

- VV23-24. And if the Jews turn from their unbelief, God will graft them back into the tree again. Is God finished with Israel as a nation? No! These are stern warning not to presume on the goodness and mercy of God.

3. The Promise of Israel's Restoration (11:25-32)

- Paul did not want the Gentile believers to be ignorant of God's plan to restore Israel. The mystery revealed is that Israel's blindness or hardening is:
 - Partial, not total. Though most Jews are blind today, Jews are still coming to Christ. God is doing a great work among the remnants.
 - Temporary, not permanent. This blindness will last only *"until the fullness of the Gentiles"* has come in, or "until the full number or complete number of the Gentiles has come to Christ."
- At a time yet future, Christ will turn away unbelief from Israel. *"And so all Israel will be saved."*
 - One view is that by "all Israel" Paul meant all "true Israel." Those who hold to an Amillennial position take a figurative approach and define the term "Israel" as "spiritual Israel" (the Church, comprising Jews and Gentiles).
 - Most Bible teachers believe that by "all Israel" Paul meant all ethnic Israel living or all Israelites who trust in Christ at the end of the time. All Israelites will be saved who come to faith in Christ at some future time after God removes the hardening of their hearts.
- The Church is not Israel; neither are the promises given to Israel fulfilled in the Church. The time would come when, as a people, as a nation, Israel will be restored to the divine favour. Paul made a clear distinction between believing Gentiles and Israelites (11:17-24).
 - Paul uses the term "Israel" 10 times in Romans 9-11, and every reference to Israel refers to the ethnic Israel.
 - "Israel" in 11:25 and "they" in 11:28 both refer to the Jews in contrast to the Gentiles.
 - The context favors the reference to the Jewish people. Romans 11 teaches that the future conversion of Israel will be blessing to the whole world. It also speaks of the temporary hardening of Israel in the present age so that the Gentiles might be saved.
- A day will come when God finishes His work among the Gentiles and He will turn once again with mighty power in saving the Jews.
 - The plain reading of "all Israel" would take this as ALL Jews. However, many commentators agree that it does not mean every single Jew living in the end times but the great majority of Jews living at that time will turn to Christ with saving faith ("all elect Israel").
 - Paul did not say "might be saved" but "shall be saved"! This is not just a possibility but is an absolute certainty! There is a glorious future ahead when Israel will repent, turn to Christ, and be saved.

God's Unchanging Purpose (11:1-36)

- One of the greatest arguments for the truthfulness of the Bible is the continued existence of the nation of Israel (cf Deut 7:1; Gen 12:1-3). The descendants of Abraham have survived as a distinct race despite the most formidable odds. On May 14th 1948, Israel was regathered in her land, and the Jewish state of modern Israel was reborn. Twice the Jews have been destroyed as a nation and dragged away to the far corners of the earth as slaves. Twice they have returned to Israel and re-established their nation (Isa 11:11). The only reason Israel exists today is because of God's promises made to the nation (Jer 31:35-37).
- Romans 11 contains Paul's most complete teaching on Israel. God still has a plan for His "chosen people." Israel's present unbelief is temporary. The time will come when God shows mercy to the nation and all Israel will be saved.

1. The Permanence of Israel (11:1-10)

- Romans 10 points clearly to Israel's rejection of God. Does that mean that God has cast away His people? [Note: Paul refers to Israel - the Jews - as "HIS people"]. Despite their present state of unbelief, God has not rejected His people.
 - Paul was a Jew, a former rabbi, and he is saved! Humanly speaking, Paul's conversion was the most unlikely event imaginable (1 Tim 1:13).
 - Elijah once thought all Israel was apostate, that he was the only faithful one left. But God has kept ("reserved" - God saw to it) 7,000 faithful remnants.
- God, previously before time began, made a choice among all the nations of the world to set His heart of affection upon the nation Israel (Deut 7:7-8). God would have to deny Himself, His own promises, and His covenant love before He would reject Israel. Known by God alone, according to the wisdom of His eternal counsel, He chose to set His heart on the nation Israel. God has not rejected His people, the Jews.
- There are 3 main views of the millennium (Rev 20:1-6) and God's promises concerning Israel:
 - Premillennialism believes that after the Second Coming of Christ, He will reign for a thousand years over the earth. Premillennialism takes a literal interpretation of God's covenants and end-times prophecy. Premillennialists see Revelation 20:1-6 as describing the future fulfillment of the promise that Christ would reign on David's throne and for God to fulfil His promises to Israel. * *Life BP Church holds to a premillennial position**
 - Amillennialism says that the Church has replaced Israel. Amillennialists interpret the 1,000 years in an allegorical manner. Jesus is right now reigning on the throne of David in heaven and the promises made to Israel are fulfilled by Christ and His Church (Jews & Gentiles) during this present age.
 - Postmillennialism believes the promises will be fulfilled in this present age to Jews who believe in Christ.

