

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

God has *not* cast away His people, the Israelites

Romans 11:1

The last verse of Romans chapter 10 points clearly to Israel's rejection of God and rejection of God's gospel. The Israelites have rejected God (Rom. 10:21). Thus, the logical question is this: HAS GOD REJECTED THEM? "Has God cast away His people?" The answer is a strong NO: God forbid! May such a thought never enter our minds! Perish the thought!

Paul's main argument in this chapter is made up of two parts: **1) ISRAEL'S REJECTION IS NOT TOTAL BUT PARTIAL.** The great majority of Jews have rejected God's gospel as found in the Person of Jesus Christ, but not all of them have. There was a remnant of Jews who trusted Christ, and Paul was part of this remnant (v.1). The key verse is Romans 11:5. **2) ISRAEL'S REJECTION IS NOT PERMANENT BUT TEMPORARY.** The nation will not always reject God. There is coming a great future day when the nation will be saved (verses 26-27). Both of these key ideas are found in Romans 11:25: "that blindness **IN PART** (PARTIAL) is happened to Israel, **UNTIL** (TEMPORARY) the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." The blindness is not total blindness and it is not permanent blindness! There are some Jews who see very well today! (They know Christ as their Saviour, and whereas once they were blind, now they can see!) There is coming a future day when the nation Israel will see and recognize Christ as their Messiah and Lord (Zech. 12:10).

In this chapter Paul looks at both the present and the future. As he looks at the present he sees a remnant of Jews who are saved (just a small number when compared with the total number). As he looks at the future he sees all Israel being saved. Note carefully the words that emphasize time:

1) **PRESENT**, showing that the Jews have a part in God's present program: "Even so therefore **AT THIS PRESENT TIME** there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). 2) **FUTURE**, showing that the Jews have a part in God's future program: "All Israel **SHALL BE (future tense)** saved" (Rom. 11:26), and this will take place after the fullness of the Gentiles (11:25). It's true that they have fallen, but their **fall** will be followed by their **fullness** (11:12). Their "casting away" (a different word from that of v.1) will be followed by their reception (11:15). Their being "broken off" God's salvation tree will be followed by their being grafted in (11:17,19,21,24). God has committed Himself to the nation Israel by way of promises and covenants, and because of this the nation Israel is guaranteed a wonderful future, and God will never change His mind about this (11:28-29). Israel can count on it!

"**Cast away**"=literally it means "to push or thrust away" (see Acts 7:27), and thus it takes on the meaning of "reject, repudiate (disown, refuse to have anything to do with)." Has God pushed aside His people? Has God disowned them? Has God refused to have anything to do with them now or in the future? **GOD FORBID!** Indeed, even in Romans 10:21 we saw God with His hands stretched forth unto His people! God cares!

Paul offers himself as the number one proof that God has not cast away His people: "For I also am an Israelite (and God has not cast away me!)." Paul was a saved Jew who had come to Christ and who would never be cast out (John 6:37). Notice carefully that the end of verse one defines an Israelite very specifically. An Israelite is one who is physically and literally a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and who has come out of one of the 12 tribes (in Paul's case, the tribe of Benjamin, compare Phil. 3:5). This is important because there are those today who wrongly teach that anyone who is saved and part of God's church is a true Israelite (even saved Gentiles). This is not true. God has not changed His definition of what a true Israelite is. An Israelite by believing on Christ can become a member of the Church, but becoming a member of the Church does not make a person an Israelite. A person is born an Israelite; a person is born again into the church. See our paper, **The Use of the Term**

"Israel" in the N.T.

Any Jew familiar with the Old Testament should have known that God had made a definite commitment to the nation Israel and would never CAST OFF or CAST AWAY this nation: See Jeremiah 31:35-37 and Jeremiah 33:25-26. Those who have believed on Christ today can rejoice in the truth that God has committed Himself to us in a wonderful way, with the result that we are SAFE and SECURE in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Heb. 13:5; etc.). When we sin, the Spirit of God is **GRIEVED** but He does not **LEAVE** (Eph. 4:30). When we sin, we are **CHASTENED** but we are never **CONDEMNED** (1 Cor. 11:31-32). See our paper on **Eternal Security**.

Romans 11:2-3

Paul clearly answers the question found in verse 1: "**God hath not cast away His people which (whom) He foreknew.**" God had set His love upon these people and claimed them as His own (see the discussion of the meaning of "foreknow" under Romans 8:29). Would He then go and cast them away? Certainly not! "**Wot ye not**"=know ye not; "**Elias**"=Elijah. To understand the O.T. background read 1 Kings chapter 19 (especially verses 10,14,18). When Elijah said, "**They** have killed Thy prophets, and digged (torn) down Thine altars..." he was referring to the children of Israel (1 Kings 19:10). These were dark days in the history of Israel (the northern kingdom). The king, Ahab, and his wicked, pagan wife Jezebel were leading the people away from the true worship of Jehovah to the false worship of Baal (the Canaanite fertility god). It was a time of great apostasy for the Israelites in general. Elijah felt that he was standing all alone. He felt that he was the only one left who was still honoring Jehovah, the true God. Everyone seemed to be a Baal worshipper except for himself. But Elijah was mistaken and God had to correct him.

