

ROMANS 9:1-11:36 | GOD'S WORK FULFILLED THROUGH ISRAEL

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, Pg. 38

ROMANS 11:1-36 | GOD'S CURRENT PROGRAM: AN OVERLAP

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, Pg. 43

ROMANS 11:11-12 | THE BIG PICTURE

VERSE 11 - BLUE

In our *Rightly Divided color coding* system, we now have words in blue, indicating my interpretation that these words are directly applicable to those living in the age of Grace. I have chosen to make this interpretation because these verses describe the conditions under which we live—Israel in blindness and salvation available to non-Israel.

Understanding the Greek text "Λέγω οὖν μὴ ἐπιπίσαν ἵνα πείσωσιν" (translated as "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" in the KJV) is key. The term "ἵνα" (hina) introduces a purpose or result clause. In the context of Romans 11:11, it seems to suggest that while Israel stumbled, leading to a fall, the ultimate purpose was not their permanent fall or destruction. Rather, their stumble and fall had the broader divine purpose of leading to salvation for the Gentiles.

This revelation alone should persuade a person toward a dispensational mindset: there was a time when Israel had not stumbled, and there will be a time when Israel receives the promises of God offered to the nation.

The "fall" of Israel led to the salvation of the Gentiles because it allowed for the creation of a new spiritual entity, the Church, which includes both Jews and Gentiles. This is the "mystery" that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 3:6: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

This dispensational shift from Israel to the Church was not a plan B, but rather a part of God's plan all along, simply unrevealed. As Paul says in Romans 11:25-26, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved."

Therefore, we should recognize that the stumble of the Israelites was not a mistake, but rather a necessary part of God's plan to bring salvation to all people.

The purpose of all this has been "to provoke them unto jealousy." In this context, "them" refers to the nation of Israel. To understand this better, refer to Romans 10:19 and our notes there, which clarify that it is not the mere inclusion of Gentiles that would provoke them, but rather their becoming "no people" (lo-ammi) that would stir up their jealousy.

Understanding the Question in Romans 11:11:

It's worth noting that the phrasing of Romans 11:11, "Have they stumbled that they should fall?" can lead to a potential misunderstanding if interpreted as a simple rhetorical question.

In this potential interpretation, it may seem as though Paul is asking if Israel stumbled so as to lead to a complete fall, to which he answers with an emphatic "God forbid." This might suggest that Israel has not truly fallen, but merely stumbled.

However, upon deeper examination of the original Greek text and the contextual usage of "ἵνα" (hina), it's clear that the fall of Israel did occur, but it wasn't the ultimate purpose of their stumble. Instead, the stumble and ensuing fall of Israel served a greater divine purpose: to bring about the salvation of the Gentiles and to lead Israel into a "lo-ammi" period.

Therefore, while this verse does utilize rhetorical questioning to make a point, the intended understanding is not merely about whether Israel fell, but rather about the purpose behind this stumble and fall.

Viewing the phrase as a purpose question explains why the KJV language does, indeed, display a "fall" for Israel, thus the very wording of the KJV forces one out of the "in error" interpretation.

VERSE 12 - BLUE

I believe that the phrases "**riches of the world**" and "riches of the Gentiles" are synonymous, referring to the spiritual blessings that come from "the fall" and "**the diminishing**" of Israel. These blessings are highlighted in the two parallel phrases, which simply emphasize the blessings to the world in the dispensational change. My personal hermeneutical principle is to take all passages literally when possible, i think it would be next-to-impossible to build a "financial riches" interpretation from this verse, especially in light of Paul using the same "riches" terminology in Ephesians 3:8 and Colossians 1:27, but explicitly referring to spiritual riches.

Paul speaks of a future dispensational change and asks "**how much more their fulness?**" This suggests that, while there are riches available in the current age of grace, the day of fulness will far exceed what we have today. The term "fulness" appears to refer to God's delivery of the full promises to Israel during the Millennium. Similarly, Acts 3:21 refers to the Second

Coming as the "times of restitution of all things," which seems to align with the fulness mentioned in Romans 11:12. Additionally, Paul speaks of "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Eph. 1:10), which is also connected to the coming Messiah and His kingdom.

