**Romans Chapters 10-11 Study Outline**

**Roman Chapter 10**

The theme of this chapter is Israel’s present rejection. Paul moved from divine sovereignty ([Rom. 9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209)) to human responsibility. He continued the theme of righteousness introduced at the end of the previous chapter ([Rom. 9:30-33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:30-Rom%209:33)) and explains three aspects of Israel’s rejection.

**1. The Reasons for Their Rejection (**[**10:1-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:1-Rom%2010:13)**)**

You would think that Israel as a nation would have been eagerly expecting the arrival of their Messiah and been prepared to receive Him. For centuries they had known the Old Testament prophecies and had practiced the law, which was “a schoolmaster” to lead them to Christ ([Gal. 3:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal%203:24)). God had sought to prepare the nation, but when Jesus Christ came, they rejected Him. “He came unto his own [world] and his own [people] received him not” ([John 1:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%201:11)). To be sure, there was a faithful remnant in the nation that looked for His arrival, such as Simeon and Anna ([Luke 2:25-38](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%202:25-Luke%202:38)), but the majority of the people were not ready when He came.

**They did not feel a need for salvation (**[**v. 1**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:1)**).** There was a time when Paul would have agreed with his people, for he himself opposed the gospel and considered Jesus Christ an impostor. Israel considered the Gentiles in need of salvation, but certainly not the Jews. In several of His parables, Jesus pointed out this wrong attitude: The elder brother ([Luke 15:11-32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2015:11-Luke%2015:32)) and the Pharisee ([Luke 18:9-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2018:9-Luke%2018:14)) are two examples. Israel would have been happy for political salvation from Rome, but she did not feel she needed spiritual salvation from her own sin.

**They were zealous for God (**[**v. 2**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:2)**).** Ever since Israel returned to their land from Babylonian captivity, the nation had been cured of idolatry. In the temple and the local synagogues, only the true God was worshipped and served, and only the true law was taught. So zealous were the Jews that they even “improved upon God’s law” and added their own traditions, making them equal to the law. Paul himself had been zealous for the law and the traditions ([Acts 26:1-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2026:1-Acts%2026:11); [Gal. 1:13-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal%201:13-Gal%201:14)).

But their zeal was not based on knowledge; it was heat without light. Sad to say, many religious people today are making the same mistake. They think that their good works and religious deeds will save them, when actually these practices are keeping them from being saved. Certainly many of them are sincere and devout, but sincerity and devotion will never save the soul. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” ([Rom. 3:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%203:20)).

**They were proud and self-righteous (**[**v. 3**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:3)**).** Israel was ignorant of God’s righteousness, not because they had never been told, but because they refused to learn. There is an ignorance that comes from lack of opportunity, but Israel had had many opportunities to be saved. In their case, it was an ignorance that stemmed from willful, stubborn resistance to the truth. They would not submit to God. They were proud of their own good works and religious self-righteousness and would not admit their sins and trust the Savior. Paul had made the same mistake before he met the Lord ([Phil. 3:1-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Phil%203:1-Phil%203:11)).

[**They misunderstood their own law (vv. 4-13).**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+10&version=NKJV&resource_entry=wiersbe-be-bible-study/they-misunderstood-their-own-law-vv-4-13&tab=study)

**They misunderstood their own law (**[**vv. 4-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:4-Rom%2010:13)**).** Everything about the Jewish religion pointed to the coming Messiah–their sacrifices, priesthood, temple services, religious festivals, and covenants. Their law told them they were sinners in need of a Savior. But instead of letting the law bring them to Christ ([Gal. 3:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal%203:24)), they worshipped their law and rejected their Savior. The law was a signpost, pointing the way. But it could never take them to their destination. The law cannot give righteousness; it only leads the sinner to the Savior who can give righteousness.

Christ is “the end of the law” in the sense that through His death and resurrection, He has terminated the ministry of the law for those who believe. The law is ended as far as Christians are concerned. The righteousness of the law is being fulfilled in the life of the believer through the power of the Spirit ([Rom. 8:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%208:4)), but the reign of the law has ended (see [Eph. 2:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph%202:15); [Col. 2:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Col%202:14)). “For ye are not under the law, but under grace” ([Rom. 6:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%206:14)).

