structure descended from Jacob. Not every individual, since you could marry in or be cut off, but the whole structure. Paul knew his Old Testament, so he probably had that in mind.

The alternative reading, he pointed out, collapses. If “all Israel” just means everyone who will be saved, then Paul has written that everyone who will be saved will be saved — “a potato is a potato.” The point is sharper than that: God is able to bring salvation to a tribal structure so scattered that ten of its tribes were mixed into the nations “like a cake, not a salad,” and to do it in one motion with the Gentiles coming in.

3. Chosen to bring it, not to have it

▶ 1:01:23

Here is the hinge for the whole message. We tend to hear “chosen” and think “saved.” But Israel was not chosen over the other nations in order to be saved — otherwise the Egyptians stand condemned by ethnicity, which makes no sense of anything God has said. They were a kingdom of priests, and the promise was always that all the families of the earth would be blessed through them.

So restoration means more than rescue. “If they're restored, then they're restored to that,” Matt said — “not hoarding it, but shining it.” Israel was a noble instrument, a means and not an end, and that is what is at stake when Paul starts talking about them coming back.

4. Elijah's arithmetic

▶ 1:04:46

Paul opens the chapter by refusing the premise: has God rejected his people? Not at all — Paul is himself an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin. There is rejection in the room, but it is his fellow Jews rejecting Christ, not God rejecting them.

Then he reaches for Elijah. Matt gave the 1 Kings 18 cliff notes: 450 prophets of Baal, 400 of Asherah, one of Yahweh, and a contest with an audience. All day the losing side dances and cuts itself while Elijah needles them about whether their god has stepped away. At evening Elijah has the altar drenched three times in the middle of a drought — God does not need our help, and we make it hard on him anyway — and prays a short prayer. Fire falls. And then Elijah runs, alone and afraid, until God corrects the count: seven thousand who never bowed, plus instructions to anoint his own replacement.

▶ 1:07:19

> "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.
>
> ROMANS 11:4–6 ↗

The analogy holds because both halves run on the same fuel. Baal or Yahweh then, rejecting or receiving Christ now — grace through faith in either century.

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5. The stupor was a verdict, not an ambush

▶ 1:08:58

> "Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.'"
>
> ROMANS 11:7–8 ↗

Two notes. "The elect" is not a mysterious third group appearing out of nowhere; it is the people Paul has already described, receiving grace by faith. And before anyone recoils at the stupor, go read what Paul is quoting, because he quotes Isaiah constantly in this chapter.

> "For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes… And the Lord said: 'Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men…'"
>
> ISAIAH 29:9–13 ↗

The order is stated plainly: hypocrisy and refusal first, judicial hardness second. Nobody with a soft heart full of faith had hardness imposed on them by an inscrutable decree. "If you refuse the light of the world, what are you going to be left with? Darkness. And no one else to blame for it but yourself." Paul makes the same move again with David's prayer about the table becoming a snare (Romans 11:9–10) — the table standing, Matt suggested, for the whole spread of covenant privilege answered with a spoiled response.

6. Jealousy, and what full inclusion would mean

▶ 1:11:28

> "...through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous."
>
> ROMANS 11:11 ↗

The trespass, at minimum, is the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah — the shedding of the blood that buys the world's forgiveness. Gentiles bringing God glory is then meant to provoke Israel, and if the provocation works, Paul says the return is worth more than the riches already released.

▶ 1:13:43

> "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?"
>
> ROMANS 11:15 ↗

Acceptance here is not merely being saved, because chosenness was never merely being saved. Israel was a missionary kingdom. The evidence is in the details: Deuteronomy 4:6 has the nations hearing specific statutes, and Isaiah 43:21 has pagan audiences hearing God's praises — neither happens without deliberate communication.

▶ 1:15:31

Which reframes Paul's own résumé. Being an apostle to the Gentiles is not a defection from his calling as an Israelite; it is the calling, executed. He is a Benjamite walking in Israel's actual destiny. And that is why Matt hears "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" as a promise about the mission and not only the rescue. What "life from the dead" means, he left open — some read it as unprecedented revival, others as the literal resurrection following a completed commission. "Who knows. I don't know."

7. We are on the field by mercy

▶ 1:17:39

Until that day, the danger is not theological confusion. It is swagger. "They benched themselves through doubt and unbelief, and we could do the same. We don't have an inherent right to bear his name and bring glory to God in the world." Israel, sidelined by their own rejection, can return by

repentance. That return would be mercy — and our inclusion is the same mercy. “It's mercy all the way down.”

▶ 1:20:37

Then the sharpest turn of the morning. When we read the Old Testament and picture Israel as people blessed simply in order to be blessed, that is not only bad exegesis — it is a projection. “I think at the core we have an immaturity spiritually or emotionally, where we feel like God has given us grace just to have the grace, shined light on us just so that we could have light, given us mercy just so that we could have mercy, but not to be merciful.” The same reflex makes Israel the hero of every story we read, which is another projection: us center stage, God a peripheral character in his own book. Matt started to call it funny and corrected himself. “It's actually just tragic.”

8. Blessed to bless

▶ 1:23:21

So the application arrived as a string of rhetorical questions rather than a program. What have we been given? Are we keeping the light under a basket? Are we honoring God with our lips while withholding our hearts — the exact charge Isaiah brought? Jesus told a whole parable about people who receive mercy and are expected to show it, and he understood why it is more blessed to give than to receive — not because giving buys anything, but because blessing was always meant to travel. The people it travels to are near: neighbors, coworkers, and a whole world's worth of Austinites.

▶ 1:24:28

He closed by taking the pressure off. We will probably botch it, and the promise stands anyway — the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. God has never depended on our help. Being invited to give it is the grace. Matt borrowed Mark's Alpha announcement for the picture: you go, you love it, and you wish you had invited more people. Standing before Christ will be that, magnified — looking back at whatever we gave him for the love of it and thinking, that was the best thing I ever did. Which, he noted, is where Romans 12 is headed. The service ended standing, praying that the last seven seats in Alpha would fill.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- 1 Corinthians 2:2
- Romans 1:16–17
- Romans 3:1–4
- Romans 3:29
- Romans 4:14
- Romans 11:26
- Exodus 19:6
- Genesis 12:3
- 1 Kings 18
- 1 Kings 19:18
- Romans 11:4–6
- Romans 11:7–8
- Isaiah 29:9–13
- Psalm 69:22–23
- Romans 11:9–10
- Romans 11:11
- Romans 11:15
- Deuteronomy 4:6
- Isaiah 43:21
- Romans 11:29
- Matthew 5:15
- Matthew 18:23–35
- Acts 20:35
- Habakkuk 2:14
- Romans 12:1

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. When you hear the word “chosen,” what do you assume it is for? How does Israel being chosen to carry blessing rather than to keep it change the way you read your own calling?
2. Isaiah's charge was drawing near with the mouth while the heart stays far off. Where does that describe you right now, and what would it take to close the gap?
3. Matt said Israel benched themselves and we could do the same. What actually sidelines people you know — and what is nudging you toward the bench?
4. Where do you catch yourself reading Scripture with you as the protagonist and God as a supporting character? What does the story look like the other way around?
5. Name one specific way you have been blessed, and one specific person you could pass that blessing to this week.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel’s senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church’s governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope’s own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akoXXmp963s&t=3233s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.