Romans 11:4

God's answer to Elijah is found here and in 1 Kings 19:18. "**I have reserved to Myself**"=I have left/kept for myself. God had a remnant of Israelites, numbering 7000, who had not bowed the knee to Baal but had stayed loyal to Jehovah. The great majority of Israelites had turned away from the LORD and had wickedly followed Jezebel's god, but there was a minority of 7000 who had not done this. It was apparently a "silent minority" because Elijah did not know of their existence, but God knew who they were and where they were and how many there were. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Romans 11:5

What was true in Elijah's day was also true in the days of the Apostle Paul. In Elijah's day there were 7000 Israelites who had not rejected Jehovah. In Paul's day there were also thousands of Israelites who had not rejected the Lord Jesus Christ but who had believed on Him. God has not told us how many, but it is safe to say that there were probably more than 7000 Jews who had believed in Christ at the time Paul penned these words to the Romans (see Acts 2:41 and 4:4). The majority of Jews did not believe on Christ but there was a minority (a remnant) that did, and the Apostle Paul was part of this believing remnant (Rom. 11:1), as well as John, Peter, Matthew and thousands of other Jews who had trusted Christ. This remnant is called "a remnant according to the election of grace." These Jews had believed on Christ (from the human side) and they had been chosen by God (from the divine side), "not according to (their) works, but according to His own purpose and GRACE" (2 Tim. 1:9). The verb "there is" is in the perfect tense and thus means "*there has been and continues to be* a remnant according to the election of grace." In the days of Paul, not all Jews were saved. Far from it! Only a remnant (see Romans 9:27). Thank God for the believing remnant! Thank God for His gracious dealing with the Jews even after they had crucified His Son! Thank God for His gracious dealing with Saul of Tarsus, even after he had fiercely persecuted the church of God! Instead of casting away His people, God graciously reached down and saved a remnant! "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph.1:6). God in His grace even made sure that the gospel went "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16).

Romans 11:5 (continued)

Notice carefully the expression, "**at this present time.**" It is very important that we understand God's purpose and program right now, "at this present time." Many people fix their eyes upon what is taking place in the world today and they get all frustrated and flustered and even frightened because they fail to understand God's purpose and program for this present age.

What Is God Doing In The World Today?

1) **Acts 15:14** (the context: the gospel was beginning to go to the Gentiles and this bothered many Jews who did not understand what God was doing). What is God doing in the world today? He is visiting the Gentiles (the nations) to take out of them a people for His Name ("for His Name" = to show the greatness of His person, and in particular, to show the greatness of His grace. See Eph.2:7 where we learn that the church is the eternal display case or showcase for God's matchless grace).

2) **Matthew 16:18** (this was a prediction of what Christ would do in the future, beginning on the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2). What is God doing in the world today? He is building His church. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* and it refers to God's CALLED OUT assembly. God is visiting the nations taking out of them a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). Who are these people? They are God's CALLED-OUT ones, His church!

3) **1 Corinthians 12:13** (this verse explains *how* people become members of the church, which is the body of Christ). What is God doing in the world today? He is baptizing (placing) people (believers) into the body of Christ, thus making them members of God's unique and special organism.

4) **Acts 2:47**. What is God doing in the world today? He is *adding* to the church daily such as should be saved. Notice that God is saving individuals, He is not saving the world. The world system headed by Satan is condemned and is appointed to destruction. God graciously saves individuals out of this world system (John 15:19; 17:14). **Illustration:** Consider the Titanic when it was sinking. Efforts were made to save individuals who were on lifeboats or in the icy waters, but no efforts were made to save the ship which was sinking. God's purpose is not to save the world (which is sinking-- 1 John 2:17). God's purpose is not to Christianize the world so that the governments, businesses, schools, and homes of the world operate according to Biblical principles. No, God's purpose is to add to His church daily such as should be saved. God has told us to catch fish, not to clean the fishbowl.

5) **Romans 11:25** (which will be discussed in more detail when we come to this verse in location). What is God doing in the world today? He is doing a special work among the Gentiles until the full number has come in. God is daily adding more and more persons to His church (Acts 2:47) as the Church is being built (Matt. 16:18). There is coming a day when the building will be completed and the final individual will be saved and made a member of Christ's body. At that time Christ will return to receive His believers unto Himself, an event known as the rapture (John 14:2-3; 1 Thess.4:13-18; 1 Cor.15:51-52; Tit. 2:13; Phil. 3:20-21; etc.).

Romans 11:6

Grace and **works** are two principles that are utterly opposed. They are contrary one to the other. If you have grace then you can't have works. If you have works then you can't have grace. Salvation cannot be the result of grace **and** works. It must either be all of works (something which man has earned by the way he has lived) or it must be all of grace (something which God gives which man does not deserve at all).

GRACE refers to that which God gives the believing sinner as a free gift which he does not deserve and which he has not earned. It is based on God's work on the cross (Romans 3:24). **WORKS** refer to those things which a person does to try to earn God's approval and God's favor. It is based upon man's self-effort, man's feeble attempts to try to work his way to heaven. Compare Romans 4:4-5 and Galatians 2:16. Romans 4:4 speaks of **WORKS** which involve a reward (payment, wages) that is owed to the person who works. Sinful men have nothing to look forward to on the day that they receive their "paycheck" for the way they have worked and lived, because the only thing they have earned for themselves is **DEATH** (Romans 6:23). Romans 4:5 speaks of "grace" and it involves a perfect righteousness that is given as a **FREE GIFT** based upon the work already accomplished

by Christ on the cross.