Paul quoted from the Old Testament to prove to his readers that they did not even understand their own law. He began with [Leviticus 18:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev%2018:5), which states the purpose of the law: If you obey it, you live.

“But we did obey it!” they would argue.

“You may have obeyed it *outwardly,”* Paul would reply, “but you did not believe it from your heart.” He then quoted [Deuteronomy 30:12-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%2030:12-Deut%2030:14) and gave the passage a deeper spiritual meaning. The theme of Moses’ message was “this commandment” ([Deut. 30:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%2030:11)), referring to the Word of God. Moses argued that the Jews had no reason to disobey the Word of God because it had been clearly explained to them and it was not far from them. In fact, Moses urged them to receive the Word in their hearts (see [Deut. 5:29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%205:29); [6:5-12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%206:5-Deut%206:12); [13:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%2013:3); [30:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%2030:6)). The emphasis in Deuteronomy is on the heart, the inner spiritual condition, and not mere outward acts of obedience.

Paul gave us the spiritual understanding of this admonition. He saw “the commandment” or “the Word” as meaning “Christ, God’s Word.” So, he substituted “Christ” for “the commandment.” He told us that God’s way of salvation was not difficult and complicated. We do not have to go to heaven to find Christ, or into the world of the dead. He is near to us. In other words, the gospel of Christ–the Word of faith–is available and accessible. The sinner need not perform difficult works in order to be saved. All he has to do is trust Christ. The very Word on the lips of the religious Jews was the Word of faith. The very law that they read and recited pointed to Christ.

At this point Paul quoted [Isaiah 28:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2028:16) to show that salvation is *by faith:* “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” He quoted this verse before in [Romans 9:33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:33). He made it clear in [Romans 10:9-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:9-Rom%2010:10) that salvation is *by faith–*we believe in the heart, receive God’s righteousness, and then confess Christ openly and without shame.

Paul’s final quotation in [Romans 10:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:13) was from [Joel 2:32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%202:32), to prove that this salvation is open to everyone: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul had already proved that “there is no difference” in condemnation ([Rom. 3:20-23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%203:20-Rom%203:23)); now he affirms that “there is no difference” in salvation. Instead of the Jew having a special righteousness of his own through the law, he was declared to be as much a sinner as the Gentile he condemned.

This entire section emphasizes the difference between law righteousness and faith righteousness. The contrasts are seen in the following summary:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Law Righteousness* | *Faith Righteousness* |
| Only for the Jew | For “whosoever” |
| Based on works | Comes by faith alone |
| Self-righteousness | God’s righteousness |
| Cannot save | Brings salvation |
| Obey the Lord | Call on the Lord |
| Leads to pride | Glorifies God |

Having explained the reasons for Israel’s rejection of God’s righteousness, Paul moves into the next aspect of the subject.

**2. The Remedy for Their Rejection (**[**10:14-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:14-Rom%2010:17)**)**

This passage is often used as the basis for the church’s missionary program, and rightly so, but its first application is to the nation of Israel. The only way unbelieving Jews can be saved is by calling on the Lord. But before they can call on Him, they must believe. For the Jew, this meant believing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth truly is the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel. It also meant believing in His death and resurrection ([Rom. 10:9-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:9-Rom%2010:10)). But in order to believe, they must hear the Word, for it is the Word that creates faith in the heart of the hearer ([Rom. 10:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:17)). This meant that a herald of the Word must be sent, and it is the Lord who does the sending. At this point, Paul could well have been remembering his own call to preach the Word to the Gentiles ([Acts 13:1-3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2013:1-Acts%2013:3)).

The quotation in [Romans 10:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:15) is found in [Isaiah 52:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2052:7) and [Nahum 1:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nah%201:15). The Nahum reference had to do with the destruction of the Assyrian Empire, the hated enemies of the Jews. Nineveh was their key city, a wicked city to which God had sent Jonah some 150 years before Nahum wrote. God had patiently dealt with Nineveh, but now His judgment was going to fall. It was this “good news” that the messenger brought to the Jews, and this is what made his feet so beautiful.