- “*There is a remnant*” - there are always Jews who believe God throughout her history. Today, the remnant is composed of Messianic Jews or Jewish Christians and are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. Even though most Jews are unbelieving, the existence of a faithful remnant of believing Jews shows that God has not cast off Israel from His covenant promises (cf 1 John 5:19). This remnant has been kept by the “*election of grace*.” God’s sovereign choice ensures that there are faithful believers in every age. None chosen will fail to be saved, and none who is not chosen will ever be saved.
- The majority of Israel suffered the judgment of God – “*were blinded*” or hardened - because of their unbelief. “*According as it is written*” - Paul quotes from OT Scriptures to show how God has predicted this blindness.
 - V8 is a quote from Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4. “*The spirit of slumber*” is an attitude of numbness towards spiritual things. Their eyes are blinded, so that even when the truth is there, they cannot see it. Their ears are deaf even when loving appeals and warnings are set before them.
 - V9 & 10 are quoted from Ps 69:22-23. David prayed that their table would become a snare for his enemies. Ps 69:22-23 predicts that the very things which should have been the source of nourishment and blessing to Israel (table means their blessings from the hand of God, which should have led them to Christ; cf. Galatians 3:24) became the occasion for their rejection of God.
- The Jews became so hardened that God caused a blindness because of their rejection of the Messiah (2 Cor 3:13-15; Luke 19:41-44). Wilful unbelief makes a person indifferent to that truth, and eventually he is unable to grasp its meaning or respond to it.

2. The Purpose of Israel’s Rejection (11:11-24)

- Israel has stumbled but they would not fall in the sense of being removed from God’s purpose and plan. Israel’s rejection of the Messiah did not thwart God’s plan. God is working out a purpose through their unbelief.
 - By divine appointment, it is so ordained that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles upon the Jews’ refusal of it (Acts 13:46, 18:5-6, 28:25-28).
 - Even in this, the salvation of the Gentiles is intended in divine providence to provoke the Jews to jealousy (Deut 32:21). God would bless the Gentiles so much that the Jews would be envious and drive them to Christ.
- It was God’s plan in the beginning for Israel to be a light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6). This plan goes back to Genesis 12:1-3, when God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees. God promised to bless Abram and make from him a great nation, so that in him ALL the families of the earth would be blessed. God’s purpose for this hardening Israel is to use it as a means of converting many Gentiles, which in turn will be a means of converting many of the hardened Jews themselves. V12 underscores the high place of the Jews. The “fall” of Israel is

the “riches of the world.” In the end times, Paul hopes that his ministry among the Gentiles will in the end stir the Israelites into following the example of the Gentile believers in accepting the gospel. God will cause the house of Israel to be strong again, to gather again. Ezekiel 37 predicts the restoration of the nation of Israel in the last day. That will be as “*life from the dead*” – a national restoration, including salvation at the end of days.

- Paul speaks of the firstfruits (Num 15:19-21) and root to affirm his belief in God’s promise to Israel. The firstfruits and root refer to the patriarchs, and if they are holy, their descendants are, too. The patriarchs were separated and chosen by God for a unique purpose. Out of them would come God’s special and holy nation. Temporarily the Jews are in unbelief, but their real character will yet appear. Israel occupies a special place in God’s plan.
 - In this analogy, Paul uses the olive tree, a symbol of Israel (Jer 11:16).
 - The natural branches are the Jews. Some of the natural branches are broken off. These are the unbelieving Jews who have rejected Jesus.
 - When the natural branches were broken off, God, the husbandman, takes the wild olive tree, takes a branch off it, and starts grafting in the wild olive branches to the cultivated olive tree. The wild branches are Gentiles, some of whom came to faith. The branches of the wild olive were grafted in among the natural branches, not instead of them. Both wild and natural branches are joined into the same cultivated tree and participate in the root and fatness.
 - The root is a reference to Abraham (& the Patriarchs) from whom the entire nation had sprung. The root and fatness of the cultivated olive tree support all the branches in the tree, both grafted and natural. This represents the promises and covenants given through the fathers.
- Unproductive branches are the unbelieving Jews, cut off temporarily. Gentiles are grafted in not as a replacement, but as an addition to the Jewish people. The Parable of the Vineyard Owner/Wicked Husbandmen (Luke 20:9-18) shows that Gentiles would be added to the kingdom (cf John 10:16). Gentiles are benefiting from all of God’s promises.
- Three times (11:18,20,25) Paul warns Gentile believers against spiritual pride.
 - VV18-20. Lest Gentiles think of themselves as superior to Jews, Paul reminds them that the root supports the branches – not the other way around. The Gentiles are no better than the Jews but are grafted into the tree by God’s grace alone.
 - V21-22. If God set aside Israel for their unbelief, He could do the same to Gentiles for their pride. God’s goodness is seen in His gracious dealing with the believing Gentiles who have been partaking in salvation blessings. God’s severity fell on those Jews who failed to exercise faith and rejected the Messiah. The Gentiles of faith must remember that they only occupy their position in the tree because of God’s unmerited grace. If some of the natural branches fell, so could some of the wild branches!