Compare Ephesians 2:5-9

Notice the emphasis upon **GRACE** (verses 5,7,8) and God's free gift (v.8). Notice that since salvation is by grace, **WORKS** are excluded (v.9). Notice the different kind of works that are mentioned in v.10 (these are not the works that an unsaved person does to try to earn salvation, but these are the works that a saved person does because he is saved, and these works are based upon God's working IN THE BELIEVER--Phil. 2:12-13).

Compare Titus 3:3-8

Notice the emphasis upon **GRACE** (v.7) which is defined as God's kindness and love toward man who is totally undeserving (verses 3-4). Notice that since salvation is by grace, **WORKS** are excluded (v.5). Notice the different kind of works that are mentioned in v.8 (these are the works done by BELIEVERS, which are the fruit of God's life in the believer--Matthew 7:18; James 2:14-26).

The hymn writer says, "Oh to grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be!" Consider some of the riches of God's grace:

We are chosen by grace (Romans 11:5 "the election of grace").
 We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5,8; Acts 15:11).
 We are justified by grace (Titus 3:7).
 We are redeemed and forgiven by grace (Eph.1:7).
 We are made rich by grace (2 Cor. 8:9).
 We have our every need met by grace (2 Cor. 9:8; cf. Heb. 4:16).
 We endure difficult trials by grace (2 Cor. 12:9).
 We have eternal encouragement and hope by grace (2 Thess. 2:16).
 We come to God in prayer by grace (Heb. 4:16).
 We are taught and disciplined in the Christian life by grace (Tit. 2:11-12).
 It was even through the grace of God that we believed on Christ (Acts 18:27).
 See our paper, [The Riches of His Grace](#)

Paul summed it up this way: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). God's **grace** involves all that God has given to us which we do not deserve at all! **God's mercy** involves all that God has **not** given to us which we do deserve because of our sins! May we daily give thanks to God for His mercy and grace!

Romans 11:7

Israel (the great majority of the nation) has not obtained that which he sought for so earnestly, but the election (the small remnant of believing Jews) has obtained it. "The election" of verse 7 is equivalent to "the remnant" of verse 5. These expressions refer to those Jews who have put their trust in Christ during this present church age. "**The rest**" refers to all of the other Israelites who do not make up the believing remnant. In verse 7 we find the expressions "the rest" and "Israel" both of which refer to the great majority of Israelites who did not believe on Christ. See Romans 9:31 and 10:3. The Jews were trying to obtain God's righteousness, but they were trying to obtain it the wrong way, by the "works of the law" (Rom. 9:32). The remnant obtained it by simply putting their faith in Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes (Rom. 9:32; 10:4). These Jews were saved but **the rest** of the Jews who did not believe on Christ were **BLINDED** (or **HARDENED**), which is the same word used in Romans 11:25 (not all Jews are blind but the majority of them are). Israel's blindness is further explained in 2 Corinthians 3:14-16 and see also 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24.

The rest were "blinded" judicially. The retribution of God fell upon a people who first closed their

eyes. If a man says, "I will not," there may come a time when he will say, "I cannot" (Alva J. McClain, *Romans*, p. 198).

Romans 11:8-10

This "blindness" or "hardening" was in accord with Old Testament Scripture as Paul now shows. He first quotes from two places in Isaiah (Isaiah 29:10 and 6:9). "Spirit of slumber" means "spirit of stupor" (to be dull, insensible, without feeling). If any should have recognized the Messiah the Jews should have, but they lost their spiritual sensitivity because of unbelief. Paul then quotes David in Psalm 69:22-23 (see verses 9-10). This is a Messianic Psalm which pictures the suffering Saviour (see v.21 and compare Matthew 27:34,48; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36 and John 19:29-30). The Jewish nation rejected the crucified One and they accepted full responsibility for what they did (Matt. 27:25). We should not be surprised at the judgment which befell the nation (including their blindness and hardness of heart).

Romans 11:11

"**Stumbled**"=tripped; "**fall**"=fall into ruin, to fall in such a way as to not recover, "to fall beyond recovery" (NIV). The second word for "**fall**" is a different word meaning "a false step, transgression, sin" (namely unbelief). This same word is found in Rom. 5:20 "offence". The nation Israel sinned and fell and rejected Christ, but it was not a fatal fall. The nation has not been ruined without any hope of recovery. A better day is coming! The nation shall rise again! When Christ came the first time the nation "received Him not" (John 1:10-12). When Christ shall come the second time the nation will bless their Messiah just prior to His return (Matt. 23:39). Today the nation is blinded and God has given them "a spirit of slumber (stupor)" (Rom. 11:8). In the future the nation will be made to see (Zech. 12:10) and God will pour upon His people "the spirit of grace and supplications." The **present rejection** will be followed by a **future reception**.

Israel's present rejection and fall is a curse to Israel but a blessing to Gentiles because "**through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.**" During this present church age, the great majority of those who are members of the body of Christ are Gentiles (though we thank God for the Jewish exceptions!). God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). This is illustrated in John 1:11-12 (the Jews did not receive Christ, so God offers His salvation to ANYONE who will receive Him!). God has a purpose in Israel's fall: to bring salvation to the Gentiles. God has a purpose in bringing salvation to the Gentiles: **to provoke Israel to jealousy**, to make Israel envious (see Romans 10:19 and also Romans 11:14). When the Jews rejected their Messiah, God had the good of the Gentiles in mind and salvation was brought to them (Rom. 11:11). God, in dealing with the Gentiles during this present age, has the good of the Jews in mind, in seeking through the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy.