Isaiah used this statement for a *future* event–the return of Christ and the establishing of His glorious kingdom. “Thy God reigneth!” (Read [Isa. 52:7-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2052:7-Isa%2052:10).) The messenger with the beautiful feet announced that God had defeated Israel’s enemies and that Messiah was reigning from Jerusalem.

But Paul used the quotation in a *present* application: the messengers of the gospel taking the good news to Israel today. The “peace” spoken of is “peace with God” ([Rom. 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%205:1)) and the peace Christ has effected between Jews and Gentiles by forming the one body, the church ([Eph. 2:13-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph%202:13-Eph%202:17)). The remedy for Israel’s rejection is in hearing the Word of the gospel and believing on Jesus Christ.

[Isaiah 53:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2053:1) was Paul’s next quotation, proving that not all of Israel would obey His Word. This verse introduced one of the greatest messianic chapters in the Old Testament. Traditionally, Jewish scholars have applied [Isaiah 53](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2053) to the nation of Israel rather than to Messiah, but many ancient rabbis saw in it a picture of a suffering Messiah bearing the sins of His people (see [Acts 8:26-40](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%208:26-Acts%208:40)). In Isaiah’s day, the people did not believe God’s Word, nor do they believe it today. [John 12:37-41](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2012:37-John%2012:41) cites [Isaiah 53:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2053:1) to explain how the nation saw Christ’s miracles and still refused to believe. Because they would not believe, judgment came on them and they could not believe.

Note that trusting Christ is not only a matter of believing, but also obeying. Not to believe in Christ is to disobey God. God “commandeth all men everywhere to repent” ([Acts 17:30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2017:30)). [Romans 6:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%206:17) also equates “believing” and “obeying.” True faith must touch the will and result in a changed life.

**3. The Results of Their Rejection (**[**10:18-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:18-Rom%2010:21)**)**

There are three results, and each of them is supported by a quotation from the Old Testament.

1. **Israel is guilty (**[**v. 18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:18)**).** Someone might have argued with Paul: “But how do you know that Israel really heard?” His reply would have been [Psalm 19:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2019:4), a psalm that emphasizes the revelation of God in the world. God reveals Himself in creation ([Ps. 19:1-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2019:1-Ps%2019:6)) and in His Word ([Ps. 19:7-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2019:7-Ps%2019:11)). The “book of Nature” and the “book of Revelation” go together and proclaim the glory of God. Israel had the benefit of both books, for she saw God at work in nature, and she received God’s written Word. Israel heard, but she would not *heed.* No wonder Jesus often had to say to the crowds, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” ([Matt. 11:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt%2011:15); [Mark 4:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%204:9)).

**(2) The message goes to the Gentiles (**[**vv. 19-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:19-Rom%2010:20)**).** What marvelous grace! When Israel rejected her Messiah, God sent the gospel to the Gentiles that they might be saved. This was predicted by Moses in [Deuteronomy 32:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%2032:21). Paul had mentioned this truth before in [Romans 9:22-26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:22-Rom%209:26). One reason why God sent the gospel to the Gentiles was that they might provoke the Jews to jealousy ([Rom. 10:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:19); [11:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:11)). It was an act of grace both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. The prophet Isaiah predicted too that God would save the Gentiles ([Isa. 65:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2065:1)).

As you study the New Testament, you discover that “to the Jew first” is a ruling principle of operation. Jesus began His ministry with the Jews. He forbad His disciples to preach to the Gentiles or the Samaritans when He sent them on their first tour of ministry ([Matt. 10:1-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt%2010:1-Matt%2010:6)). After His resurrection, He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem and to start their ministry there ([Luke 24:46-49](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2024:46-Luke%2024:49); [Acts 1:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%201:8)). In the first seven chapters of Acts, the ministry is to Jews and to Gentiles who were Jewish proselytes. But when the nation stoned Stephen and persecution broke loose, God sent the gospel to the Samaritans ([Acts 8:1-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%208:1-Acts%208:8)) and then to the Gentiles ([Acts 10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2010)).

