

A PROVOCATIVE PEOPLE

(Romans 11:11-16)

I. PRELIMINARIES

- A. Pastoral Prayer
- B. (Further announcements)
- C. Today's Text:

¹¹ “I ask then: Have they stumbled, never to rise again (to fall)?” God forbid! Rather, through their fall salvation *has come* to the Gentiles in order to provoke the Jews to jealousy. ¹² But if their transgression *means* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness mean! ¹³ But *here* I am, speaking to you, the Gentiles. Seeing, then, that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I might provoke my own people⁷ to jealousy, and *so* save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means reconciliation for the world, what will their acceptance be, if not life from the dead? ¹⁶ For if the first portion (first fruits) *of the sacred dough* is holy, the lump is holy as well; and if the root *is* holy, so too *are* the branches.

- D. Prayer over the ministry of the Word

II. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. Opening Illustration: John and David: A people provoking a people to jealousy!

B. Review: (Slide)

1. The Scandal: Israel at large has rejected its own Messiah!

2. The Explanations: (Slide)

- Explanation #1: God's OT promises to Israel have not failed because they are not fulfilled in physical Israel, but in spiritual Israel.
- Explanation #2: The majority of Jews stubbornly insist on clinging to the Law for salvation, instead of to Christ, who fulfills it
- Explanation #3 (two Sundays ago): Even now, God has a remnant of Jewish believers. He has not *totally* rejected his ethnic people. (e.g., Larry Kudlow)
- Explanation #4 (today): One day up ahead, he will again visit Israel at large and draw them to Christ and salvation. He has not *finally* rejected his ethnic people *at large*.

III. (11-12) GOD'S (MYSTERIOUS) PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL AT LARGE

A. An anguished question: *"I ask then: Have they stumbled, never to rise again (to fall)?"*

- HSL

⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes?'"

⁴³ And so I say to you *all* that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that produces its crops. ⁴⁴ Moreover, the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and the one on whom it falls—it will grind him to powder." (Mt. 21; Acts 13, 1 Peter 2:4-10)

B. A confident answer (prayer): *God forbid!* (HSL)

C. A great *mystery*: *Rather, through their (temporary) fall salvation has come to the Gentiles in order to provoke the Jews to jealousy.*

- God's OT plan: Israel makes the Gentiles jealous

⁵ "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. ⁶ So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' ⁷ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? ⁸ Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? – Dt. 4

- God's NT plan (revealed in the OT!): The Gentiles make Israel at large jealous!

The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. ²⁰ "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. ²¹ They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. ²² For a fire will be kindled by my wrath, one that burns down to the realm of the dead below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. --Dt. 32

- The Gist of the MYSTERY of God's plan for Israel and the nations (R)

D. A JOYFUL question: ¹² *But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness mean!*

- Riches for the world/Gentiles (HSL)
- Two fullnesses up ahead: First the Gentiles, then the Jews (HSL)
- Discussion Question: What are the riches that come to us in the Gospel?

²⁵ For I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise in your own eyes: A partial hardening has fallen on Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in

- But what exactly will Israel's fullness mean: Hang tight!

IV. (13-14) PAUL'S PERSONAL PURPOSE: TO ALIGN HIMSELF WITH GOD'S PURPOSE

¹³ But here I am, speaking to you, the Gentiles. // Seeing, then, that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, // ¹⁴ if by any means I might provoke my own people to jealousy, and so save some of them.

- He knows his ministry
- He magnifies his ministry
- With two goals in view: Provoke to jealousy, and so save some
- Big Question: HOW does he magnify his ministry? (Jews first—proselytes—Gentiles; Corinth, house of Titius next to synagogue, Crispus, ruler, converts)
- Discussion Question: How can we provoke our non-Christian neighbor to jealousy?

V. (15-16) PAUL'S REASONS FOR ALIGNING HIMSELF WITH GOD'S PURPOSE

A. Reason #1: Life from the dead!

¹⁵ For if their rejection means reconciliation for the world, what will their acceptance be, if not life from the dead?

- View #1: Conversion of Israel at large, bringing glorious new spiritual life and further blessing to the Gentile world (Postmillennial view) (HSL)
- View #2: The return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the World to Come!
- A GREAT sign of the imminence of Christ's return!

B. Reason #2: Ethnic Israel is "holy" to the Lord

¹⁶ For if the first portion (first fruits) of the sacred dough is holy (Num. 15:17-21), the lump is holy as well; and if the root is holy, so too are the branches.

²⁸ With respect to the gospel, they are enemies for your sake; but with respect to *God's* election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God *are* without regret or change.

VI. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION: HOW SHALL WE BECOME A PROVOCATIVE PEOPLE?

A. God desires us to be "a provocative people"

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do men light a lamp and *then* place it under a basket; instead, they place it on its stand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. – Mt. 5

B. How shall we become a provocative people?

- An awareness of riches (Mt. 13)

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and he buys that field. ⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant *who went* in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶and when he found a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

- An attitude of gratitude and joy

“The glory of the Lord is man fully alive!” (e.g. the ladies outreach)

- A magnification of your ministry

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