Three times Paul speaks about God's purpose in using the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (see Romans 10:19; 11:11 and 11:14, and compare Deut.32:21). When a person is jealous or envious he is saying, "You have something that I want. You have something very good which I don't have!" Let us now consider some of those things which the saved Gentiles now have which ought to make the Jewish people envious. These are blessings which the Jewish people should possess but they forfeited these things because of unbelief. These are blessings which the church (made up mostly of Gentiles) now possesses and enjoys in Christ. Consider the following:

| | What the Jews had or what the Jews had been promised | What the Church (made up of mostly Gentiles) now enjoys |
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What the Jews had**What the Church enjoys**

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| SALVATION | "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). | "Through their (Israel's) fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:11). "Be it know unto you (Israel), that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (Acts 28:28; cf. 13:46). |
| BLESSING | "I will bless thee and make thy name great" (Genesis 12:2). "I (the LORD) will bless them" (Num. 6:27). | "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3; cf. Gal. 3:14). |
| A SPECIAL PEOPLE | "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD God; the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people who are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). | "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people (a special people of His own), zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14 and cf. 1Pet.2:9). |
| A CHOSEN PEOPLE | "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself. The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:6-7). | But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thess. 2:13). "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). |
| REDEEMED | "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, Israel, whom God went to redeem to be His own people" (1 Chron. 17:21). | "In whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. 1:7). "For ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). |
| REST | "To whom he said, This is the rest by which ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:12; cf. 30:15). | "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29). |
| THE KINGDOM | "Behold the days come saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper... in His days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely" (Jeremiah 23:5-6; cf. Lk.1:32-33). | "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). |

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| <p>NEARNESS OF GOD</p> | <p>"For what nation is there so great, who hath God as nigh (near) unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? (Deut. 4:7).</p> | <p>"But now in Christ Jesus ye who were once far off are made nigh (near) by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).</p> |
| <p>POSSESSING GOD'S HOLY WORD</p> | <p>"And what nation is there so great, who hath statutes and ordinances as righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut.4:8)</p> | <p>"For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me . . . I have given them thy Word" (John 17:8,14).</p> |
| <p>THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS</p> | <p>"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1). "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31,34).</p> | <p>"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). "Having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:13; cf. Rom. 4:6-9). "And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17).</p> |
| <p>THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT</p> | <p>"And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). "And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land" (Ezekiel 37:14; compare Isaiah 32:15; 44:3).</p> | <p>"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Cor. 6:19) "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:9).</p> |
| <p>ACCESS TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES</p> | <p>"But into the second (the most holy place) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood" (Heb. 9:7).</p> | <p>"Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus... let us be drawing near" (Heb.10:19-22; 4:16).</p> |
| <p>CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM</p> | <p>"I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me... They answered, and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:37,39; cf. Matt. 3:9).</p> | <p>"They who are of faith are the sons of Abraham...and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed" (Galatians 3:7,9,29). "That he (Abraham) might be the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11). Note: The fact that true believers living today are spiritual children of Abraham does not mean that the church is "spiritual Israel." See the following article: The Use of the Term "Israel" in the N.T.</p> |

Romans 11:12

The "**fall**" of Israel is the "**riches of the world.**" The word "**fall**" is the same word as in verse 11 ("through their **fall** salvation is come unto the Gentiles"). The great majority of the Israeli nation have FALLEN into unbelief during this present age, but the world has benefited! The message of salvation has gone into all the world (Mark 16:15). Spiritual riches are offered to all men everywhere who will simply receive them by faith in Christ. What kind of "**RICHERS**" can the world possess? Romans 2:4--"the **riches** of God's goodness"; Eph. 1:7--"the **riches** of God's grace"; etc. That's why Christ came into the world and died on the cross--so **that we might be RICH** (2 Cor. 8:9)!

"**Diminishing**"=a lessening, decrease, loss. Because of unbelief, Israel has been on the decrease (this is illustrated well in the book of Acts where in Acts 2 the newly formed church is made up of all Jews but as you travel through the book of Acts you find fewer and fewer Jews in the church and more and more Gentiles). But Israel has a wonderful future in the plan of God. Paul speaks here of Israel's "**FULLNESS**". During this present church age it is the time of the Gentile's FULLNESS (see Rom. 11:25), but during the future millennium age it will be time of Israel's FULLNESS (Rom. 11:12). Israel is now in the "fall stage" but there is coming a day when they will be in the "fullness stage." If spiritual riches extend to the world and to the Gentiles with Israel "fallen," how much more the world shall be blessed during the time of Israel's fullness (in the millennial age: a blessed age for both Jew and Gentile). The fact that Paul speaks of Israel's FULLNESS is solid evidence that the Jews have a wonderful future prepared for them according to the purpose and plan of God.

Romans 11:13-14

Paul was the "**apostle of the Gentiles.**" See Romans 15:16; Acts 9:15 and Galatians 2:7-8). "**Office**"=ministry, service; "**magnify**"=glorify. Paul's labor of love among the Gentiles was not done without concern for the Jews. Quite the contrary. As God did His great work of salvation among the Gentiles, Paul was hoping that this would **provoke the Jews to jealousy** resulting in the salvation of some of them. Paul's concern for the salvation of his brethren the Jews is found throughout these chapters (see 9:1-4; 10:1).

