



# BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT



BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER ELEVEN



FAST FACTS

## ROMANS CHAPTER 11

- God has not cast away the Jews.
- The rejection of Christ by most of first century Israel resulted in the Gospel being taken to the Gentiles.
- Gentiles have been grafted into the “tree” of Israel.
- Gentiles must never think themselves superior to Israel, because Gentiles could not be Christians if not for the Jews.
- The joyful conversion of the Gentiles will ultimately result in Israel becoming “jealous” and returning to true worship of God.
- St. Paul concludes with a doxology proclaiming the beauty and power of God’s work.

### ON THE CD

JOHN 15:1-9

DO I READ ALL OF THE BIBLE?

DO I TITHE?

THE NEW ISRAEL

INTERACTIVE QUIZ

MUCH MORE!

## ROMANS 11

St. Paul concludes Romans chapter ten with a statement about God’s continued concern for Israel: He has consistently reached out to them, even though they disobey and rebel against Him (10:21). This leads to the opening of chapter eleven: “Has God cast away His people! Certainly not” (11:1)! For St. Paul to conclude that God has rejected Israel would be absurd, for he himself is an Israelite (11:1; see also 9:3). Furthermore, God foreknew that some first century Jews would accept Christ as their Messiah (11:2); the number was small, as in the days of the Holy Prophet Elijah when only 7,000 Israelites remained faithful to God (11:2-4), but there is nonetheless a “remnant” of Israel who accept God’s grace (11:5). Verses five and six summarize a key point from chapter nine: a person cannot make him- or herself righteous, but instead must depend upon the grace of God for righteousness.

St. Paul’s allusion in Romans 9:17-18 to God hardening Pharaoh’s heart makes it easier to understand 11:7-10. Those who rejected Christ, who rejected true knowledge of God’s plan for their salvation, were subsequently hardened and made incapable of true spiritual insight. To demonstrate that this lack of insight was foretold in the Old Testament, St. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 29:4 (Romans 11:8). Just as the ancient Israelites saw their deliverance from Egypt and yet still refused to credit this salvation to God, so some first century Jews knew about Jesus and yet still refused to accept Him. St. Paul similarly uses Psalm 69:22 as evidence that these Jews misunderstood and misused the Law, ultimately rendering themselves unable to see Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law (11:9-10). St. Paul’s point is that God allowed these Jews to suffer the inevitable consequences of their rebellion.

Romans 11:11 at first seems quite obscure: “I say then,

## THE NEW ISRAEL

The concept of the people of God involves God’s initiative in choosing His people. The Old Testament does not depict God adopting an existing nation, but instead shows Him creating a people for himself. In St. Paul’s epistles the concept of the people of God is expanded to include both Jews and Gentiles within the Church, as is seen in the Apostle’s second epistle to the predominantly Gentile church in Thessalonica: “God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, <sup>14</sup>to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). It is reinforced in 1 Thessalonians 1:4, in which the heathen Thessalonians (v. 9) accepted the gospel message preached by Ss. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy (vv. 5-6), and then became part of the “chosen remnant of Israel.”

In addition to the epistles to the Thessalonians, the image of the Church as the new Israel is explicitly stated in Galatians 6:16: “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” While the phrase “Israel of God” refers explicitly to Jewish Christians who uncompromisingly follow the Christian gospel, the fact that the rule of the gospel applies equally to Jewish and Gentile Christians incorporates both groups into the new Israel. Both faithful Jews and Gentiles are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28-29), and thus Christians are all children of the “Jerusalem above” that is the Church (4:26).

The concept of the Church as the new Israel can also be found in Romans chapters 9-11. Just as God chose Isaac and Jacob from among Abraham’s sons, so He freely chose that the Gentiles should accept the the blessing of life in Christ would then flow from them to Abraham’s descendants.

