

XI

Israel's Unbelief

ROMANS 11:1–24

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.”⁴ But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,⁸ as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.”

⁹ And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”

¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive

tree,¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.¹⁹ Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.²⁴ For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

READ | ROMANS 11:1–24

THINK ABOUT

The subject of Israel is a fascinating one. The people of Israel and the land of Israel are central to the biblical story. Paul has explained that the Messiah comes from Israel “according to the flesh” and “is the Christ who is God overall, blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:5). Calvary Church rejects the view that the church has now taken the place of Israel. That is, we do not hold to “Replacement Theology.”

Romans 11 makes it abundantly clear that ethnic and national Israel has a future, and that future includes the Promised Land!

The purposes of God, stated in the Old Testament and reaffirmed in the New Testament, are that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is central to the consummation of the plan of God for Israel.

In these verses, Paul is stating that Israel is presently in disobedience. But that unbelief is not total — there is a remnant.

APPLY

In our society, anti-Semitism is still prevalent. Why is that the case? While we do not necessarily approve everything present day Israel does, God’s purposes include the nation of Israel and the land of Israel.

“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

Let us be supporters of Israel, and reject the idea that the present day church is a spiritualized Israel.

ASK

How would you respond to a Christian who says that the church has replaced Israel, and that now in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:28).

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What are the examples Paul gives in this passage to demonstrate that there is a believing remnant today within Israel? How would you present the Gospel to a Jewish person today? What obstacles would you anticipate?

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How would you answer their objections from Scripture? Does this passage help?

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PRAY

Lord, I pray for the peace of Israel and for the salvation of the Jewish people. Help me to be a clear witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, give me wisdom and grace not only to proclaim Jesus but to display His love to all whom I meet, including my Jewish friends.

PSALM 87:1–3

“On the holy mount stands the city he founded;
the Lord loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.
Glorious things of you are spoken,
O city of God. *Selab*”

PSALM 125:1

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be moved, but abides forever.”

PSALM 130:5–8

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.”



“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” — *Perronet & Holden*

“ISRAEL’S UNBELIEF”

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