

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison

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A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

Composed by Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

I. Salvation from Sin

The teachings in this section are at the absolute heart of the NT and the gospel message. It is critical for anyone trying to comprehend the Christian faith to soundly understand them.

a) Jesus Christ's Death as an Offering for Sin

God provided Jesus Christ as an offering for sin

ROM 8:3B *By sending his Son to be an offering to pay for sin, God used a human life to destroy sin.* NCV™

As such, Jesus Christ died for our sins . . .

1COR 15:3B *Christ died for our sins, as the [OT] Scriptures say.* CEV

. . . He gave himself as an offering to God, as a sacrifice for our sins

EPH 5:2 *Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.* NCV™

HEB 7:27B *Jesus brought the sacrifice for the sins of the people once and for all when he sacrificed himself.* GW

Jesus Christ is the “Lamb” who was sacrificed

1COR 5:7B *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

References to Jesus as a “Lamb” allude to him being an offering or sacrifice. Possibly the title alludes to the imagery of the suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53:7, which in turn may well be based on the use of a lamb in some sin offerings (e.g. Lev 4:32; 5:6). Alternatively, the Passover lamb (cf. 1Cor 5:7b †; Mark 14:12), which was integral to the Israelite’s redemption from Egypt, may primarily be in view. Thus references to Jesus as a “Lamb” speak of him as a sin offering and/or as an offering to pay for redemption. Both meanings are very relevant.

Jesus Christ was an unblemished offering – being without sin

HEB 9:14 [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.*

2COR 5:21A *Christ was without sin ...* GNT

In his death, Jesus Christ bore our sins

1PET 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we may cease from sinning and live for righteousness. By his wounds you were healed.*

In his death Jesus Christ effectively took our sins from us and bore them and their consequences himself. Note that having no sin of his own (as discussed in the previous subsection) was critical to Jesus Christ being eligible to bear the sins of others.

Why was Jesus Christ's offering for sin necessary?

What were some similarities and differences of Jesus Christ's offering to the offerings stipulated in the Old Testament?

What did Peter mean when he said that Jesus Christ "bore our sins" (1Pet 2:24)?

b) Jesus Christ's Death and Atonement for Sin

Biblical atonement is where God in his grace accepts an offering or sacrifice of a living being (i.e. its life) as a substitute for the life of a sinner – the person's life otherwise being required for their sin. As such, God accepts the sacrifice as payment for the person's sin. The result is that sin is taken away – and so the sinner is forgiven, pronounced righteous and reconciled to God. In conjunction with this, God's wrath – provoked by sin – is appeased.

In the OT, people who had sinned brought an animal as an offering of a life, for the priests to sacrifice on their behalf to make atonement for them. Jesus Christ's offering or sacrifice of himself has a number of striking parallels with this OT practice. Furthermore, his death in fact fulfilled this requirement of the OT law once and for all, making such offerings no longer necessary. The atonement made by Jesus Christ's death is central to the Christian faith.

Jesus Christ died for us

ROM 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

GAL 2:20B [PAUL:] So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of *the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Jesus Christ died for us, in place of us, as a substitute for our lives. As such, in giving himself as an offering to God for our sin, he gave his life so that we would not have to forfeit our own lives eternally for our sin and suffer eternal "death". Instead we can have eternal life, life which extends beyond physical death. Note that because he is the Son of God, Jesus Christ's life is worth infinitely more than our lives, and so his death was an adequate sacrifice for any number of people.

As such, Jesus Christ's sacrifice of himself means that our sins can be forgiven . . .

MATT 26:28 [JESUS:] *For this is my blood of the new covenant that is being poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins.* 1SV

HEB 9:26B–28A But now, at the end of the ages, *he has appeared once for all to remove sin by his sacrifice.* ²⁷Indeed, just as people are appointed to die once and after that to be judged, ²⁸*so the Messiah was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.* ISV

... and that we can therefore be justified and righteous before God

ROM 5:9, 19 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now that *we have been justified by his blood*, how much more will we be saved from wrath through him! ... ¹⁹For just as through one man's disobedience many people were made sinners, so also *through one man's obedience many people will be made righteous.* ISV

Note that "one man's obedience" (v. 19) clearly has in view Jesus Christ's sacrifice, which was made by him in obedience to God.

Consequently, through Jesus Christ's death we can be reconciled to God . . .

COL 1:21–22 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things. ²²But *his Son became a human and died. So God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent.* CEV

... and so through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God

ROM 5:1 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ESV

Thus, Jesus Christ was the atoning sacrifice for sins, saving people from God's wrath

1JN 2:2 *It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's.* ISV

1THES 5:9 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The New Testament often refers to Jesus Christ's "blood". What is the significance of his "blood"?

