

**GOSPEL** of *Grace*  
FELLOWSHIP

**Romans**

**Jesus Christ, Our Righteousness**

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**F** – The author of the book of Romans was the apostle Paul (1:1). Also named Saul, Paul was a Roman citizen from the city of Tarsus (which is in present-day south-central Turkey). He was a tentmaker as well as a religious leader – a Pharisee, trained under the famous first-century rabbi Gamaliel. After persecuting the church, Paul had an experience with the living Christ on the road to Damascus & became one of the most influential early followers of Jesus, going on to write about half the books & one-quarter of the content of the NT.

Paul wrote Romans around the year AD 57, possibly while in the city of Corinth on his third missionary journey.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**L** – Paul wrote this powerful letter to the church at Rome to prepare the way for a visit he hoped to make there. He presented the basic ideas of salvation to a church that had not previously received the teaching of an apostle, and he also explained the relationship between Jew and Gentile in God’s overall plan of redemption. Strife had arisen between Jewish Christians in Rome and the more numerous Gentile Christians.

So Paul laid out for them the simple, basic gospel – God’s plan of salvation, how both Jew & Gentile can be made right with God. This is the theme of Romans, stated broadly as the “righteousness of God” (1:16-17; 3:21-22) and branching off into the ideas of justification by faith, sanctification, security, freedom from guilt, and submission to authority.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**L** – Romans is the most systematic of Paul’s epistles. It reads more like an elaborate theological essay than a letter, emphasizing Christian doctrines concerning sin, death, salvation, grace, faith, righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption, resurrection, and glorification, among others. Paul made widespread use of OT quotations in the book, sometimes using them to carry his argument. He also expressed a deep concern for Israel and its present status, its relationship to the Gentiles and its final salvation.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**I** –

- Wrath of God (1:18-3:20)
- Grace of God (3:21-8:39)
- Plan of God (9-11)
- Will of God (12-15)
- Paul’s Greetings & Blessings (16)

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**G** – Romans is Paul’s gospel manifesto and serves as a logical follow-up to the book of Acts, since Acts traced the movement of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, the capital city of the world’s dominant empire at the time. Rome’s power, influence, and infrastructure allowed the good news of Jesus to eventually reach “the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

During his third missionary journey, Paul stayed in Corinth for about a year and a half, and it was probably from this city that he wrote to the Roman believers. His message was simple, defining the very essence of Christianity: God’s righteousness came through Jesus Christ. He declared that this *righteousness* (mentioned 66 times in the book) could not come by obeying the law of Moses (the word *law* appears 78 times) but only through faith in Christ (*faith* is mentioned 62 times).

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**G** – The patchwork of just these three repeated words helps us to see the essence of the message of the book of Romans: *Righteousness* doesn't come from our ongoing work to keep the *law* but rather by *faith* in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Paul painted a stark picture of the human condition: we were all born under God's wrath, slaves to sin. While the world loves to celebrate mankind's so-called righteousness – our sincerity of belief and basic goodness – Paul said that we are in fact *"all under sin"* (3:9). He quoted numerous OT passages (Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl. 7:20) to underscore his point: that *"there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God"* (3:10-11).

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**G** – And this is why the gospel is such good news: We can never be good enough or do enough good needs to gain salvation, but because Jesus Christ came & died on the cross for our sins, we can be made right with God simply through our faith in him.

In Romans, Paul emphasized this essential aspect of the gospel over and over again: It's the wretched and poor in spirit – those who realize they are sinners – who place their faith and trust in Jesus and will be saved.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**H** – Paul wrote his letter to the Romans during the first years of Emperor Nero's reign (AD 54-68). Rome, a large and prestigious capital city, had a sizeable mixture of ethnicities, cultures, and religions, and the church there was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Acts 19:21 tells us of Paul's plans to visit the city.

Nero, the sixth Roman emperor, is famous for supposedly orchestrating the burning of Rome in AD 64 (rumors abounded that he threw his own private concert while the city was in flames) and then blaming the Christians for it. In the months following this bizarre event, the Roman historian Tacitus reported some of the first officially sanctioned persecution of the early church.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**H** – According to *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Nero came with all kinds of cruel punishments, including many *that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts, and the worried by dogs till they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman empire ; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred.*

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**H** – Nero's persecution of Christians was only the beginning; the Roman Empire continued to oppress and kill Christians over the next two-and-a-half centuries. As the pattern goes, however, the church not only survived, but thrived during this time. The emperor Constantine eventually established tolerance for Christianity in the Edict of Milan in AD 313, opening the door for it to become the official state religion decades later under Theodosius I.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**T** – The dividing line between a saint & an ain't is **salvation by grace**. If you're not saved by faith in Christ alone, then you ain't a saint. Then you're still subject to God's wrath. Some think that if you're really good & a group of people looks back on your life & sees that you performed a miracle, you get canonized & they add a little halo to your church directory photo. That's not what saint means. If you are a believer in Christ right now while you're still here on earth, in God's eyes you are a saint – set apart for him because of what he has done for you.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**T** – **Christians need to be real with one another.** We often feel the need to put on a show in front of other people, especially other believers, projecting an image of ourselves as having it all together – great job, great marriage, great faith. But every single person struggles with sin, doubt, fear, & worry to some degree (7:15-25). Fellowship is so important because you need that honesty, accountability, & encouragement that only other believers can provide.

