

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

The Mysterious Mercy of God

Passages: Romans 11:25-32

Introduction: John reiterated that he believes there is one future people of God united in Christ and comprised of Jews and Gentiles together. Romans 11 captures this reality with the olive tree illustration.

John covered the key phrase in Romans 11:26 "in this way all Israel will be saved," noting that this means a large number of ethnic Israelites will believe in Christ in the future. This is referred to as a future large-scale conversion or mass ingathering. Historic pre-millennialists typically hold this view as do dispensational pre-millennialists. Some amillennialists also hold to a large future ingathering, while others do not. Post-millennialists are also split on the issue.

Additional passages: Genesis 17:12-13; Exodus 12:37-38, 21:43-44, 48-49; 34:6-7; Leviticus 19:33-34; Romans 9:6-7, 11:5-6; Ephesians 2:1-10.

Questions:

1. John talked about the glorious mercy of God that Romans 11:30-32 extolls. Romans 11:5-6 makes it clear that all are saved by grace and not works, a truth Ephesians 2:1-10 expounds on. What encouragement does salvation by mercy/grace offer? How does it promote humility?
2. Read Genesis 17:12-13; Exodus 12:37-38, 21:43-44, 48-49; and Leviticus 19:33-34. What do these passages teach about how ethnic Israelites are to treat foreigners who want to join them? What must those foreigners do to become a part of God's people?
3. The church today makes up the people of God, comprised of all those who follow Jesus regardless of ethnicity, social status, economic state, or gender. How is it going with not harboring partiality in your heart against those who are not like you in these ways and instead welcoming and embracing all who possess faith in Christ?
4. John noted that it is because God is true to His promises that there will be a future large-scale conversion of Jews. He then explained exegetically how Romans 11 teaches this:
 - a. Vs. 25-26: "a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved." The partial hardening of ethnic Israel contrasted with all ethnic Israel being saved.
 - b. Vs. 17-24: the olive tree illustration that has natural branches (Jews), grafted-in branches (Gentiles), and cut-off-but-grafted-back-in natural branches (Jews) (Rom 11:17-24). All people who are part of the olive tree are believers: it was only those of faith who were saved in ancient Israel, only by faith are Gentiles saved, and only by faith can modern-day Jews be saved.

This means it is not the strength of our faith that first saves us or keeps us saved: instead, it is God's character—He will keep His word to His people. How does this strengthen your assurance of salvation?

5. Verses 30-32 extoll the glory of God's mercy. John noted that the height of the display of God's glory is His mercy (Cf. Ex 34:6-7). Is mercy what you naturally think of when you think of God's glory?
6. How does the coming of Christ strengthen the argument that God's glory is most demonstrated in His mercy?