In essence, Paul is pointing to a future time of complete fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, a time that will bring greater blessings than those currently experienced in the age of grace. This underlines the importance of recognizing the distinct dispensational shifts in God's plan.

ROMANS 11:13-24 | THE GRAFTING OF THE GENTILES

VERSE 13 - BLUE

Paul makes it clear that he wants to talk as "the apostle of the Gentiles" and speak to "you Gentiles" for a moment. Recall that chapter 11 discusses the overlap period in which God is working with both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, there is a need to address both groups, especially related to God's current work.

Paul asserts that speaking directly to the Gentiles magnifies his office, a concept that standard Christianity is unfamiliar with. The term "magnify" comes from the Greek word "doxazo", which is related to "glory" and can be interpreted as "glorify".

It is crucial for believers to understand the uniqueness of Paul's office in God's work, as it is at the core of right division. Standard Christianity is puzzled by why God needed a separate apostle for the Gentiles when He had already appointed 12 to go into all the world. Paul's office was not merely another role, but an entirely different ministry in content. It was not merely to a different group of people, as the 12 were instructed to go "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) and "to all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Paul's office was unique in its content, not just its audience, as seen in Ephesians 3:2.

VERSE 14 - BLUE

Earlier in verse 11, Paul used the same Greek word to describe how the Jews would be provoked to jealousy, and in verse 14, to emulation, which is a synonym. However, in verse 11, it was the 'lo-ammi' status of Israel, meaning 'not my people,' a term indicative of God's temporary setting aside of Israel, that would provoke them. Here, Paul adopts a more personal, and perhaps psychological, approach, suggesting that his own actions will elicit the desired provocation.

Paul understands the human spirit and how it does not like to be ignored or surpassed. Therefore, he hopes that his success among the Gentiles might provoke his fellow Jews to emulation, leading them to seek the Lord for the end of their "not my people" status. His ultimate goal is to save some of his fellow Jews, using his own ministry and efforts as a catalyst for their spiritual awakening.

VERSE 15 - BLUE

Once again, this verse showcases the concept of dispensational change, characterized by a time of 'casting away' and a time of 'receiving' in relation to the Jewish nation.

The beauty of this verse lies in its ability to present a clear yet profound timeline of events:

Dispensational Event	Result	Timing
Casting away of them (Israel)	Reconciliation of the world	Starting from Acts 9
Receiving of them (Israel)	Life from the dead	At the Second Coming

In other words, when the Jewish nation is received again and becomes "my people," it will coincide with the resurrection, and the Messiah will restore the Kingdom to Israel. This profound prophecy offers a glimpse into God's divine plan, emphasizing the significance of Israel's restoration in the grand scheme of salvation history.

VERSE 16 - BLACK

Distinct from verses 11-24, verse 16 diverges from speaking about matters directly applicable to the body of Christ and instead focuses exclusively on aspects directly related to Israel. This verse serves to remind Gentiles that Israel possesses a 'holy base' and 'holy stock,' indicating that their current situation is only temporary. Ultimately, a 'holy outcome' is assured for Israel.

The verse is written with uniquely Jewish language and concepts. For instance, the notion of a 'holy base' and 'holy stock' are reminiscent of the Hebraic understanding of holiness and the sanctity of the Israelite lineage. This stands in stark contrast to the surrounding verses, further emphasizing the unique standing of Israel in God's plan.

VERSES 17-18 - BLUE

Paul's writing habit of taking a word mentioned almost incidentally and expanding it into a full side-discussion is exemplified here. Having briefly referred to "branches" in verse 16, he launches into the renowned "grafted in" discussion. Paul is evidently referring to Israel when he speaks of "some of the branches" being "broken off," a nod to Israel's fall (vv. 11-12). He then characterizes the Gentiles as a "wild olive tree," which is likely a continuation of the metaphor rather than a loaded representation. It's plausible that any tree could have served the purpose.

