

Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel which, according to the prophets, was to bring **all men** the definitive order of justice, love, and peace. According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by “distress” and the trial of evil which does not spare the Church and ushers in the struggles of the last days. **It is a time of waiting and watching.**

### *The glorious advent of Christ, the hope of Israel*

Since the Ascension Christ’s coming in glory has been imminent, even though “it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.” This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are “delayed.”

**The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by “all Israel,” for “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” in their “unbelief” toward Jesus.<sup>1</sup> St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.” St. Paul echoes him: “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?”<sup>2</sup> The “full inclusion” of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of “the full number of the Gentiles,” will enable the People of God to achieve “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” in which “God may be all in all.”**

### *The Church’s ultimate trial*

Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 11:25-26 <sup>25</sup> Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: **a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** <sup>26</sup> And in this way **all Israel will be saved,** ...

<sup>2</sup> Romans 11:12, 15 <sup>12</sup> Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

<sup>15</sup> For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism.

**The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection. The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world.**

### ***All Israel will be saved***

Verse 11:12: Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

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

There's a lot of debate about exactly how to understand what Paul saying here.

Romans 11:25, and 26 he says that there's a hardening that's come upon Israel for the sake of the Gentiles coming in, and then all Israel will be saved in this way. There are many different interpretations about what he envisions, but there are **three primary ones**.

**Replacement Theology:** To say "all Israel" will be saved, "all Israel" means the Church. The Church is the new Israel, and old Israel no longer represents God's chosen people. This is an untenable position (it's also anti-Semitic) since it doesn't seem to answer the questions that he's raising, namely, "What is God going to do with unbelieving Israel?"

**All Israel means All Israel:** Another position is that Paul is envisioning a giant mass conversion of living Israelites close to the end when Jesus returns or at Jesus' return, which is possible. But in that case all Israel means all unbelieving Israel at that moment, but what about those who have died.

**Conversion at the Final Moment:** And another interpretation is that at the resurrection of the dead, people who were hardened as part of this process but didn't mortally choose against God, will, when they actually see their redeemer in full, and without the misunderstandings, without all the bad preaching or the bad examples, etc., will see him and recognize him and submit on the last day, and that they will be then redeemed and forgiven their sins.

Romans is a very complicated letter. Even Paul calls this a mystery, so caution is necessary in interpretation.