The Jewish believers were shocked when Peter went to the Gentiles ([Acts 11:1-18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2011:1-Acts%2011:18)). But he explained that it was God who sent him and that it was clear to him that Jews and Gentiles were both saved the same way–by faith in Christ. But the opposition of the legalistic Jews was so great that the churches had to call a council to discuss the issue. The record of this council is given in [Acts 15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2015). Their conclusion was that Jews and Gentiles were all saved by faith in Christ, and that a Gentile did not have to become a Jewish proselyte before he could become a Christian.

**(3) God still yearns over His people (**[**v. 21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:21)**).** This quotation is from [Isaiah 65:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2065:2). “All day long” certainly refers to this present “day of salvation” or day of grace in which we live. While Israel as a nation has been set aside, individual Jewish people can be saved and are being saved. The phrase “all day long” makes us think of Paul’s ministry to the Jews in Rome when he arrived there as a prisoner. “From morning till evening” Paul expounded the Scriptures to them and sought to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah ([Acts 28:23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2028:23)). Through Paul, God was stretching out His arms of love to His disobedient people, yearning over them, and asking them to return. God’s favor to the Gentiles did not change His love for the Jews.

God wants to use us to share the gospel with both Jews and Gentiles. God can use our feet and our arms just as He used Paul’s. Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem and longed to gather His people in His arms. Instead, those arms were stretched out on a cross where He willingly died for Jews and Gentiles alike. God is long-suffering and patient, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” ([2 Peter 3:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Pet%203:9)).

[**ROMANS 11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011)

For centuries people have been puzzled by the nation of Israel. The Roman government recognized the Jewish religion, but it still called the nation *secta nefaria–*“a nefarious sect.” The great historian Arnold Toynbee classified Israel as “a fossil civilization” and did not know what to do with it. For some reason, the nation did not fit into his historical theories.

Paul devoted all of [Romans 11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011) to presenting proof that God is not through with Israel. We must not apply this chapter to the church today, because Paul is discussing a literal future for a literal nation. He called five “witnesses” to prove there was a future in God’s plan for the Jews.

1. Paul Himself ([11:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:1))

“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite.” If God has cast away His people, then how can the conversion of the apostle Paul be explained? The fact that his conversion is presented three times in the book of Acts is significant ([Acts 9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209); [22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2022); [26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2026)). Certainly Dr. Luke did not write these chapters and repeat the story just to exalt Paul. No, they were written to show Paul’s conversion as an illustration of the future conversion of the nation of Israel. Paul called himself “one born out of due time” ([1 Cor. 15:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Cor%2015:8)). In [1 Timothy 1:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Tim%201:16) he stated that God saved him “that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

The accounts of Paul’s conversion tell very little that parallels our salvation experience today. Certainly none of us has seen Christ in glory or actually heard Him speak from heaven. We were neither blinded by the light of heaven nor thrown to the ground. In what way, then, is Paul’s conversion “a pattern”? It is a picture of how the nation of Israel will be saved when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth. The details of Israel’s future restoration and salvation are given in [Zechariah 12:10–13:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zech%2012:10-Zech%2013:1). The nation shall see Him as He returns ([Zech. 14:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zech%2014:4); [Acts 1:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%201:11); [Rev. 1:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rev%201:7)), recognize Him as their Messiah, repent, and receive Him. It will be an experience similar to that of Saul of Tarsus when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians ([Acts 9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209)).

This is why Paul used himself as the first witness. The *fact* that he was saved does not prove that there is a future for Israel. Rather, what is important is the *way* he was saved.

2. The Prophet Elijah ([11:2-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:2-Rom%2011:10))

Israel is God’s elect nation; He “foreknew” them, or chose them, and they are His. The fact that most of the nation has rejected Christ is no proof that God has finished with His people. In his day, Elijah thought that the nation had totally departed from God (see [1 Kings 19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Kgs%2019)). But Elijah discovered that there was yet a remnant of true believers. He thought he was the only faithful Jew left and discovered that there were seven thousand more.

Paul referred to this “remnant” in [Romans 9:27](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:27), a quotation from [Isaiah 10:22-23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2010:22-Isa%2010:23). At no time has the entire nation of Israel been true to the Lord. God makes a distinction between Abraham’s natural children and his spiritual children ([Rom. 2:25-29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%202:25-Rom%202:29)). The fact that the Jews shared in the covenant by being circumcised did not guarantee their salvation. Like Abraham, they had to believe God in order to receive His righteousness ([Rom. 4:1-5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%204:1-Rom%204:5)).

