



ROMANS Part 96

Chapter 10:19-21

A stubborn and
contradicting people.

by Martin Zender



But, I am saying, Did not Israel know at all? First Moses is saying, I shall be provoking you to jealousy over those not a nation; Over an unintelligent nation shall I be vexing you. 20 Yet Isaiah is very daring and is saying, I was found by those who are not seeking Me; I became disclosed to those who are not inquiring for Me. 21 Now to Israel He is saying, The whole day I spread out My hands to a stubborn and contradicting people!

From here through most of chapter 11 it's all Israel, all the time. These last verses of chapter 10 are the launching pad for The Israel Channel—chapter 11.

It's fun to talk about Israel because it's so enjoyable *not* to be Israel. I can't understand why Christians want to be Israelites. Are the Christians nuts? Well, yes, in fact, they are. Not me. Sanity is my *soup du jour*—and so is not wearing a yarmulke. I prefer salvation by grace rather than works; it keeps my fingernails cleaner. I do not want to be a universe-wide example of what *not* to do and how *not* to find God and how to resist rather than receive God's gifts. I prefer my place as fodder for audacious displays of God's unmerited favor. I prefer my predestination of heavenly bliss in spite of being an unworthy sinner with no fleshly ties to Abraham. Thus, I can sit in the bleachers of my justification and watch this poor nation struggle beneath her self-imposed ("God-imposed" for you absolute truth fans) chasing of the law. To be honest, it makes my enjoyment of my "no law" world that much sweeter. This bliss is marred, of course, by the occasional cringe. It's sometimes hard watching Israel being so...so...*Israelitish*.

In my last installment of this series, I assured you that Israel *did* know something of God because of the testimony of nature, especially that of the sun. The universal beneficence of the giant sky-bound hydrogen ball subconsciously suggests to the sons of Jacob the goodness of God to all of Adam's descendants, irrespective of nationality. The sun predated Abraham, even Adam. Lots of great stuff happened before Abraham. Try telling an Israelite that. They can't generally see past the patriarch with whom God began their exclusive receipt of truth. Such narrow vision. "Nothing before us, nothing after us," is generally how Israelites see things. Rose-colored glasses would actually be an improvement for these people, but as things stand, they are blind, and not even the blind benefit from tinted eyewear.



THE ULTIMATE PROVOCATION

Paul quotes Moses here from Deuteronomy 32:21—

They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

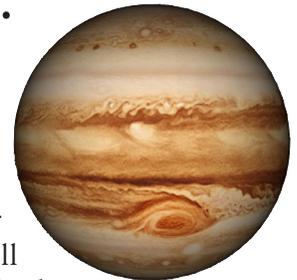
Jealousy is the most hideous of sins, rooted in selfishness and a lack of love the size of Jupiter. “If I can’t be happy, then I don’t want anyone else being that way,” says the Green Monster, through the mouths of the miserable. Whereas envy is a two-party enterprise, jealousy requires three parties—so that now an extra person can be unhappy. We envy another person for what they have. While this does indeed stink, this sin is limited to us and to the one other person. Jealousy involves the aforementioned third party that we imagine threatens what we imagine to be our exclusive property. It entails risk of loss. (For the Jews, it was the nations threatening them with loss of their God.)

A woman may envy another woman’s pearl necklace, but a wife becomes jealous when her husband talks to a person *wearing* a pearl necklace. The jealousy-weakened wife fears even her husband’s legitimate contact with members of the opposite sex. The husband’s happy discourse with other women besides her enrages the wife because, in her mind, everything must be about her. The base emotion is fear—fear of loss. (This is Israel’s fear when God chats with Greeks.) All that matters to the jealous wife is the complete destruction of her fear of loss, which must by necessity involve the complete destruc-

tion of the third party. (The Jews wanted the grace-believing goyim dead—or at least following law so that Jewish misery might have company.) In this, the wife’s happiness stands paramount—all else be damned. This smells worse than envy and not even scented trash bags overcome it.