Romans 11:15

"**Casting away**"--this is a different word than that which is found in verse 1. God has not cast away the Jews in the sense of repudiating them and disowning them and casting them away finally (v.1). They are still His chosen people, but many (most) of the chosen people have chosen to reject their Messiah, and because of this God cannot receive them into His favor (and in this sense they are "cast away" as in verse 15). Israel's rejection of Christ was followed by God reaching out to the world with the message of reconciliation (John 1:11-12; and see 2 Cor. 5:19-21). This verse parallels verse 12 (Israel's fall parallels Israel's casting away; Israel's fullness parallels Israel's being received; and in both verses we see how the world benefits both from Israel's fall and fullness). Israel has a glorious future to look forward to. The nation will be **RECEIVED!** Their "**casting away**" (first part of verse) will only be temporary, but there is coming a day when God will **receive** them and they will receive Him (see Zechariah 12:9-11; Matthew 23:37-39). During this present age, during Israel's casting away, the world is being reconciled. During the future age, during Israel's reception, the world will enjoy what might be described as a resurrection (life from the dead!). It will be like a brand new world (see Isaiah 11:9). The establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth will bring about sweeping and radical changes in every department of human activity, so far reaching that Isaiah speaks of its arena as "a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17). Every need of humanity will be anticipated and provided for. It is during this time that the Christmas carol will find its real fulfillment: "**JOY TO THE WORLD!**" Some of the results will be: All military warfare will be abolished (Mic.4:3); there will be perfect government (Isaiah 33:22); there will be the disappearance of physical disease and deformity (Isaiah 35:5-6; 33:24); there will be a change in the nature of animals (Isaiah 11:6-8); etc. For the classic work on the KINGDOM, see *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, by Alva McClain.

Romans 11:16

"**For**"--Paul now gives further explanation for the future national restoration of Israel, as well as for the present

status of the Gentiles. This explanation is found in these next several verses which deal with the olive tree illustration. "**Firstfruits**" refers to dough (NIV-"If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy"). "**Lump**" refers to the whole batch of dough (see Numbers 15:17-21 where the "first of your dough" is offered unto the Lord). As Murray says, "The first of the dough given unto the Lord meant the consecration of the whole lump." Paul then moves from the dough illustration to the olive tree illustration which is continued through verse 24. The entire lump (batch of dough) must be holy as was the firstfruits of the dough. So also the branches must be holy as was the root. A holy root will have holy branches. The firstfruits and root refer to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (compare Rom. 11:28 and 9:5 "the fathers"). The fathers were holy because they were chosen by God. They were separated and chosen by God for a unique purpose. Out of them would come God's special and holy nation (Deut. 7:6-8; cf. Jer. 2:2-3).

Romans 11:17

God must have branches in keeping with the root. Unbelieving Jews bear no resemblance to father Abraham who "believed God" (Gen. 15:6). The natural branches refer to Israel. The wild branches refer to the Gentiles. The cultivated olive tree refers to the place of God's blessing. The wild olive tree is not the place of blessing (cf. Eph. 2:11-13) but branches from the wild olive tree are grafted into the cultivated olive tree and are then able to partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree (Rom. 11:17). Some of the natural branches were "**broken off**," and verse 20 gives the reason why ("because of unbelief"). Wild branches were "**grafted in** among them" because of faith in Christ--compare Rom. 9:30-32--and thus are in the place of blessing. Believing Gentiles are able to enjoy God's salvation and God's righteousness and God's Spirit--see Gal. 3:14--that the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the Spirit through faith.

Romans 11:18

"**Boast not against the (natural) branches!**" Paul is here addressing the Gentiles and giving them a strong warning. They did not support the root but the root supported them, and they needed to realize this. They were in the place that they were in, not because of any merit or goodness on their part, but only because of their relationship to Abraham due to their faith in Abraham's God (Rom. 4:12,16).

Romans 11:19-20

Murray's words are fitting here: "The boasting condemned is the arrogance and presumptuous confidence to which believing Gentiles are liable when they consider the place of privilege and honour they occupy by the displacement of Israel...The person who is called upon to fill a place vacated by the exercise of discipline upon another is liable to gloat self-righteously over this advancement and look with disdain upon the fallen."

The Gentile says, "The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." Paul says, "Well said! You are quite right!" (v.20) It is true that through Israel's fall salvation is come to the Gentiles (v.11), but Gentiles need to understand why this is true. It was through unbelief that Israel fell and it was through unbelief that the natural branches were broken off. It was through faith that the Gentile stands. Thus the warning: "**Be not highminded but fear!**" Don't think that you can't fall as well! If the Jews rejected Christ in unbelief, can't the Gentiles do this as well? This warning has gone largely unheeded in the history of the church these last 2000 years as we have seen Gentiles who have thought that they could remain in the place of blessing apart from genuine faith in Christ (substituting in its place ritualism, religion, rationalism, etc.).

Romans 11:21

If God removed the natural branches (because of unbelief) which should have been part of the tree, how much more will God remove the wild, unnatural branches which shouldn't really be there at all apart from the goodness and mercy of God! If God didn't spare the Jews, why would He spare the Gentiles? If God judged unbelief in Israel, will He not judge unbelief among the Gentiles? If God's chosen people fell into unbelief, should not this make the Gentiles take heed unto themselves lest they do the same?