How does Jesus Christ's death make atonement for sin?

How should we respond to Jesus Christ dying for us?

c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin

In the OT, references to God redeeming his people generally speak of God saving them or setting them free from oppression. In the NT, references to redemption more specifically involve the concept of setting people free by the payment of a ransom, a payment of comparable value. This reflected the use in NT times of "redeem" to denote the freeing of a slave by a payment. The NT applies such terms to Jesus Christ redeeming or freeing believers from enslavement to sin by giving his life as a ransom.

Jesus Christ gave himself as a ransom for us, to redeem us

1TIM 2:5–6 For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, *Christ Jesus, himself human*, ⁶*who gave himself as a ransom for all*, revealing God's purpose at his appointed time.

EPH 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses*, according to the riches of his grace, ...

Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .

TITUS 2:14 *He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness* and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good.

ROM 6:6–7 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] We know that *our old natures were crucified with him so that our sin-laden bodies might be rendered powerless and we might no longer be slaves to sin*. ⁷*For the person who has died has been freed from sin.* 1SV

This speaks of believers being freed from sin through Jesus Christ's death in terms of our union with him, in which we participate in his death in a spiritual sense and consequently die to sin. In v. 6, "sin-laden bodies" is a figurative term referring to our sin-laden selves – the "sinful self" (GNT, cf. NCV). Its power over us has been broken, meaning that we are no longer enslaved to sin.

. . . and Jesus Christ's death cleanses us from sin

1JN 1:7 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and *the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Sin defiles us and makes us spiritually unclean – separating us from God who is holy, set apart from sin and such uncleanness. In conjunction with redeeming us and freeing us from sin, Jesus Christ's death cleanses us from sin's defilement and the associated spiritually uncleanness. This allows us to be brought into a relationship with God (as reflected in the following two subsections).

Note that in the above verse, the word translated "cleanses" has a continuous tense, implying ongoing purification rather than a single act of purification (cf. *New Bible Commentary*). Although Jesus Christ's sacrifice is the only sacrifice needed, the cleansing from sin that it provides needs to be claimed time and again.

God's people have been bought by Jesus Christ's death . . .

REV 5:9 They [heavenly beings] were singing a new song: "You [Christ] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were killed, and *at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.*

An implication of believers being redeemed from sin by Jesus Christ's death is that they have been bought for God – to whom they are now slaves (as per the following subsection).

. . . As such, they have been freed from sin and are now slaves to God

ROM 6:22 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But now that *you have been freed from sin and have become God's slaves*, the benefit you reap is sanctification, and the result is eternal life. 15v

Note: Jesus Christ's death redeems people from the law . . .

GAL 4:4–5 But when the appropriate time had come, *God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,* ⁵*to redeem those who were under the law*, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights.

One important aspect of the redemption provided by Jesus Christ, is that we have been redeemed from bondage to the Mosaic Law – which is the sense here of “to redeem those who were under the law” (cf. CEV, NLT). As such, we are freed from the law’s regulations and rituals.

. . . and Jesus Christ’s death redeems people from the law’s consequences

GAL 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”) . . .*

The law imposes on us a curse as a consequence for sinning and breaking the law. But Jesus Christ redeemed us from this curse as he removed it from us and took it upon himself – “put himself under that curse” (NCV) – by dying for us, in our place.

In what sense and/or to what extent are we free from sin’s control?

What is meant by the assertion that we have been redeemed from the law?

How conscious are you of being a slave to God? What is one thing you ought to start doing to better live as a slave to God?

d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in people being saved

1PET 3:21 [PETER, SPEAKING TO BELIEVERS ABOUT BAPTISM:] It is not the washing away of bodily dirt, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. *It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ...* GNT

In baptism, one makes a “promise” or commitment to live in accordance with God’s will as governed by “a good conscience”. In doing so one is saved by Christ’s resurrection – the culmination of his saving work – with one’s baptism being an acknowledgement of this, signifying our faith in Christ’s saving work.

Jesus Christ's resurrection is linked to the forgiveness of sins . . .

ACTS 5:30–31 [PETER AND THE OTHER APOSTLES, TO JEWISH LEADERS:] *The God of our forefathers raised up Jesus, whom you seized and killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*

Without being resurrected Jesus could not have subsequently been exalted as Savior (and Leader), which is here implied as being integral to God’s people being given repentance and forgiveness.

