

# Romans (11:11-15)

## *Make 'em Jealous*

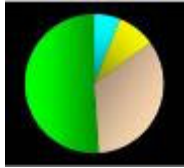
Part 52 – October 23, 2005

### VITAL STATS

On May 14, 1948 Israel declared independence (possibly fulfilling Ezekiel's "Dry Bones" prophecy). And on January 1, 2004, Israel's population hit 6.7 million.

Now, out of this total population<sup>1</sup>: 1.6 million (23.3%) were non-Jewish - 1 million (15.8%) of those being Muslim and 140,000 (2.1%) of those being Christian.

- 5.1 million (76.7%) were *ethnic* Jews.



And this is where it gets interesting. Out of the entire Jewish population, only 6% (300,000) described themselves as "ultra-orthodox" and another 9% (460,000) described themselves as "religious". This means that only 15% attempted to adhere to Mosaic Law.

And out of the other 85% of ethnic-Jewish population, 34% (1.7 million) disregard much of the Jewish law and another 51% (2.6 million) describe themselves as "secular".

And out of the 51% who made no attempt to observe Jewish law, 53% (1.4 million) were Agnostic (believing a God *does* exist) and 47% (1.2 million) were Atheist (believing a God *does not* exist).

### REVIEWING ROMANS

Now let's review what Paul has recently said:

- Israel is disobedient and contrary to God. (*Rom 10:21*)
- Despite this, God has not rejected Israel. (*Rom 11:1*)
- However their hearts have become hardened. (*Rom 11:7*)

And we talked about "redemptive hardening" – when God uses our spiritual stumbling to break a false sense of self-sufficiency.

### STUPORD STUMBLERS

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<sup>1</sup> All statistics taken from: State of Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Totals were rounded to the nearest thousand. Some descriptive terms are my own creation.

Today Paul finds purpose upon purpose upon purpose for the “stumbling” or “blindness” or “hardening” of Israel:

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. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? - *Romans 11:11-15 NIV*

Q: Remember how negative Paul sounded last week?

God gave them a **spirit of stupor**, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear ... (11:8)

These folks were “stupord”!

May their table become a snare and a trap, [and] a stumbling block ... (11:9)

Paul didn't want their destruction; but he did want God to do whatever it takes to prepare them to receive what they rejected. Today, we can see the hope in Paul's heart as he asks:

“Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?”

And then answers:

“Not at all!”

They've stumbled but they haven't fallen. Stumbling is temporary, a fall is permanent.

Q: Ever look at your own “stupord” choices - things done or left undone - and wonder if you've fallen and you can't get up?

- You can't fall until God let's go.

This is great news: if snared, trapped, blind, deaf, stupor-spirited, stumblers are recoverable, that means I am too!

- We can always get up with God's help.

**PURPOSE UPON PURPOSE**

Now we come to the first sovereignly-planned purpose Paul sees behind Israel's temporary hardening:

"Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles"

God had used their rejection to send Paul to the Gentiles:

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly ... "It was necessary that this Good News from God be given first to you Jews. But since you have rejected it ... well, we will offer it to Gentiles. - Acts 13:46 NLT Condensed

The apostles had to be shaken out of a mindset that Christ had come *only* for the Jews. And God was able to use the Jew's stubbornness to propel his Word into the world.

Jesus told a parable to the Jews about a landowner who planted a vineyard, rented it out to farmers, and sent servants to collect his fruit at the time of harvest. But the farmers beat and killed every servant he sent.

"Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and **given to a people who will produce its fruit.**" - Matthew 21:37-43 NIV

God has used Israel's rejection, to teach the world, that salvation does not come by works or heritage or religion; but it is only by grace through faith and evidenced by "fruit". And this brings us to the second sovereignly-planned purpose that Paul saw behind Israel's spiritual stupor:

"Salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious"

Israel's *hardening* brings salvation to the Gentiles, which in turn is meant to *soften* Israel ... by making them jealous. But how do we make people jealous of our faith? Pressuring? Pushing? Protesting? Arguing? No one is ever forced into envy.

But obedience to the gentle whisper, of God's Holy Spirit, in our own life, on a daily basis, will produce Kingdom fruit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. – *Galatians 5:22-23 NIV*

- The Spirit's *internal* work produces an *external* crop.

This is the inarguable stuff that defuses defenses, and draws people to Christ. They become appropriately jealous when they need and desire what you already have. This is why a weak & defeated, or an aggressive & antagonistic, or a weird & goofy faith is so counter to the Kingdom.

- Our faith must appeal rather than repel.

So, Paul sees purpose, upon purpose, upon purpose:

- A. The purpose behind their hardening was to bring the gospel of a *Jewish* Messiah to every non-Jew.
- B. The purpose behind giving it to “fruitful” Gentiles is to make Israel herself envious of our bounty in Christ.
- C. The purpose behind a nation-wide revival for Israel is to open a whole new channel of blessing to the *entire* world.

But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring (11:12)

Israel was called to be the missionaries to the world, and they were entrusted with the message of the Messiah. Can you imagine the exponential impact when they reclaim that role; and Jew and Gentile proclaim together a Christian gospel of a Jewish Savior?!

And Paul not only explains what God is doing – he exploits it:

Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them (11:13-14)

You see, Paul knows that the envy of Israel will ultimately lead to her embracing Jesus as Christ. They need what he's offering – they just have to see it. And the resulting revival, for a nation so dead in their faith, will be nothing short of a resurrection!

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (11:15)

Q: But, why has it taken so long? Did Paul really expect it to take 2000 years?!

A: Next time! Paul gives specifics ... and it's shocking!

- Don't read ahead! (Just kidding)