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**F - L - I - G - H - T**

**T** – **Let understanding & grace govern your conduct with other believers.** In Romans, Paul described the difference between a strong Christian & a weak one. Physical strength isn't the issue; demonstrating grace & moral but non-legalistic reasoning is. Pau's instruction for weak & strong center on this idea: *"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification"* (15:2). Enjoy your liberty in Christ, but don't flaunt it.

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### Contrast with 1 Corinthians

| 1 Corinthians             | Romans                       |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| sanctification            | justification                |
| application of the cross  | interpretation of the cross  |
| Paul the administrator    | Paul the theologian          |
| gospel is wisdom of God   | gospel is power of God       |
| behavior of Christians    | basis of Christianity        |
| sin's power removed in us | sin's penalty removed for us |

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### Contrast with Galatians

| Galatians                     | Romans                    |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| what the gospel is <i>not</i> | what the gospel <i>is</i> |
| polemic in tone               | irenic in tone            |
| actual opponent               | retorical opponent        |
| battle in progress            | victory is won            |

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### To Whom Written?

Some scholars maintain that the Roman churches consisted mainly of Jewish Christians. In favor of this view they cite Paul's emphasis on the Jewish nation in chapters 9-11, appeal to the example of Abraham, quotations of the OT, and passages in which Paul appears to be arguing against Jewish objections (2:17-3:8; 3:21-31; 6:1-7:6; 14:1-15:3).

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### To Whom Written?

But according to chapters 9-11. God has temporarily turned his attention from the Jewish nation to the Gentiles; so these chapters may rather indicate that the original audience of the letter consisted mainly of Gentile Christians. The appeals of Paul to Abraham and to the OT may reflect his own Jewish background, not the background of his audience – or if theirs, Gentile proselytes' and God-fearers' knowledge of the OT gained through attendance at synagogues prior to Christian conversion.

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### To Whom Written?

Paul appeals to Abraham, moreover, to include Gentile believers alongside Jewish believers. And the answering of particularly Jewish objections may stem from Paul's frequent debates with unbelieving Jews and with Judaizers, the latter of whom tried to proselytize Gentile Christians, rather than from a Jewish Christian address for the letter.

A number of passages demonstrate the **predominately Gentile composition** of the Roman churches:

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### To Whom Written?

- Paul writes in 1:5-6, "*among all the Gentiles...among whom are you also.*"
- In 1:13 he writes, "*among you just as also among the rest of the Gentiles.*"
- His statement, "*I am speaking to you Gentiles*" (11:13), characterizes the Roman churches as a whole, not a minority within them; for in 11:28-31 the audience is said to have obtained mercy because of Jewish unbelief.
- In 15:15-16 he speaks of his writing to them in conjunction with his ministry "*to the Gentiles.*"

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### Purposes of Romans

Paul writes Romans to prepare believers living in Rome for his first visit to their city. For a long time he has been intending to visit but has been prevented (1:13; 15:22-24a). He purposes to **strengthen** the Roman Christians in their faith (1:11,15) and to **win their financial support** for his projected mission to Spain after visiting Rome (15:24,28).

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### Purposes of Romans

For the most part, what he writes seems to be what he has on his mind to tell Jewish Christians in Jerusalem when he arrives there with the offering he has been collecting for them. He fears that the tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the East may have reached such proportions that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem will refuse the offering because of its having been collected largely from Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia and delivered personally by himself as the apostle to the Gentiles (15:30-31).

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### Purposes of Romans

He also knows enough about the churches in Rome to **warn** Gentile Christians of boasting of superiority over Jewish Christians (11:17-32) and against despising them for their ritual observances (14:1-23). Claudius' banishment from Rome of Jews, including Jewish Christians, must have left the churches there in charge of Gentile Christians who very likely are trying to maintain control even now that Jewish Christians are returning to Rome, along with other Jews, after the death of Claudius. Paul's warnings signal the **concern of a full-scale rupture** between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome as well as in the East.

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### Purposes of Romans

So he presents in Romans what he will present in Jerusalem, the gospel of justification by faith for Jews and Gentiles alike as the **basis for Christian unity** – but unity not for its own sake; rather, for the sake of **further evangelism** such as he plans to pursue in Spain. A rupture in Rome would spoil his chances of getting very much support for the Spanish mission.