. . . and Jesus Christ's resurrection is linked to justification

ROM 4:25 He was handed over to death because of our sins and *was raised to life because of our justification.* ISV

This points to God showing his acceptance of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin by raising him to life. As such, God’s resurrection of Jesus Christ validated or affirmed Christ’s sacrifice as being acceptable for the sin of humankind. And so it means we can be justified.

Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection

1COR 15:17–23 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Furthermore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. ¹⁹For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone. ²⁰But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. ²²For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then when Christ comes, those who belong to him.*

The “firstfruits” (vv. 20, 23) alludes to the firstfruits of the harvest which were offered to God. As well as preceding the rest of the harvest, they were seen as a confirmation that the rest would take place. Here the term is applied to Christ, as like the firstfruits of the harvest, his resurrection precedes and is an assurance of the resurrection of all believers.

Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil

COL 2:15 *God stripped the spiritual rulers and powers of their authority. With the cross, he won the victory and showed the world that they were powerless.* NCV™

1JN 3:8B *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* ESV

This largely has Jesus' death and resurrection in view as that by which he destroyed the devil's work of seeking to bring destruction on humankind.

Note: Jesus Christ's resurrection affirmed that he was the Messiah, the Son of God

ROM 1:3–4 It [the gospel] is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: as to his humanity, he was born a descendant of David; ⁴as to his divine holiness, *he was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death.* GNT

ACTS 2:30–33 [PETER, SPEAKING OF A PROPHECY OF DAVID:] Therefore, *since he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him with an oath to put one of his descendants on his throne,*³¹ *he looked ahead and spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah: ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, and his flesh did not experience decay.’*³² *It was this very Jesus whom God raised, and of that we are all witnesses.*³³ *He has been exalted to the right hand of God, has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you are seeing and hearing.* 15v

In vv. 30–31, Peter asserts that David had spoken (cf. vv. 35–38) of the Christ being resurrected to assume the Davidic throne, as the descendant whom God had promised David would be placed on his throne. In vv. 32–33, Peter implies that God’s resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent exaltation of Jesus to his right hand (pointing to Jesus’ enthronement) shows him to be the one – the Christ.

Did Jesus need to be raised from the dead for our sins to be forgiven?

Explain why Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection.

Who are the "spiritual rulers and powers" (Col 2:15) and what authority have they been stripped of?

II. Salvation for the World

Prior to Jesus Christ's mission, God dealt primarily with Israel, as his people. What Jesus Christ accomplished had momentous implications for all people – notably in making God's salvation, with eternal life, freely available to every person in the world. An associated outcome is that people from all nations can readily become one of God's own people.

a) The Savior of the World

God provides salvation through Jesus Christ

JOHN 3:17 For *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* ESV

1THES 5:9 *God did not choose us to suffer his anger but to have salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* GNT

As such, Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world . . .

1JN 4:14 [JOHN:] And we have seen and testify that *the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.*

. . . Jesus Christ realizes salvation and redemption

HEB 5:9 After he had finished his work, *he became the source of eternal salvation* for everyone who obeys him. GW

COL 1:13–14 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] He [God] delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of *the Son he loves*, ¹⁴*in whom we have redemption*, the forgiveness of sins.

We can only be saved through Jesus Christ

ACTS 4:12 *Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.* GNT

JOHN 14:6 *Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

The first statement is understood by some commentators to mean that: Jesus is the way to the Father because he is the truth and the life. The second statement emphatically states that he is the only way to God, one implication of which is that Jesus is the only source of salvation.

Jesus Christ will bring believers’ salvation to completion on his return

HEB 9:28B *And he will come a second time, not to offer himself for sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.* NCV™

God provides salvation through Jesus Christ. What else does God do – or has he done –through Jesus Christ?

In what sense is Jesus Christ the Savior of the world? Has he saved the whole world?

Do you think that people can only be saved through Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

b) Life through Jesus Christ

The “life” spoken of in the NT that Jesus Christ provides is often referred to as spiritual life. It involves being “alive to God” (Rom 6:11), with God’s Holy Spirit indwelling us, renewing and nourishing us. With this, we have a spiritual consciousness that enables us to live in communion with and in dependence on God, eternally. This spiritual life is only attainable through Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

God provides life through Jesus Christ

1JN 4:9B *God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him.*

As such, Jesus Christ gives spiritual life . . .

JOHN 10:10 [JESUS:] The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. *I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.* GNT

JOHN 6:35 *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.*

Jesus speaks of himself as the source of spiritual life. The phrases “never go hungry” and “never be thirsty” indicate he satisfies one’s spiritual needs, supplying what is needed for spiritual life.