Romans 11:22

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (v.13), wants the Gentiles to carefully consider both the goodness (kindness) and severity (sternness) of God. God's sternness is seen in His dealing with unbelieving Israel. They have been cut off from the place of blessing. God's kindness is seen in His gracious dealing with the believing Gentiles who have been partaking in salvation blessings. **"If thou continue in His goodness."** The word "continue" is the same word as the word "abide" in verse 23. Israel is not going to remain in unbelief forever (v.23), but the Gentiles had better make sure that they remain in belief so as to continue in the goodness of God, or else they will be cut off.

Note: This passage must not be used as an argument against the solid doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. See our paper on **Eternal Security**. Paul is viewing Jews and Gentiles, but he is not viewing individuals. His point is simply this: Just as the Jews rejected Christ and were removed from the place of blessing, so also the Gentiles if they reject Christ will be likewise removed from the place of blessing. He is not speaking of an individual Gentile who believes in Christ and is saved, and then later in his life rejects Jesus Christ as Saviour, loses his salvation and goes to hell. This is a Biblical impossibility. Those whom the Father has given to Christ (true believers) shall never be lost (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30). God not only saves us, but He keeps us saved. The true believer will never fatally and finally depart from the faith (though he may have serious lapses of faith). This is well illustrated in Luke 22:31-32. Peter had a serious lapse of faith and even denied his Lord, but thanks to the intercession of Christ **his faith did not fail!** Though there are times of weakness and temptation and failure, yet God works in our hearts to keep us believing: "who are kept by the power of God **through faith** unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). This is well illustrated in Acts 27:22-31. The safety and security of these men was foretold and promised and guaranteed by God (Acts 27:22,24,25) and yet the way God kept them safe was to keep them in the ship (v.31). The security of those who are on the "ship of faith" (true believers) has been promised and guaranteed by God (John 10:27-30), and yet the way God keeps us safe is to give us repeated warnings about the danger of leaving the ship (departing from the faith). Such warnings (as in Colossians 1:23; Acts 13:43; Acts 14:22) are used by God as a means of keeping the believer safe and secure in Christ forever. A true believer ever remains on the ship of faith. He may fall down very hard on the deck (as Peter did), but he will never fall overboard!

Romans 11:23-24

Paul now gets back to his main point about the future restoration of the nation Israel (compare verses 12 and 15). **"They"** refers to Israel (the Jews). Today the Jews are in unbelief (the majority of them, though not all of them), and this is the reason they are not part of the olive tree. But if they do not remain in unbelief (that is, if they trust Christ as Saviour), then they shall be grafted in to the olive tree and once again will be in the place of blessing, partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree (compare v.17). They were put out because of unbelief (v.20) and they can get back in by believing (v.23). The God who removed them and broke them off is certainly able to graft them in again. In fact, the grafting in of the natural branches is less remarkable than the grafting in of unnatural, wild branches. What God has done to the Gentiles is **"contrary to nature."** How much more will the Jews (the natural branches) be grafted into their own olive tree? After all, that's where they belong!

Note on grafting: To **graft (verb)** means to insert a shoot or bud of one plant or tree as a graft into another plant or tree, where the **graft (noun)** continues to grow, becoming a permanent part. "The olive tree often grows wild, and so when the trees are cultivated they must be grafted. A graft of a cultivated olive tree is inserted into the stem of the wild olive tree, and then the wild olive tree is cut down close to the ground, and the part below becomes root and feeder for the inserted shoot. This is the customary process of grafting. The Apostle Paul, for the sake of argument, speaks of grafting contrary to the natural process. He tells of God grafting the wild olive of the Gentiles on the good stock of the Jewish nation, which is a reversal of custom (Rom. 11:24)" (*Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, by Fred H. Wight).

Romans 11:25

Paul did not want the Roman believers to be ignorant concerning the mystery of Israel's partial blindness during this present age. A New Testament mystery is that which has been hidden, kept secret, and not made known to

men in previous ages but has now been made manifest and made known and revealed in this present age by the New Testament apostles and prophets (see Eph. 3:4-5; 3:9; Col. 1:26; Romans 16:26). What Paul wanted the Roman believers to know was something that believers in other ages knew nothing about. Moses, David and Isaiah knew nothing about what Paul is speaking of here. Paul is speaking about a special thing that God is doing among the Gentiles during this present age (compare Acts 15:14) between the two advents of Christ, and during this time, Israel is BLIND. Concerning Israel's blindness, see 2 Corinthians 3:14-16. The blindness can be taken away from individual Jews today as they turn to the Lord Jesus; the blindness will be taken away from the nation at the second coming as the nation turns to the Lord (compare 2 Cor. 3:16 and Rom. 11:26).

Paul did not want the Gentiles to be puffed up with pride ("**lest ye should be wise in your own conceits**"), and to prevent this the Gentile believers need to understand God's present and future program for Israel. Paul makes two major points with respect to Israel's blindness: 1) **Her blindness is partial, not total.** Though most Jews are blind today, not all Jews are. There are some Jews who see very clearly because they have received Christ as their Messiah and Saviour; 2) **Her blindness is temporary, not permanent.** It lasts "**until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in**" (v.25). The fullness of Israel (v.12) will take place after the fullness of the Gentiles (v.25). What is the "fullness of the Gentiles"? The NIV translation is helpful: "until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." Today Christ is building His Church, made up primarily of Gentiles. God is visiting the nations of the world to take out of them a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). At some time in the future (a time known only to God), the full number of Gentiles will have come in (that is, all those whom God has purposed to include in His church will be gathered in and saved).

