

28. June 2025

LETTER TO THE ROMANS

“Israel in God's plan”



Rom 10:15-21

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!” But they have not all heeded the gospel; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

In the passage we have heard, Saint Paul begins by speaking of Israel's disobedience. The chosen people received the announcement, but most of them did not accept the message. The Apostle quotes the prophecies of Sacred Scripture that were being fulfilled before their eyes. Several passages from the Old Testament, especially from the prophets, lament the disobedience and rebellion of the people of Israel. When they encountered the Messiah, they remained stubbornly closed.

In today's passage, Paul expresses the idea that by allowing His people to reject Him and by allowing other peoples to share in the divine graces and benefits that they no longer enjoy, the Lord wanted to awaken Israel's jealousy.

However, the Apostle insists that God has not rejected the Jewish people (Rom 11:1). He points out that he himself is an Israelite and quotes in this context the prophet Elijah, who thought he was alone:

“Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have demolished thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand

men who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al." So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." (Rom 11:3-6).

In fact, there were those among the Jewish people who accepted faith in Christ, together with the apostles. They are the 'chosen remnant' in whom God's promises were fulfilled, while the others remained obstinate.

Paul then goes on to explain that through Israel's stumbling, salvation came to the Gentile world to provoke jealousy among the chosen people (v. 11). But he emphasises that *"if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?"* (v. 15).

Paul then goes on to explain how the Gentiles who found the way of salvation through faith in Christ are connected to the people of the old covenant. To illustrate this, he uses the image of the olive tree. Because of the unbelief of the Israelites, some branches were broken off, while others, from the 'wild olive tree' (i.e., the Gentile nations), were grafted into the good olive tree (vv. 17-24). The Apostle warns that the Gentiles should not be proud of having been grafted in, for they too could be cut off from the good olive tree if they do not persevere in God's ways. Conversely, the Jews who were cut off can be grafted back in if they accept faith in Christ.

Then, quoting Scripture, the Apostle emphasises that all Israel will still be saved once the Gentiles have embraced faith in Christ:

"A hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." (Rom 11:25b-27).

We see, then, that Paul maintains the hope that Israel will attain salvation and that God's original plan for His people will be fulfilled. Initially, this only becomes a reality in the chosen remnant, that is, in those Jews who accepted Jesus as their Saviour and Redeemer.

Thus, a situation arises in which, on the one hand, Israel has become an enemy of Christians as far as the Gospel is concerned, since they rejected the Messiah and also persecute and fight against faith in Him. On the other hand, as far as election is concerned, they are loved, as St. Paul expresses it (v. 28).

Indeed, these two aspects must be taken into account.

We often encounter rejection and sometimes even hostility from certain Jews. But when we consider the patriarchs and prophets, the faithful remnant of Israel, we feel united with them. That is why it is so important that we pray for the Jewish people, that they may come to recognise the Messiah and share in the grace that God has planned for them.

Paul concludes these reflections with a hymn of praise to the wisdom of God, who alone is able to unite His first chosen people with the faithful from all nations:

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.” (Rom 11:33-36).

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/feast-of-the-immaculate-heart-of-mary-3/>

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/his-mother-kept-all-this-in-her-heart/>