

# Romans Chapter 11

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## Introduction:

Paul has stated for his readers (and us) that there are two Israels. Romans 9:6. There have always been two Israels -- the external one that is the nation and the true one that is called "His people." The promises to Abraham are fulfilled in this inner Israel. Redemption in Christ is for them as they turn to Him.

## THE ISRAEL WITHIN ISRAEL

### Romans 11 NLT

**(1) I ask, then, has God rejected His own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.**

- **Has God** turned against **His** chosen **people**? The reverse is true: **Israelites** had rejected **God**. The evidence that He has not **rejected His own people** is Paul himself. He can trace his lineage to **Abraham** and he is from the **tribe of Benjamin**. Paul's credentials as an **Israelite** were impeccable. So Paul was a saved **Israelite**.

**(2) No, God has not rejected His own people, whom He chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said,**

- **God had not rejected** the remnant (true Israel). Lets remind ourselves what we read in chapter 8:

**For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And having called them, He gave them right standing with Himself.**

**And having given them right standing, He gave them His glory.** (Romans 8:29-30 NLT)

- Paul now quotes from the story of **Elijah the prophet** who was complaining because he was the only true believer remaining. But Elijah was wrong.

**(3) "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."**

- Elijah didn't have the scope of information that the Lord had. God had some men that Elijah hadn't met. (1 Kings 19:10.)

**(4) And do you remember God's reply? He said, "No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!"**

- **God** clued in His prophet. (1 Kings 19:18.) **God** had a *remnant* inside the main-line nation of Israel who had not worshiped the idol **Baal**. These were the true Israel inside of the nation of Israel.

**(5) It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God's grace -- His undeserved kindness in choosing them.**

- Paul, speaking of his own time, makes the comparison. There are **faithful people** within the greater physical **Israel** who have accepted the **grace of God**.

**(6) And since it is through God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is -- free and undeserved.**

- And since the acceptance of the few was through **God's kindness**, it was not by their having done **good works** to keep the law. Law-keeping did not provide a method for paying for even one sin.

## THE HEARTS OF MAIN-LINE ISRAEL WERE HARDENED

**(7) So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have -- the ones God has chosen -- but the hearts of the rest were hardened.**

- Paul still commends what he can about his own people: they were trying to **find favor with God**. Aside from the **few** of verse 7, the **hearts** of the majority of individuals were **hardened**.

**(8) As the Scriptures say, "God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day He has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear."**

- Paul draws from and combines two Old Testament prophets:

**For the LORD has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep. He has closed the eyes of your prophets and visionaries.**

(Isaiah 29:10 NLT)

**But to this day the LORD has not given you minds that understand, nor eyes that see, nor ears that hear!**

(Deuteronomy 29:4 NLT)

- **God** has not ignored the main-line unbelieving citizen of Israel. Rather, He has **shut their eyes** and **closed their ears**. They have ignored the overwhelming evidence that Jesus was from heaven so **God** has fuzzed up their minds and set their **hearing** to ignore the preaching of the risen Jesus.
- "To this day" in Deuteronomy speaks of a time when they are about to enter the land of promise. Paul utilizes it for the time when he is writing. But individual Jews are not trapped. They can change their response to God's evidence and accept His grace.

**(9) Likewise, David said, "Let their bountiful table become a snare, a trap that makes them think all is well. Let their blessings cause them to stumble, and let them get what they**

**deserve. (10) Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their backs be bent forever."**

- Israel's hero-king **David** speaks of God' enemies and pronounces a curse on them. Let their financial success be a **snare** to them; let their **blessings** cause them to **stumble**; they are getting what they deserve for ignoring the truth. Paul was applying this to the comfortable, well-off Jews of his own day.

### **THE RESULTS OF THE JEWS BEING HARDENED**

**(11) Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But He wanted His own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves.**

- Was all of Israel **beyond recovery**? No, but God made **salvation available to the Gentiles** in order to make Israel **jealous** so they would **claim** salvation the right way and not by obedience to the law. So the hardening of Israel played a part in the conversion of Gentiles. This, in turn, led to the conversion of more of God's people.

**(12) Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.**

- **The Gentiles were enriched** by **Israel's** refusal and that was a **blessing** to them. A case of these very principles is seen in Paul's experience in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia:

**The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord. But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the**

**Gentiles. For the Lord gave us this command when he said, 'I have made You a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.'**"

**When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. (Acts 13:44-48 NLT)**

- One school of thought is that all Israel will turn and be saved at some point in time. Advocates of this view foresee a time when the full nation of Israel will make a mass-move towards Jesus. However, Paul is talking about individual Israelites turning and coming to Jesus. In verse 14, he speaks of the "people of Israel," not the the entire nation.

If turning an entire nation to His way was intended, it would have had much more attention in the Scriptures than this single verse.

**(13) I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, (14) for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them.**

- Paul reveals that he is now addressing the **Gentile** component of the church at Rome. God had sent him to **Gentiles** in particular, but in Paul's plans, he wanted his successful work of winning **Gentiles** to make his Jewish countrymen **jealous** so they would also accept Christ.

**(15) For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead!**

- **Life from the dead** is a phrase Paul has used elsewhere. Here is a sample:

**But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by**

**God's grace that you have been saved!** (Ephesians 2:4-5 NLT)

Paul describes the conversion of Gentiles as a resurrection in itself.

