

### Israel Will Return to the Lord in the Future

#### Romans 11:11-24

Romans 11:11-24 - *"I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!*

*<sup>13</sup> For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

*<sup>16</sup> For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup> And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

*<sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. <sup>22</sup> Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"*

#### Background Notes

In Romans 9-11 we learn about God's plans for the nation of Israel throughout human history. Romans 11 tells us that the nation of Israel has been set aside because of unbelief, but Israel has been set aside only **temporarily**. There will come a time in the future when the nation of Israel will turn back to the Lord. At that time, all the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament will be fulfilled literally -- to Israel! Those Old Testament promises are for the Jewish people. They are **not** to be spiritualized to the Church. The Church is not "spiritual Israel," or the so-called "New Israel." No, **the Church is the Church, and Israel is Israel!**

The Jewish people of the future will return to the Lord; their unbelief will turn to belief. In the meantime, the gospel of the Lord Jesus is going out to the whole world, and the Church, which is primarily Gentile, is being formed as the body and bride of Christ. This was all part of God's sovereign plan, right from the beginning.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Israel's rejection has resulted in great blessing to the world.

Verse 11: *"I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."* Once again in verse 11 we have a rhetorical question that expects a negative reply. The idea in this question is, "The Jewish people have not fallen from their place of privilege permanently, have they?" Reply: "No, certainly not! May it never be!" Israel's "fall" or rejection is only temporary.

In the meantime, however, Israel's temporary "rejection" has resulted in great blessing to the world. How has Israel's rejection resulted in great blessings to the world? The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, has gone out to the Gentiles all over the world! *"But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."* How many of you are grateful for this great blessing? Let's never forget to be thankful for this great blessing!

Here's another aspect of God's sovereign plans. A result of Israel's rejection and the gospel going out to all the world is that the Jews would be provoked to jealousy. Look at the end of verse 11, again: *"But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."* As the Jewish people see the blessings of God and the joy of God in Christians, it should provoke them to jealousy.

In verses 13-14 Paul said that one reason that he was an apostle to the Gentiles was that he might, by any means, *"provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them."* Paul saw this principle at work in his life -- and so should we. Call it "good" jealousy if you will. For several years we lived next to a very sincere Orthodox Jewish family. The husband told me one day that he was very unhappy with his synagogue and he felt like going to church with us because we were happy Christians! Well, that was the principle of jealousy at work -- to move our former neighbors closer to their true Messiah. They haven't recognized Him as Messiah yet, but they certainly recognize the blessing and joy that has come to our lives because of our worship of their God! Israel's rejection has resulted in great blessing to the world.

### 2. Israel's restoration will result in great blessing to the world.

Verse 12: *"Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!"* And verse 15: *"For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"*

The idea in verse 15 is: "You haven't seen anything yet!" If you think the reconciliation of the Gentiles who come to faith now is a great blessing, wait till you see the greater blessing that will come to the world in the future! When Israel is restored to the Lord, they will be a light to the Gentiles, and there will be very great blessing to the world. In comparison to the situation of the Jewish people now, the future will look like a miracle of resurrection!

Right now Israel is, by and large, spiritually dead -- but they will be brought back to life. We read about this time in Revelation 7:9. *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands...”* Israel’s restoration will result in great blessing to the world.

Paul used two illustrations or metaphors to show that Israel’s restoration is not a far-out concept, but that it is completely consistent with God’s character and His way of dealing with mankind.

Metaphor #1: *“...if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy” (v16)*. The “first-fruit and the lump” illustration comes from the Law of First Fruits in the Old Testament. The first fruits of any crop were to be set apart and offered to the Lord. According to Numbers 15, when dough was made from the first fruits, the **whole lump** of dough was considered holy, not just the piece that was presented in the ceremony. In the same way, if the first fruit of Israel was Abraham and he was set aside by God, then it should not be surprising that God will make a special, holy, set-apart “whole lump” of people in the future from the descendants of Abraham.

Metaphor #2 *“...and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree...”* Now skip down to verse 24, *“For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?”* In this illustration of the root and the branches, the root (like the first fruit) is Abraham, the father of Israel. But the olive tree does not represent Israel – it represents the “place of privilege” or “position of favor.” In the Old Testament, Israel had the place of privilege. The Jewish people were the “natural branches.” But because of Israel’s unbelief, **some** of the natural branches were broken off. Notice -- **some**, but **not all!** God has always -- remember, **always!** -- had a believing “remnant.”

As a result of the natural olive tree branches being broken off, branches from a wild olive tree were grafted in. *“And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree...” (v24)* The branches that were brought in do not represent the Church or individual Christians – the “wild olive branches” are the Gentiles who are being brought into the place of privilege, wherever the gospel is spread in the Gentile world. So the focus of God’s dealings with mankind at the present time is with the Gentiles.

Now if the Gentiles are boastful and lifted up with pride over the natural branches (v18-19), or reject the way of faith (v20) -- as the Gentile world has done for the most part -- then the wild olive branches will not be spared (v21-22). There’s no idea here of the Church being cut off, or of individual Christians losing their salvation. No, these verses teach that the arrogant, unbelieving Gentile world will be removed from the present place of privilege, and once again God’s focus will be with Israel.

It's important to see that this scenario is not inconsistent with God's character and God's ability. Verses 23-24 "*And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*" When all this comes to pass in the future -- and it will! -- Israel will become a light to the Gentiles as they were always meant to be. Israel's restoration will result in great blessing to the world.

## **Practical Application**

### **Let's preach both the goodness and the severity of God.**

Verse 22: "*Consider the goodness and severity of God. On those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*" Remember that Paul was speaking of Gentiles in general here, not to believers. As Paul preached both the goodness and severity of God, so should we.

I had to learn this lesson the hard way when I was working with the Young Life ministry – a national evangelical ministry that reaches out to teenagers. When I first started working with Young Life teens I only preached the goodness of God. Then I realized that I was not giving the whole message. The severity of God is also part of the message! "God is holy and He must judge sin. If you don't respond to His goodness, you will be cut off." As a result of presenting both goodness and severity of God, not as many kids came out to Young Life Club. People don't like to hear that side of the story. However, also as a result, some of those kids who heard the whole message became true, genuine and committed believers. Let's preach both the goodness and the severity of God!