

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS - PART TWELVE

Jesus Christ died for us,(chapters 1-4) and rose again to live in us,(chapters 5,6) so that first we would be different on the inside with a new mind, attitude, expectation, understanding and confidence,(chapter 7,8) that would then show on the outside(chapters 12-16). God is not unjust. On the contrary He is incredibly merciful in the way He moulds us,(chapter 9) speaks to us, (chapter 10) and makes a place for us in His plan.(chapter 11) The real problem is not Him but us.

Chapter 11 describes how God sees Jew and Gentile the same, recognising the need of each and having a purpose for each. We, on the other hand, have hard hearts and prejudiced eyes that limit our caring and our vision to those like us of whom we approve. Each of the last two chapters has begun by Paul expressing his love and concern for his Jewish people. Now we see why. Paul had not rejected them because God had not rejected them.(11:1) First he reminds us that all Jews are not the same. Some had rejected Him but many had not, just as the Lord had once had to remind Elijah when he was feeling mad about the attitude of his people, that there were many more than he knew of who still trusted God.(11:2-5; I Kgs.19:14-18) Some Jews had accepted the grace of God and some had not. Those who persisted in their rejection had been hardened by God in the same way that He had hardened Pharaoh after giving him every opportunity.(11:6-10; 9:14-18) Paul emphasises his point from the words of Moses in his parting message to the Israelites,(Deut.29:4) and from David in a Psalm which anticipated the loneliness of rejection on the cross.(Ps.69:22,23)

Paul again uses the idea of jealousy as a God-designed means of bringing men to Christ. His hope is that Gentiles meeting Jesus will move Jews to consider what they are missing out on and turn to Him too.(11:11-15) Next he moves from the illustration of a piece of dough to that of the branch of an olive tree. If those born Jews were the original olive tree, those who rejected Christ would be like dead branches broken off and discarded.(Jer.11:16) Then Gentiles trusting the Lord would be wild olive branches grafted into the tree in their place.(11:16,17) He warns Gentiles not to be arrogant about their relationship with God because they have no more right to stay in the tree than the Jews did if they do not confirm their opportunity by faith. For either group their place in Christ is by faith alone.(11:18-21) Remember that God is kind to accept those who believe but must be severe to judge those who refuse.(11:22) And Jews who return to God, as many were doing, would be like branches being grafted back where they originally belonged.(11:23,24)

We are next given a glimpse into the future of Israel. For the moment some have believed and others rejected leaving space for Gentile believers. In the end however Jews will turn to Christ. When the Lord returns He will come back to His people as their Saviour and they will respond in faith, vindicating His first intention for them. God does not give up on His plan. His mercy just keeps on going!(11:25-32) How we underestimate God's wisdom! So don't you dare say He is unjust! He persists with religious people and heathen the same. The problem is with us who, because of our prejudices, so quickly give up on those who are different from us and do not seem very promising. Make not just your hands and mouth available to Him, but your heart - or else it is we who are unjust.(11:33-36)

Chapter twelve begins to explain how Christ in us will radically change our behaviour.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER TWELVE

12:1 Q.1 Paul urges us 'by the mercies of God' to present ourselves. How does this phrase confirm what the last three chapters have been about? What really is worship?

12:2 Q.2 In what way will our minds be changed when we present our bodies to God? Why are we to present our bodies rather than our minds? What is the difference between being conformed and being transformed?(Matt.17:2; II Cor.3:18) What will be the first effect on our minds of being transformed?

12:3-5 Q.3 In what way is God's grace going to change the way we think about God and each other? In the light of this, what do you think about the modern view that people need to have their self-esteem raised?(Phil.2:3-8) What is the 'measure of faith'?

12:6-8 Q.4 What kinds of spiritual gifts are there?(I Pet.4:10-11) What are gifts for? Who decides who gets what gift?(I Cor.12:1-11) What are we to do with our gift? How do we know what gifts we have? Where does faith fit into the exercise of spiritual gifts?

12:9-11 Q.5 Why does Paul switch from talking about gifts to discussing love?(I Cor:12,13,14) How does love change our attitude to ourselves, right and wrong, one another, our status, work and Christian service?

12:12-16 Q.6 His next theme is joy. Where does joy come from? How does it affect our attitude to suffering, prayer, others' needs, hospitality, those who give us a hard time, the circumstances of others, and our position in society?

12:17-21 Q.7 The final theme of this chapter is peace. What does peace look like in practice? Love, joy and peace are the first three parts of the fruit of the Spirit.(Gal.5:22,23) How is the fruit of the Spirit the consequence of 12:1-3?