

Exegetical Notes - Romans 11:11-16

**“The Purpose of Israel’s Refusal to Believe:
Salvation Comes to the Gentiles”**

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Romans 11:11-16

Verse 11

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

- In Romans 11:1, Paul asks the question: “Did God reject his people?” He answers the question with an emphatic “NO.” His proof of that is himself. He was an Israelite but has come to faith in Jesus Christ and so is saved. He uses Elijah as more proof. In Elijah’s day God called out a remnant of faithful followers from among the disobedient nation of Israel. He concludes that God is still calling a faithful remnant out of Israel to salvation through faith in Jesus.
- He then asks: “Did Israel fall beyond recovery?” and his answer is, “Not at all.” Again the answer is emphatic. He explains that the purpose of Israel’s refusal to believe in Jesus was to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles and to make Israel envious so as to understand that their idea of how God works and whom he favors is incorrect.

Verse 12

But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

- He then reminds the Church (see verse 13) not to become guilty of the same sin as Israel. If Israel’s refusal to believe brought salvation to the Gentiles, the Church should be happy when Israel is restored. If God opens heaven to all of the nation of Israel, Christians should rejoice!

Verses 13-16

I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry¹⁴ in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.¹⁵ For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?¹⁶ If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

- Paul wants the Christians to know that at the end of time the Hebrew people will stand before God. They will be confronted/judged with their refusal to believe in Jesus.
- In verse 14, Paul clearly says that he “HOPES” his preaching will arouse Israel to faith so that “some of them may be saved.” All who confess Jesus as Lord and believe God raised him from the dead WILL be saved. About this there is no doubt. So, there will be a faithful remnant saved out of Israel.
- Some scholars believe that Paul’s teaching here about firstfruits and the whole batch being holy, implies that at the end of time all of Israel will be saved, meaning all Jews throughout time, not just a remnant. He is saying that God is God. If God chooses to restore all Israel, Christians should rejoice in that and not complain about God’s sovereign choice.
- However, the meaning of these verses is uncertain. If they mean that only a faithful remnant will survive, all should take heed. Either way, those who confess and believe WILL be saved. So, do not take chances. Confess and believe and you, Jew or Gentile, will be saved!

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Purpose of Israel’s Refusal to Believe: Salvation Comes to the Gentiles*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)