**(16) And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy -- just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.**

- **Abraham**, Isaac and Jacob were **holy** in that they were set apart by God for His purposes. They were the **root** of a **tree**. So their **descendants**, the **branches**, will be **holy** (set apart for God's service), too.
- God's remnant is not depicted as an orchard, but one **tree**. The remnant who are identified as men and women of faith are now the church. Peter says this clearly to all believers:

**But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light. "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."** (1 Peter 2:9-10 NLT)

**(17) But some of these branches from Abraham's tree -- some of the people of Israel -- have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree.**

- However, some of the **branches** of **Abraham's tree** were **broken off**, allowing God to **graft** in **branches** from a **wild olive tree**. Clearly, **grafted branches** are **Gentiles**.

- Being **grafted** as they were, the **Gentiles** could now **receive the blessings promised to Abraham and his children** and **sharing** in the ongoing **nourishment God's special olive tree**.
- The **grafting** began in earnest in Acts 10 where **God** told Peter to go with the **Gentile** men at his door. Peter, along with some local Jewish brethren, made the trip to a meeting at the home of Cornelius, a **Gentile** centurion. **God** acted directly from heaven, giving the **Gentiles** a measure of the Holy Spirit as evidence that they could be baptized into Christ. And so the **grafting** got under way. Luke, writer of Acts, quoted Peter as saying:

**"Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days. (Acts 10:47-48 NLT)**

**(18) But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.**

- There's nothing to **brag about**. Gentiles are **just a branch**, not the **root** like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**(19) "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me."**

- A Gentile could argue their importance by showing that God **broke off branches to make room for** them.

**(20) Yes, but remember -- those branches were broken off because they didn't believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. (21) For if God did not spare the original branches, He won't spare you either.**

- Paul responds to the bragging by pointing out the reason **some branches were broken off**, not to make room for Gentiles, but because they didn't **believe in Christ**. Gentiles could face the

same fate. The once-saved-always-saved view cannot be harmonized with that statement.

**(22) Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in His kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off.**

- It is popular today to speak *only* of the love of God. But that is unbalanced and therefore deceptive.

### **JEWES WHO MISSED CHRIST CAN BE GRAFTED BACK**

**(23) And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree.**

- There were some in Israel who opposed Christ, but changed their minds. One solid example is in Acts 6:

**So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. (Acts 6:7 NLT)**

These priests had been in the employ of the Jesus-haters who ran the government but they saw the light and changed their allegiance. They were **grafted** into the **tree of** God's remnant believers.

**(24) You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into His cultivated tree, He will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.**

- Since **God was willing** to **graft** Gentiles into His tree, He was **eager** to restore **original branches** to **His cultivated tree**.

**(25) I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of**



**the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ.**

- **Gentiles** coming to Christ by faith have no reason to **feel proud**. Some of the people of physical Israel (it can't be spiritual Israel) have hard hearts.

**(26) And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, "The One who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and He will turn Israel away from ungodliness. (27) And this is My covenant with them, that I will take away their sins."**

- It appears that Paul has changed his usage of **Israel**. He now uses **Israel** in the sense of *true Israel*. His quotation of Isaiah in verses 26-27 shows he is now pointing to spiritual Israel, the *remnant* who are believers in Christ.

**"The Redeemer will come to Jerusalem to buy back those in Israel who have turned from their sins," says the LORD. "And this is My covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit will not leave them, and neither will these words I have given you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children's children forever. I, the LORD, have spoken!** (Isaiah 59:20-21 NLT)

Isaiah is not pointing to the whole physical nation, but the believers within the nation. That matches another comment in the New Testament:

**May God's peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the new people of God.** (Galatians 6:16 NLT)

Or, as nearly all translations read:

**And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.** (Galatians 6:16 NASB)

**(28) Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people He loves because He chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**

- Many from the nation of **Israel** are **enemies of the Good News** to the benefit of the **Gentiles**. But God still **loves** them because of **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. Understand, they will not be saved without turning in faith. Here is an instance of the Jewish opposition from Paul's experience:

**And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, "Your blood is upon your own heads -- I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles."** (Acts 18:5-6 NLT)

**(29) For God's gifts and His call can never be withdrawn.**

- Consider the prophet Malachi:

**"I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed.**  
(Malachi 3:6 NLT)

**(30) Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against Him, God was merciful to you instead.**

- Paul spoke of this in Ephesians:

**So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself.**  
(Ephesians 2:19-20 NLT)

The hardness of the Jews caused **God** to turn to the **Gentiles** and some received His **mercy**.

**(31) Now they are the rebels, and God's mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God's mercy. (32) For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so He could have mercy on everyone.**

- Once the Gentiles were **rebels** (verse 30), but now the Jews **are the rebels**. This allows God to show His mercy to both groups. Totally absent is keeping the law -- any law -- for salvation.

**(33) Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand His decisions and His ways!**

- **God**, in His **wisdom** has opened a path that has allowed both Jews and Gentiles to turn to **Him**. This is beyond human comprehension.

**(34) For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give Him advice?**

- Job expressed this in his own question:

**Were you listening at God's secret council? Do you have a monopoly on wisdom?** (Job 15:8 NLT)

**(35) And who has given Him so much that He needs to pay it back?**

- The Lord does not owe anyone anything. He is not in debt.

**(36) For everything comes from Him and exists by His power and is intended for His glory. All glory to Him forever! Amen.**

- John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, saw into heaven and reported for the rest of us:

**And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: "Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the One sitting**

**on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever." And the four living beings said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb. (Revelation 5:13-14 NLT)**

We have now completed the main section of Romans and now we take a look at Christian living that combines Jews and Gentiles into one body.