

Romans 10:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Analysis

But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you—A second objection: perhaps Israel didn't understand? All' legō, mē Israēl ouk egnō? (ἀλλ' λέγω, μὴ Ἰσραὴλ οὐκ ἔγνω; "But I say, did Israel not know/understand?"). Ginōskō (γινώσκω, "know, understand, perceive") implies comprehension, not just hearing. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21, Moses' warning that God would provoke Israel to jealousy by making a non-people His people.

Parazēlōsō (παραζηλώσω, "provoke to jealousy") and parorgizō (παροργίζω, "provoke to anger") describe God's strategic use of Gentile salvation to awaken Israel. **Them that are no people** (ouk ethnei, οὐκ ἔθνει, "a non-nation") and **a foolish nation** (ethnei asynetō, ἔθνει ἀσυνέτω, "an unperceptive/foolish nation") refer to Gentiles—those outside covenant. The irony: Gentiles, who lacked Israel's privileges, are receiving salvation Israel rejected. This should provoke Israel to jealousy and repentance (Rom 11:11, 14).

Historical Context

Deuteronomy 32 (the Song of Moses) warned Israel that covenant unfaithfulness would bring judgment, including making them jealous by exalting Gentiles. This reversal occurred in AD 30-70: while the church exploded with Gentile converts, most Jews rejected Christ. After AD 70 and the temple's destruction, Gentile

Christianity dominated numerically. Paul sees this as providential—God's mercy to Gentiles should drive Israel to recognize their Messiah (Rom 11:25-27). This "jealousy strategy" continues today.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the Gentile church's experience of God's mercy serve God's purpose to save ethnic Israel?
2. Are you living in such Spirit-empowered transformation that unbelievers are provoked to jealousy?
3. What does it mean that God uses "a foolish nation" to accomplish His wise purposes?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλὰ λέγει μὴ οὐκ ἔγνω Ἰσραὴλ πρῶτος
But I say them that are no Did Israel First
G235 G3004 G3361 G3756 G1097 G2474 G4413

Μωσῆς λέγει Ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ οὐκ
Moses I say to jealousy you and by them that are no
G3475 G3004 G1473 G3863 G5209 G1909 G3756

ἔθνει ἐπὶ ᔁθνει ἀσυνέτω παροργιῶ ὑμᾶς
nation and by nation a foolish I will anger you
G1484 G1909 G1484 G801 G3949 G5209

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:21 (Parallel theme): They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Romans 11:11 (Parallel theme): I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Romans 11:14 (Parallel theme): If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Titus 3:3 (Parallel theme): For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

1 Peter 2:10 (Parallel theme): Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

1 Corinthians 1:12 (Parallel theme): Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.