Don't confuse "the fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25) with "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk.21:24):

1) THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES involves the relationship of the Gentiles to the church during this present age. God is adding to His Church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47), and primarily (though not exclusively) it is Gentiles who are being added to this body. When the full number of Gentiles comes in, then the rapture of the church will take place (the body of Christ will be complete!).

2) THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES involves the relationship of the Gentiles to the nation Israel. As it says in Luke 21:24--"Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, **until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.**" Scofield defines this period of time as follows: "The Times of the Gentiles is that long period beginning with the Babylonian captivity of Judah, under Nebuchadnezzar, and to be brought to an end by the destruction of Gentile world-power by the 'stone cut out without hands' (Dan. 2:34,35,44), i.e. the coming of the Lord in glory (Rev. 19:11,21), until which time Jerusalem is politically subject to Gentile rule (Luke 21:24)."

Concerning "the fullness of the Gentiles" it is the Gentiles who are being saved and added to the church until the body of believers is completed. Concerning "the times of the Gentiles" it is the Gentiles who are ruling over Jerusalem and controlling it until the second coming of Christ. Though these two phrases sound similar they must be distinguished (often Rom. 11:25 is wrongly linked together with Luke 21:24 by cross-references found in the margins of Bibles, etc.). We must distinguish things that differ.

Romans 11:26

After the fullness of the Gentiles (v.25) will come the fullness of Israel (v.12; v.26 "all Israel shall be saved"). This verse clearly predicts the future salvation of the nation Israel. It also tells us when this will happen: at the time when the great DELIVERER will come out of Zion (a clear reference to Jesus Christ at the second coming--compare Isaiah 59:20). Israel has a bright future. It should be noted that the nation Israel today is not a GODLY nation. It is an unbelieving nation, and for the most part a God-rejecting nation (those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father--John 5:23, and those who deny the Son do not have the Father-- I John 2:23). But the day is coming when Christ the Deliverer will turn away ungodliness from this nation, and Israel will be a God-fearing and God-honoring nation.

Romans 11:27

Israel's national salvation (v.26) was guaranteed in a special covenant which God made with this nation. One provision in this covenant was that Israel's sins would be taken away. What covenant was this? Clearly this is a reference to THE NEW COVENANT which we read about in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (notice at the end of verse 34 the remarkable promise, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"). In verse 27 "them" and "their" refers back to "Israel" and "Jacob" in verse 26. Jeremiah 31:31 clearly indicates that the new covenant was made with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah (and thus includes the entire nation). This verse offers New Testament proof that God will fulfill His new covenant promises to the nation Israel in the future.

Note: There are many who teach that God is through with the nation Israel and that God will not keep His new covenant promises to this nation. They teach that the church is the "true Israel of God" and that the new covenant promises are being fulfilled in the church based upon such passages as Matthew 26:28; 2 Cor. 3:1-8 and Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:16-17. While it is true that believers of this age partake of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant (see passages just cited) in order to provoke Israel to jealousy (see comments under Romans 11:11), yet it is also true that Israel will receive all of her promised new covenant blessings when Christ returns, as taught in Romans 11:26-27. Indeed, verses 28-29 show the impossibility of God failing to keep these promises to Israel. Consider thoughtfully what God has said through Jeremiah concerning what would have to happen in order for Israel not to be a nation before God--Jeremiah 31:35-37 and Jeremiah 33:19-26. This is quite a challenge for all who are anti-Semitic! Quite a God-given challenge for those who wish to destroy Israel! See our paper entitled, "[Can the Jews Be Destroyed?--A Message For All Who Believe Israel Has No Future.](#)"

Romans 11:28

Concerning the gospel, the Jews were enemies; concerning the election, the Jews were chosen by God and the objects of His unalterable promises which He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the days of the early church (as seen in the book of Acts) the greatest opposition to the preaching of the gospel came from unbelieving Jews. This is perhaps most clearly seen in 1 Thess. 2:14-16 (these are very strong words, but remember that they were written by the same Apostle who wrote Romans 9:1-4 and 10:1). The unbelief and hostility of certain Jews does not alter the promises of God toward the nation which He has chosen (see Deut. 7:6-8 and Deut. 10:15). Romans 11:28 is very helpful in showing us what our attitude should be towards the Jewish people today. On the one hand we should not excuse or minimize the wrong which they do. We don't want to become so "pro-Israel" that we pretend that they can do no wrong. God has not turned away ungodliness from this nation yet (see v.26) and there are plenty of ungodly actions perpetrated by Jewish people. On the other hand we don't want to forget the very special place that this nation has in the plan and program of God, and with excitement we await the fulfillment of all of God's promises to this nation. In the days of Moses and Balaam an effort was made by the heathen to CURSE the nation Israel, but what God has blessed man cannot curse (see Numbers 23:20) because God will make good all that He has spoken and promised (see Numbers 23:19)!

Romans 11:29

Here is the reason why Israel remains the beloved nation before God! **The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.** God will not change His mind and will not alter His future plan and program for Israel. God's commitment to this nation is IRREVOCABLE (something that God will not take back!). God will not change His mind! God will not change His Word or His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. God has made a commitment to this people and He will not break it.