CONTINUE

have they (meaning the Jews) stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!" St. Paul is rhetorically asking, "Is Israel now completely ruined and irrelevant to God's purposes?" Hope is not lost for the Jews. First, God intends Israel to be provoked to jealousy by seeing the Gentiles enjoying the full benefits of a deep relationship with God (Romans 11:11, 13). This is a key reason for St. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (11:13): it is not only so that the Gentiles may hear the Gospel - as important as that is - but also so that Jews will see the Gentiles' joyful relationship with God and ultimately return to Him. This return to God by the Jews will be a glorious miracle equal to resurrection from the dead (11:15), and will be a blessing to the world (11:12).

St. Paul, beginning in verse thirteen, starts to address the Gentiles. He uses the example of a wild olive tree - a common tree that would have been well known by the Romans - to demonstrate the important relationship between the Jews and Gentiles. Israel - the roots and trunk of the tree - is holy; the Gentiles - branches - have been grafted on to this holy tree (Romans 11:16-17). Because God's promises to the Jews support the Gentiles, the Gentiles have no reason to consider themselves superior (11:18); in fact, they should be humbled, because they can rebel and earn God's displeasure as easily as did the Jews (11:20-22). The Gentiles should also never believe that they have replaced the Jews: those Jews who accept Christ and return to worship of the true God will be "grafted into" the people of God, once again sharing in the salvation that was promised to their people (11:23-24).

St. Paul now reveals to the Gentiles a great mystery (meaning a past secret purpose of God that is now revealed): the current hardening of Israel will lead to the "fullness of the Gentiles" being saved, and the fullness of the Gentiles being saved as a result of Israel's hardness will itself ultimately lead to the salvation of Israel (Romans 11:25-26). God has not rejected Israel: instead, as the Holy Prophet Isaiah prophesies, Jesus has come from Israel, and ultimately the Jews will turn to Him and be justified (11:26-27; see Isaiah 59:20; 27:9; Jeremiah 31:31-34). Most first century Jews may have been enemies of the Gospel, but God's promises to them remain (11:28-29).

History demonstrates that God is merciful to the disobedient. The disobedience of Israel led to mercy being shown to the previously disobedient Gentiles (Romans 11:30); the mercy shown to the Gentiles will ultimately lead to the Jews accepting God's mercy (11:31).

St. Paul concludes with a doxology proclaiming the beauty and power of God's work. We humans could never have devised a plan as wonderful and powerful as the plan of salvation that St. Paul has explained in his Epistle (Romans 11:34-35). St. Paul concludes by reminding us that God is the source - and ultimate point - of all good things (Romans 11:36).



## DO I TITHE?

By giving a tithe to God through His Church, you play a role in His redeeming work in the world. You are, in essence, using your money in a holistic spirituality that directly impacts every area of your life. Furthermore, as you contribute to the Church, you can further be blessed by seeing how God uses your contribution to bring others into a deeper relationship with Him and us.

On a personal level, your relationship with God will deepen as you make your offering to the Lord. Thanking God for His work in your life, and demonstrating this thanks in part through your monetary offerings, will increase the joy you experience in your communion with Him. Additionally, you will realize that your financial self-sacrifice both reduces your consuming interest in material things (thus exercising further control of the passions that lead to your unhappiness), and increases your dependence upon God to provide for your material needs (giving you freedom from worry (Matthew 6:24-24; Luke 12:22-34)).

You will find, in accordance with Christ's words in the Gospel according to St. Luke, that your heart will always focus on the area in which you invest your treasure. By investing your money in the Kingdom of God rather than yourself, you will become increasingly content with the blessings of your membership in that Kingdom (2 Corinthians 9:6-8; see also Proverbs 11:24; 22:9).



## SAVED BY GRACE

St. John Chrysostom explains why some people are not saved by God's grace:

*If we are all saved by grace, some might argue, why is everyone not saved? Because they did not want to be is the answer. For grace, even though it is grace, saves the willing, not those who refuse it and turn away from it.*