Note that this remnant is saved by grace and not by works ([Rom. 11:5-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:5-Rom%2011:6)). Note also the parallel in [Romans 9:30-33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:30-Rom%209:33). It is impossible to mix grace and works, for the one cancels the other. Israel’s main concern had always been in trying to please God with good works ([Rom. 9:30–10:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:30-Rom%2010:4)). The nation refused to submit to Christ’s righteousness, just as religious, self-righteous people refuse to submit today.

If a remnant had been saved, thus proving that God was not through with His people, then what had happened to the rest of the nation? They had been hardened (a better translation than “blinded” in [Rom. 11:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:7)). This was the result of their resisting the truth, just as Pharaoh’s heart was hardened because he resisted the truth. Paul quoted [Isaiah 29:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2029:10) to support his statement, and also referred to [Deuteronomy 29:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut%2029:4). We would expect a pagan ruler to harden himself against the Lord, but we do not expect God’s people to do so.

[Romans 11:9-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:9-Rom%2011:10) are cited from [Psalm 69:22-23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2069:22-Ps%2069:23). This psalm is one of the most important of the messianic psalms and is referred to several times in the New Testament. (Note especially [Romans 11:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:4), [9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:9), [21-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:21-Rom%2011:22).) Their “table to become a snare” means that their blessings turn into burdens and judgments. This is what happened to Israel: Their spiritual blessings should have led them to Christ, but instead they became a snare that kept them from Christ. Their very religious practices and observances became substitutes for the real experience of salvation. Sad to say, this same mistake is made today when people depend on religious rituals and practices instead of trusting in the Christ who is pictured in these activities.

Paul made it clear that the hardening of Israel is neither total nor final, and this is proof that God has a future for the nation. “[Hardness] in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” ([Rom. 11:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:25)). The existence of the believing Jewish remnant today, as in Elijah’s day, is evidence that God still has a plan for His people. Paul did not imitate Elijah’s mistake and say, “I only am left!” He knew that there was a remnant of Israel in this world who trusted God.

3. The Gentiles ([11:11-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:11-Rom%2011:15))

In [Romans 2:1-3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%202:1-Rom%202:3) Paul used the Gentiles to prove the Jews guilty of sin, but here he used the Gentiles to assure Israel of a future restoration. His logic here is beautiful. When the Jews rejected the gospel, God sent it to the Gentiles, and they believed and were saved. Three tragedies occurred in Israel: The nation *fell* ([Rom. 11:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:11)), was *lost* ([Rom. 11:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:12), “diminished”), and was *cast away* ([Rom. 11:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:15)). None of these words suggests a *final* judgment on Israel But the amazing thing is that through Israel’s fall, salvation came to the Gentiles. God promised that the Gentiles would be saved ([Rom. 9:25-26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%209:25-Rom%209:26)), and He kept His promise. Will He not also keep His promise to the Jews?

It is important to understand that the Old Testament promises to the Gentiles were linked to Israel’s “rise”–her entering into her kingdom. Prophecies like [Isaiah 11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2011) and [Isaiah 60](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2060) make it clear that the Gentiles will share in Israel’s kingdom. But Israel did not “rise”; *she fell!* What would God then do with the Gentiles? God introduced a new factor–the church–in which believing Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ ([Eph. 2:11-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph%202:11-Eph%202:22)). In [Ephesians 3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph%203), Paul called this new program “the mystery,” meaning “the sacred secret” that was not revealed in the Old Testament. Does this mean that God has abandoned His kingdom program for Israel? Of course not! Israel is merely set aside until the time comes for God’s plans for Israel to be fulfilled.

Paul stated that the Gentiles had a vital ministry to Israel. Today, the saved Gentiles provoke Israel “to jealousy” (see [Rom. 10:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2010:19)) because of the spiritual riches they have in Christ. Israel today is spiritually bankrupt, while Christians have “all spiritual blessings” in Christ ([Eph. 1:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph%201:3)). (If an unsaved Jew visited the average church service, would he be provoked to *jealousy* and wish he had what we have–or would he just be provoked?)