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### Theme of Romans

The central message is "**redemption** that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24). As will be seen, redemption is a broader word for salvation than is **justification**, the initial stage of salvation.

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### Key Verse

Habakkuk 2:4 is the background for three books in the NT. Each book emphasizes a different third of this important OT text:

"*The just...*" (Rom. 1:17) – positional

"*...shall live...*" (Gal. 3:11) – practical

"*...by faith*" (Heb. 10:38) – personal

Few verses in the Bible occur more than twice and very few four times or more. This tiny verse not only influenced three NT books but the Protestant Reformation under Luther and Methodism through John Wesley.

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| NT Words for Redemption |  |   |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Greek Words             | English Meanings                             | References                                      |
| <i>agorazō</i> (verb)   | to purchase or buy in the marketplace        | 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4 |
| <i>exagorazō</i> (verb) | to purchase from or buy from the marketplace | Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5             |
| <i>lutron</i> (noun)    | a means of release, means of redeeming       | Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45                         |

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| NT Words for Redemption   |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Greek Words               | English Meanings                                 | References   |
| <i>lutroōmai</i> (verb)   | to ransom for release by paying the ransom price | Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18  |
| <i>lutrōsis</i> (noun)    | the act of freeing after ransom has been paid    | Luke 1:68; 2:38; Heb. 9:12   |
| <i>apolutrōsis</i> (noun) | an act of setting free, deliverance, release     | Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7,14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15; 11:35 |

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### Value of Romans

There are many values to the book of Romans. Intellectually, it has a very logical structure and has been used by both lawyers and logicians to teach logical thinking. Historically, it casts light on early Christianity and its doctrinal development. Theologically, it is the most comprehensive teaching on the gospel in the entire NT (chaps. 1-8). Spiritually, the scope and secret of the Christian life are revealed (chaps. 6-7). Biographically, Paul greets more than thirty people (chap. 16). Dispensationally, it explains the relation of Israel to the church (chaps. 9-11).

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### Old Testament Citations

Romans contains some seventy-four references to the OT (mostly from Psalms and Isaiah). *“It is written”* occurs nineteen times in this book, more than half of all the times Paul uses the phrase.

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### One Day Above Another

In Romans chapter 14 is a passage in which Paul instructs the Roman Christians to refrain from “despising” or “passing judgment” on one another. To “despise” is to consider someone as worthless; “pass judgment” is equally strong and means “to condemn.” Paul uses the terms synonymously: The strong hold the weak in contempt as legalistic and self-righteous; the weak judge the strong to be irresponsible at best and perhaps depraved.

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### One Day Above Another

The entire passage addresses a situation that had arisen due to differing convictions among Jewish and Gentile believers regarding **eating** and **not eating**. In the midst of this passage is a verse that is widely misunderstood. It is generally recognized that the passage deals with issues surrounding eating and drinking, and yet it is commonly assumed that verse 5 introduces a different topic momentarily and then returns to the subject of eating and drinking.

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### One Day Above Another

Verse 5 reads, “One person regards *one day above another*, another regards *every day alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”

When today’s reader encounters this verse, he assumes that it must relate to an issue that is an issue in his day – it must be talking about the day set aside for corporate worship. He doesn’t consider what the verse meant to Paul’s first century audience.

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### One Day Above Another

This verse is a classic illustration of the importance of looking at the context of a verse of Scripture before attempting to determine its meaning – not only the scriptural context, but also the historical and cultural context.

The entire passage, including verse 5, is about **eating** and **not eating**. There is a word for “not eating.” That word is “fasting.” Because the 21<sup>st</sup> century evangelical is not familiar with fasting, it would never occur to him that a comment about “one day above another” has anything to do with fasting.

But what were Jewish practices regarding fasting in the first century?

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### One Day Above Another

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* explains, “It was customary to hold public fast days on **Mondays** and **Thursdays**; individuals took upon themselves to fast every **Monday** and **Thursday**.”

Further, we are told, “On some occasions, the fast was not a total one, but people refrained only from meat, wine, anointment with oil, and other pleasures.”

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### One Day Above Another

With this information in mind, the passage makes so much more sense.

*“One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables [not all the time but on **Mondays** and **Thursdays**]...One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike...The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.”*

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### One Day Above Another

Think about it. Do you really think Paul was telling the Roman church, “Some of you can assemble for worship on this day of the week, some of you on that day of the week, and some of you on this other day of the week”? Think of what an administrative nightmare that would be! Not to mention the fact that Paul constantly stressed the unity of the church, both Jew and Gentile.

Other passages in the NT address the subject of days of worship (such as Col. 2). This one does NOT.

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### One Day Above Another

Also, when Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, he quotes the Pharisee as saying, “I fast **twice a week**” (Luke 18:12). We can know on which two days of the week he fasted!