Romans 11:30-32

This verse is speaking of the Gentiles ("ye"= the Gentiles) and the next verse speaks of the Jews ("**these**" and "**they**"(v.31)=the Jews). The word "believe" in these verses (KJV) is actually the word "obey." As Newell has said, our Gentile history can be summed up in the words, "disobedient to God" but our present position can be summed up in the words, "have obtained mercy." God delights in being merciful to the miserable, undeserving ones! In verse 31 we learn that today the Jews are disobedient and unbelieving, but in the future they will obtain mercy also. Through Israel's unbelief Gentiles now receive mercy (v.30); through God's mercy shown to the Gentiles Israel shall someday obtain mercy (v.31). See also Romans 11:11 where we find the same truth (Israel

falls so that salvation can come to the Gentiles; the Gentiles provoke Israel to jealousy to that Israel can be saved!). God's mercy is poured out upon those who deserve only His wrath (v.32)!

Romans 11:33-36

Paul ends this section with a glorious doxology, bursting forth in praise because of the unsearchable wisdom of God. Paul's words here are in sharp contrast to the person mentioned in Romans 9:19-20 who was replying against God. In humbleness of heart Paul worships God, confessing that there is much about God and about God's ways that he does not understand, yet knowing with full confidence that God does only what is perfectly wise and best. God does not need human counselors! Rather we need to bow before Him and submit to His counsel! God is the great Teacher. We don't teach Him, but He teaches us (v.34). God is the great Giver (v.35). What do we have that we have not received from Him? (compare 1 Cor. 4:7). God does not owe us, we owe Him!

In the last verse (v.36) we see how God-centered Paul's thinking and theology was (in contrast to the many humanistic, man-centered approaches of today):

"FOR OF HIM"--literally "out of Him." God is *the Source* of all things. He is the beginning of all things. Everything comes from Him. Everything starts with Him. He is the Alpha (the first letter of the alphabet), the Beginning!

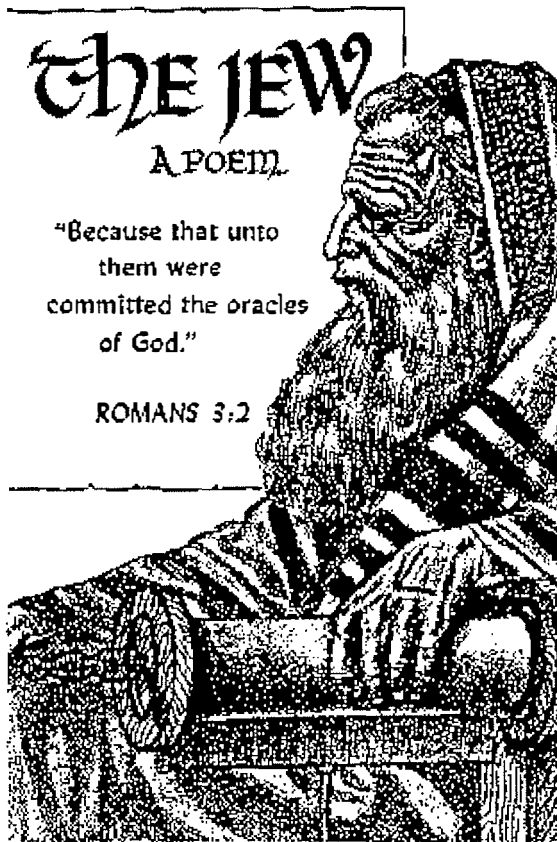
"THROUGH HIM"--everything passes through God. He is *the channel* of everything. He is totally involved in everything. Nothing can fall outside of His plan and purpose. Everything must flow through Him and nothing can be done apart from Him.

"TO HIM"--He is *the goal* of all things. Everything must end up with God. He is the final purpose and goal of all things. Not only is He the Alpha, but He is the Omega; not only is He the beginning, but He is the end! He is not only the First, but He is the Last! What can we say except, "TO HIM BE GLORY FOR EVER! AMEN!" (v.36)

See the poem **The Jew** - Showing the proper attitude Gentile believers should have towards the Jews

(NEXT PAGE)

The Christian and the Jew



The Jew

Scattered by God's almighty hand,
 Afflicted and forlorn,
 Sad wanderers from their pleasant Land,
 Do Judah's children mourn;
 And e'en in Christian countries, few
 Breathe thoughts of pity for the Jew.

Yet listen, Gentile, do you love
 The Bible's precious page?
 Then let your heart with kindness move
 To Israel's heritage;
 Who traced those lines of love for you?
 Each sacred writer was a Jew.

And then as years and ages passed,
 And Nations rose and fell,
 Though clouds and darkness oft were cast
 O'er captive Israel
 The oracles of God for you
 Were kept in safety by the Jew.

And when the great Redeemer came
 For guilty man to bleed,
 He did not take an angel's name,
 No, born of Abraham's seed,
 Jesus, who gave His life for you—
 The gentle Saviour — was a Jew.

And though His own received Him not,
 And turned in pride away,
 Whence is the Gentile's happier lot?
 Are you more just than they?
 No! God in pity turned to you—
 Have you no pity for the Jew?

Go, then, and bend your knee to pray
 For Israel's ancient race;
 Ask the dear Saviour every day
 To call them by His grace.
 Go, for a debt of love is due
 From Christian Gentiles to the Jew.

—*Author Unknown*

[Taken from a tract published by
American Board of Mission to the Jews]