There is a future for Israel. Paul calls it “their fulness” ([Rom. 11:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:12)) and their “receiving” ([Rom. 11:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:15)). Today, Israel is fallen spiritually, but when Christ returns, the nation will rise again. Today, Israel is cast away from God, but one day they shall be received again. God will never break His covenant with His people, and He has promised to restore them. (See [Jer. 31:35-37](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer%2031:35-Jer%2031:37), where God links His promises to Israel to the sun, moon, and stars.)

4. The Patriarchs ([11:16-24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:16-Rom%2011:24))

**(1) The lump of dough (**[**v. 16a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:16)**).** The reference here is to [Numbers 15:17-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Num%2015:17-Num%2015:21). The first part of the dough was to be offered up to God as a symbol that the entire lump belonged to Him. The same idea was involved in the Feast of Firstfruits, when the priest offered a sheaf to the Lord as a token that the entire harvest was His ([Lev. 23:9-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev%2023:9-Lev%2023:14)). The basic idea is that when God accepts the part He sanctifies the whole.

Applying this to the history of Israel, we understand Paul’s argument. God accepted the founder of the nation, Abraham, and in so doing set apart his descendants as well. God also accepted the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, in spite of their sins or failings. This means that God must accept the “rest of the lump”–the nation of Israel.

**(2) The olive tree (**[**vv. 16b-24**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:16-Rom%2011:24)**).** This is a symbol of the nation of Israel ([Jer. 11:16-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer%2011:16-Jer%2011:17); [Hos. 14:4-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hos%2014:4-Hos%2014:6)). Please keep in mind that Paul was not discussing the relationship of individual believers to God, but the place of Israel in the plan of God. The roots of the tree support the tree; again, this was a symbol of the patriarchs who founded the nation. God made His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He cannot deny them or change them. Thus, it is God’s promise to Abraham that sustains Israel even today.

Many of the Jewish people did not believe. Paul pictured them as branches broken off the tree. But he saw an amazing thing taking place: Other branches were grafted in to the tree to share in the life of the tree. These branches were the Gentiles. In [Romans 11:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:24), Paul described this grafting in as “contrary to nature.” Usually a cultivated branch is grafted into a wild tree and shares its life without producing its poor fruit. But in this case, it was the “wild branch” (the Gentiles) that was grafted into the good tree! “Salvation is of the Jews” ([John 4:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%204:22)).

To say that the olive tree, with its natural and grafted branches, is a picture of the church would be a great mistake. In the church, “there is no difference”; believers are “all one in Christ Jesus” ([Gal. 3:28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal%203:28)). God does not look on the members of Christ’s body and see them as Jews or Gentiles. The olive tree illustrates the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the program of God. The “breaking off of the branches” is the equivalent of “the fall” ([Rom. 11:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:11)), “the diminishing” ([Rom. 11:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:12)), and “the casting away” ([Rom. 11:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:15)). To read into this illustration the matter of the eternal destiny of the individual believer is to abuse the truth Paul was seeking to communicate.

Paul warned the Gentiles that they were obligated to Israel, and therefore they dared not boast of their new spiritual position ([Rom. 11:18-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%2011:18-Rom%2011:21)). The Gentiles entered into God’s plan because of faith, and not because of anything good they had done. Paul was discussing the Gentiles collectively, and not the individual experience of one believer or another.

It is worth noting that, according to Bible prophecy, the professing Gentile church will be “cut off” because of apostasy. [First Timothy 4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Tim%204) and [2 Timothy 3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Tim%203), along with [2 Thessalonians 2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Thess%202), all indicate that the professing church in the last days will depart from the faith. *There is no hope for the apostate church, but there is hope for apostate Israel!* Why? Because of the roots of the olive tree. God will keep His promises to the patriarchs, but God will break off the Gentiles because of their unbelief.

No matter how far Israel may stray from the truth of God, the roots are still good. God is still the “God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” ([Ex. 3:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exod%203:6); [Matt. 22:32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt%2022:32)). He will keep His promises to these patriarchs. This means that the olive tree will flourish again!