. . . Likewise, Jesus Christ gives eternal life

JOHN 17:2 You [God] gave the Son power over all people so *that the Son could give eternal life to all those you gave him.* NCV™

Eternal life encompasses the spiritual life that Christians experience now, as well as its developed form of the afterlife.

So, through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death

JOHN 3:16, 36 For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that *everyone who believes in him will not perish*

*but have eternal life. ...*³⁶*The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.*

JOHN 11:25–26 Jesus said to her, *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies,*²⁶*and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

Jesus is the one through whom resurrection and life come (v. 25a). Those who believe in him will live even though they die physically (v. 25b). At a spiritual level they will never die (v. 26a), but will live eternally.

Thus, Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death

1COR 15:54–57 Now when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will happen, *“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*⁵⁵*“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*⁵⁷*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Through Jesus Christ believers are given victory over death (vv. 54–55, 57). The “sting” of death – its “power to hurt” (GNT) – comes from sin; sin’s potency in turn comes from the consequent condemnation of the sinner by the law (v. 56). So with the law no longer being what determines a believer’s righteousness – because of what Jesus Christ accomplished – death no longer has a “sting” for believers.

What does having “life in all its fullness” (John 10:10) involve? How is it different to other people’s experience of life?

To what degree do you have “life in all its fullness”? Are there factors restricting your experience of it?

If death is a result of sin and if our sins have been forgiven, why then do we have to die at all?

c) Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ

The term “Jew” basically refers to the descendants of the people of the former Israelite kingdom of Judah. In NT times these people largely lived in the southern part of the land of Israel. The term “Gentiles” refers to non-Jewish people.

In OT times it was firstly only the Israelites, then after the Babylonian captivity more specifically the Jews, who were “God’s people” and as such knew of God’s salvation. But through Jesus Christ’s mission, God has made salvation open to the Gentiles.

God has extended his salvation to the Gentiles

ACTS 28:28 [PAUL, TO JEWISH LEADERS IN ROME:] “Therefore be advised that *this salvation from God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen!*”

God has provided salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ . . .

1COR 1:21B–23 Instead, *God chose to save only those who believe the foolish message we preach.* ²²Jews ask for miracles, and Greeks want something that sounds wise. ²³*But we preach that Christ was nailed to a cross.* Most Jews have problems with this, and most Gentiles think it is foolish. CEV

God saves people through belief in the message about Jesus Christ and his death, even if it seems foolish to some.

. . . Jesus Christ died for all people

HEB 2:9A But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, so *that through God’s grace he should die for everyone.* GNT

God has made the way of faith in Jesus Christ open to Gentiles as well as Jews – there is no difference

ROM 3:22, 30 *God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: . . .* ³⁰*God is one, and he will put the Jews right with*

himself on the basis of their faith, and will put the Gentiles right through their faith. GNT

Moreover, God has given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as well as to Jews

ACTS 10:44–45 *While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to his message.⁴⁵The Jewish believers who had come from Joppa with Peter were amazed that God had poured out his gift of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles also.* GNT

What was the difference/s between God's relationship with Jews and his relationship with "Gentiles", prior to Jesus Christ's mission?

How can the death of just one person, Jesus Christ, make amends for the sins of all people?

Why would the Jewish believers have been amazed that God had poured out the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles (Acts 10:45)?

d) The Gentiles as Part of God's People

People from among the Gentiles have been accepted by God as being of his people

ACTS 10:34–35 Then Peter started speaking: “I now truly understand that *God does not show favoritism in dealing with people,* ³⁵ *but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is welcomed before him.*

ROM 9:24–25 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Whether Jews or Gentiles, we are those chosen ones,* ²⁵ *just as the Lord says in the book of Hosea, “Although they are not my people, I will make them my people. I will treat with love those nations that have never been loved.* CEV

In v. 25 Paul quotes from Hosea to show that from among the Gentiles who formerly were not God's people, would now be those who God would call his people (cf. 1Pet 2:10).

Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one

JOHN 11:51B–52 *Jesus was going to die for the Jewish people,* ⁵² *and not only for them, but also to bring together into one body all the scattered people of God.* GNT

By dying for all people, Jesus has enabled both Jews and Gentiles to become part of the one people of God.

As such, Gentiles have been included in the true “Israel”

GAL 6:15–16 For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that matters is a new creation! ¹⁶And all who will behave in accordance with this rule, peace and mercy be on them, and on *the Israel of God.*

The term “Israel of God” (v. 16) refers to those who are “a new creation” (v. 15b). It stands in contrast with circumcision (v. 15a), the sign of the old covenant with Israel as God's people. As such the term alludes to a new “Israel” – “the new people of God” (NLT), “God's true people” (CEV). This new people of God is composed not just of believing Israelites or Jews, but believing Gentiles as well.