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### Sinners or Obedient?

**Romans 2:14-15** (see Eph. 2:3) – How can those who are by nature sinners keep God’s law of nature?

Ephesians 2:3 asserts that all humans are “*by nature children of wrath*,” but Paul speaks in Romans of unbelieving Gentiles who “*by nature do the things contained in the law*.” These two things seem mutually opposed.

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### Sinners or Obedient?

Ephesians is speaking of the **cause** of sinful actions, whereas Romans refers to the **rule** for our actions. The former relates to our **propensity** to sin and the latter to the **norm** for what is sin. There is a difference between what humans are **inclined** to do by nature and what they **ought** to do according to the natural law “*written in their hearts*” (Rom. 2:15).

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### Everyone Saved?

**Romans 5:12-21** – Does Paul teach in this passage that everyone will be saved?

The Bible says that not everyone will obtain salvation; there are some who will go to eternal damnation (Rev. 19:19-20). Indeed, Paul elsewhere says the wicked will not inherit God’s kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5). But these verses in Romans say that all will be made righteous by Christ. If all are made righteous, how can some people go to hell?

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### Everyone Saved?

The following comparison will help to identify the parallels in the passage:

| Adam                      | Christ                       |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| act of sin (vv. 12,14,16) | act of grace (v. 15)         |
| offense (vv. 15-18)       | act of righteousness (v. 18) |
| disobedience (v. 19)      | obedience (v. 19)            |

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### Physical Results

| Adam                           | Christ                      |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| death on all (vv. 12,14-15,17) | life for all (vv. 17-18,21) |

### Moral Results

| Adam                       | Christ                       |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| sin enters for all (v. 12) | grace enters for all (v. 15) |
| sin reigns on all (v. 21)  | grace reigns for all (v. 21) |

### Legal Results

| Adam                             | Christ                     |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| all made sinners (v. 19)         | all made righteous (v. 19) |
| judgment for all (v. 18)         | gift for all (v. 18)       |
| condemnation for all (vv. 16,18) | justification (vv. 16,18)  |

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### Everyone Saved?

As this chart shows, Paul’s use of “righteous” and “justification” cannot mean that all will actually be saved but only that they are potentially saved. This is because: (1) The Bible says not all will be saved (Matt. 25:41; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 20:11-15). (2) Salvation is a gift (Rom. 5:15-16,18), and gifts must be received (John 1:12). (3) The phrase “*those who receive*” (Rom. 5:17) implies that it will be received. (4) The phrase “*not like*” (vv. 15-16) shows that the parallel is not perfect. (5) The same parallel is found with reconciliation, which is potential for (2 Cor. 5:19) but only actual for some (v. 20).

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### Future for Israel?

**Romans 11:26-27** – How can there be a future for the nation of Israel since they rejected the Messiah?

The nation of Israel as a whole rejected Christ as their Messiah (Rom. 9-10; John 1:10-11), and the Bible says that the promises of Abraham go to his spiritual seed, as opposed to his descendants according to the flesh (Rom. 4; Gal. 3). Why then does Romans 11 speak of a future for the nation of Israel?

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### Future for Israel?

Abraham has both a spiritual seed (descendants) and literal descendants. Anyone who believes in Christ can become a **spiritual** heir of the promise for justification (Rom. 4; Gen. 15), because Christ came of the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16).

However, there are also promises to Abraham's **literal** descendants, the Jews, that have never yet been completely fulfilled. For example, God promised unconditionally that Abraham's literal descendants would inherit the Promised Land forever (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:15-17; 15:7-21; 17:8).

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### Future for Israel?

Only one short time in Israel's history did they inherit this land (Joshua 11:23), but God gave it to them by an unconditional oath (Gen. 15:7-21) "forever" (13:15), as an "everlasting possession" (17:8). Since God cannot break an unconditional promise (Heb. 6:17-18; 2 Tim. 2:13), this promise is yet to be fulfilled for the nation of Israel.

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### Future for Israel?

In Romans 9-11 Paul is speaking of the literal descendants of Abraham, the children of Israel. He calls them "my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites" (9:3-4), and "Israel" (10:1). This same national group (Israel) that was temporarily cut off will be grafted in again into the tree, and "all Israel will be saved" (11:26). Jesus spoke of this time in Acts 1 when his disciples asked him: "Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (v. 6). His answer was not a stern rebuke for misunderstanding the Scriptures, but an assurance that only the Father knows "the times or seasons" in which this will occur (v. 7).

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### Future for Israel?

Earlier Jesus spoke of the "regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, and you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28).

In the final book of the Bible, the apostle John spoke of God's redeeming out of the tribulation "one hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of Israel" (Rev. 7:4). So there is every reason to believe that God will honor his unconditional covenant to Israel to give them the land of Israel forever.

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