Paul describes the Gentiles as being "**grafted in among them**" (preserving the archaic spelling of "grafted" for "graft"), stating that the new branches now "**partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree.**" While the "**olive tree**" is often asserted to symbolize Israel, no explicit biblical proof can be provided.

Paul counsels the grafted entity, reminding it that "**thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.**"

The main interpretive question is: "what is this root into which the branch has been grafted?" The conventional interpretation suggests that the root is Israel itself, thereby incorporating believing Gentiles into Israel. This lends itself to the notion of the body of Christ being part of Israel or becoming the new Israel.

But what if "the root" isn't Israel at all? What if the root is simply "the work of God," and the Gentiles, during this dispensation, have been grafted into God's plan and purpose? This interpretation is equally valid from a textual perspective and better aligns with the context, which doesn't support a scenario in which Israel is permanently cut off.

Finally, it's worth noting that Paul shifts from addressing the plural ("**you gentiles**" in v. 13) to the singular in vv. 17-24. This is likely a rhetorical device, shifting the discourse to speak more to the individual than the group.

VERSES 19-21 - BLUE

In verse 18, Paul initiates a warning that persists through the subsequent verses. However, standard Christian teaching often neglects this admonition, conflating the content of this passage with the doctrine of salvation. This leads to a conception of once-saved, always-Israel status. Traditional thinking within the church must grapple with the paradox of being perceived as the New Israel or a fragment of Israel, while simultaneously avoiding the risk of being cut away.

The online resource [BibleRef.com](https://www.bibleref.com), a subsidiary of GotQuestions (both of which propagate standard evangelical interpretations), provides the following commentary on verse 21:

"The only difference between the Jewish people who have been pruned by God and the Gentile Christians who have been added is faith in Christ. The Jewish branches that were pruned were taken off because of their refusal to believe. The Gentile Christians were added because they believed. Faith in Christ is the only difference. Now Paul writes that if God was willing to break off the natural branches, those Jewish people who were genetic descendants of Abraham, He certainly won't spare Gentiles who refuse to believe in Christ. Faith in Christ is their only hope of remaining connected to the tree." (What Does Romans 11:21 Mean? <https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/11/Romans-11-21.html>. Accessed July 13, 2023).

It's crucial to note that this interpretation, which asserts that God "won't spare Gentiles who refuse to believe in Christ," overlooks the critical point that the warning is explicitly addressed to those who already believe in Christ. Verse 20 emphasizes, "thou standest by faith," and verse 21 advises, "**TAKE HEED** lest he also spare not thee." The attempt to apply verse 21 to an imagined unbeliever, while verse 20 clearly speaks to a believer, seems incongruent. This inconsistent interpretation may stem from a theological bias, skewing the interpretation rather than allowing the text to articulate its own message.

VERSE 22 - BLUE

Paul underscores both the **GOODNESS** and the **SEVERITY** of God, two aspects of His character that significantly influence the conversation. Paul issues a warning that God's severity will manifest if the believing Gentile fails to "continue in **HIS** goodness," which would result in being cut off from God's favor. It is crucial, however, to avoid conflating this with the loss of salvation. Israel, despite being cut off, did not lose its salvation. Therefore, this "being cut off" can be better understood as a loss of privilege or role in God's purpose, and ceasing to be one of God's fruitful branches.

VERSES 23-24 - BLUE

In verse 23, Paul presents the possibility of Israel being grafted in again. This statement significantly implies that being grafted in is not tantamount to becoming a part of Israel. Instead, it signifies inclusion into the purpose and plan of God. Israel was once excised from this plan, and the Gentiles were incorporated, but this situation is not permanent. The reversal can and will happen again in the future. It would even be more natural since Israel, as Romans 9:4-5 affirms, is a 'natural branch.' As such, it's pivotal to understand that being grafted in doesn't signify becoming part of Israel, but rather it means being assimilated into God's overarching plan and purpose.