Those who have faith are the true, spiritual children of Abraham . . .

GAL 3:6–7 The Scriptures say the same thing about Abraham: “*Abraham believed God, and God accepted Abraham’s faith, and that faith made him right with God.*” ⁷*So you should know that the true children of Abraham are those who have faith.* NCV™

. . . and God’s promise to Abraham is for all who have faith

ROM 4:16 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Therefore, *the promise is based on faith, so that it may be a matter of grace and may be guaranteed for all his [Abraham’s] descendants—not only for those who were given the law, but also for those who share Abraham’s faith, who is the father of us all.* ISV

This speaks of the promise or blessing of righteousness by faith, being given not only to believing Jews but to all who have faith.

How did Jews and Gentiles differ in relationship to God before Jesus Christ came?

What did Jesus Christ's mission change for the Gentiles?

What is involved in becoming or being a "child" of Abraham?

e) Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel . . .

MATT 10:5–6 *Jesus sent out these twelve, instructing them as follows: “Do not go to Gentile regions and do not enter any Samaritan town. ⁶Go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Jesus' directions to his disciples reflect the priority of the people of Israel, the Jews, in his own mission.

. . . and the gospel of Christ was first preached to the Jews

ACTS 11:19 Now those [believers] who had been scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, *speaking the message to no one but Jews.*

But the Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ . . .

JOHN 1:11 He came to what was his own, but *his own people did not receive him.*

Note that although the first occurrence of “own” is sometimes taken to refer to the world (cf. v. 10), the second at least is more often understood to be referring to Jesus' own people, the Jews.

. . . and many Jews strongly opposed the spreading of the gospel

ACTS 17:13 *But when the Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul had also proclaimed the word of God in Berea, they came there too, inciting and disturbing the crowds.*

The Jews' negative response to Jesus Christ brought God's judgment

LUKE 19:41–44 *As Jesus came near Jerusalem, he saw the city and cried for it, ⁴²saying, “I wish you knew today what would bring you peace. But now it is hidden from you. ⁴³The time is coming when your enemies will build a wall around you and will hold you in on all sides. ⁴⁴They will destroy you and all your people, and not one stone will be left on another. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you.”* NCV™

Jesus wept with heartfelt compassion because the people of Jerusalem had not recognized God's coming to them in himself (v. 44b) and the peace that could have come through him (v. 42). Consequently they would face destruction (vv. 43–44) – which came by the Romans in A.D. 70.

God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles, due to the Jews rejecting Christ and the gospel . . .

ROM 11:11B, 15 *But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous. . . .*¹⁵*For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

In v. 11, their “transgression” (a term akin to “sin”) refers to the Jews’ (or Israel’s) rejection of the gospel, God’s way of righteousness that is by faith in Christ.

. . . The Jews’ negative response contrasted with the responsiveness of the Gentiles

ACTS 13:45–48 *But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict what Paul was saying by reviling him.*⁴⁶*Both Paul and Barnabas replied courageously, “It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles.*⁴⁷*For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”*⁴⁸*When the Gentiles heard this, they began to rejoice and praise the word of the Lord, and all who had been appointed for eternal life believed.*

But God has left a faithful remnant of Israel . . .

ROM 11:5 *So in the same way at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.*

God did not totally reject Israel, for he has chosen a remnant from among them.

... and despite Israel's current state – which has benefited the Gentiles – Israel will be saved

ROM 11:25–26 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: *A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.* ²⁶*And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.*

In keeping with the context, the clause “all Israel will be saved” (v. 26) quite probably refers to Israel as a whole, rather than every individual Israelite or Jew.

Why were the Jews a priority for Jesus and his gospel?

Why do you think that the Jews largely rejected Jesus, in contrast to so many of the Gentiles?

In regard to Paul's statement in Rom 11:25b, was a partial hardening of Israel necessary to allow Gentiles to join God's people?

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There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to www.thebibleunpacked.net.

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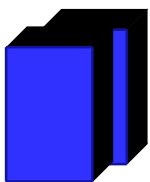
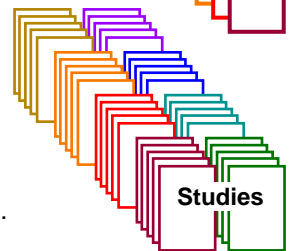
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An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/; www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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