Jealousy is Israel’s chief affliction. This is especially so among the ruling class. No deodorant works against such stench. The Pharisees hated Christ because the throngs left them to follow Him. As soon as His popularity overtook theirs, the demon jealousy clamped itself to their already slimy hearts. The power of God had vacated the Pharisee soul. They couldn’t work miracles, these men, not even fake ones. Rather than celebrating with the beneficiaries of Christ’s supernatural work, the Pharisees feared the loss of their own power and influence. They would have attended miracle school had such a thing existed. They would have signed up for the crash course: “Thirty Days To Amazing Marvels That Will Make Other People Like You And Perhaps Even Fear You.” Right. They would have done it for the power, not for the blessing.

“Jealousy is rooted in a lack of love the size of Jupiter.”



Bless a man, and that man might become so happy and self-sufficient that he will no longer need you. Wield power over him, however, and he will need you for life. You would think that 5,000 countrymen *not* starving in the wilderness would have brightened the day of the men spiritually responsible for those people. Forget it. A man delivered of lifelong blindness would send any normal person into spasms of wonder and thankfulness. Normal persons, yes, but not standard-issue Israel kingdom types. This kind cares only for its own satisfaction and simultaneously hates any contentment that would dare bypass its mediatory offices.

THE SET-UP

God did make Israel to be a priesthood nation. *He* appointed Israel to be the head and not the tail of all the nations and the intermediary between the goyim and God. The rite of circumcision confirmed this calling. It was God's way of reminding Israel of her weakness apart from Him. Circumcision was meant to humble an Israelite and remind the penis among them that their procreative prowess was of God and not simply of the distentionary derring-do of the reproductive unit. Leave it to an Israelite to boast in such a humiliating procedure. What priceless insight into the Israelite mindset:

GOD: Everyone else on the planet can keep their penises. Yours, I'm mutilating.

ISRAEL: Thank you!

God knows that Israel has a jealousy problem because He's the One who installed the chip there to begin with. National jealousy is fine only in that the lack of it stands out so startlingly. Jealousy becomes a black field for the spirit of God to demonstrate true, unselfish love. "Love is *not* jealous," says the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13:4). Therefore, jealousy is not love.

GOD'S USE OF JEALOUSY

"First Moses is saying, I shall be provoking you to jealousy over those not a nation; Over an unintelligent nation shall I be vexing you" (Romans 10:19).

God brilliantly uses Israel's jealousy for her ultimate benefit. God is a divine alchemist, taking a dark thing and converting it into a shining star. He plays a game with Israel. "They made *Me* jealous by embracing gods that aren't gods at all," says the absolute Deity. "Therefore, I will make *them* jealous with a people who aren't really a people at all, but a bunch of morons" (Deuteronomy 32:21). It's a playground tactic. One can almost hear the "nyaa-nyaa" afterward.

It is fine for God to employ playground tactics if He wants to because He's God. And believe me, it is a playground tactic. (And believe me, He is God.) Don't begrudge God this. I intend allowing God whatever tactic pleases Him, including the playground variety. God's games are productive, as are His tactics. He knows what He's doing. Don't be upset, either, about God being jealous. He draws up His jealousy from a different well than ours. His bucket overflows with goodness from a well of *divine* jealousy. Our jealousy is the self-serving variety whereas

His ultimately serves the objects of His love—as we are about to see in chapter 11. Israel is still God's love. God will teach her a lesson about unfaithfulness by giving her a taste of her own castor oil. It's only a taste because God is truly faithful to Israel but is playing the part of an unfaithful lover to make her *her* pine for Him.

But talk about vexation. *God*.

ISRAEL VEXED NEARLY TO DEATH

"Yet Isaiah is very daring and is saying, I was found by those who are not seeking Me; I became disclosed to those who are not inquiring for Me" (Romans 10:20).

Here is the ultimate paradox and the ultimate fuel for the jealousy-fires of Israel hating God's other lovers, namely, us. A man of the nations worshipping a pile of rocks on Wednesday is declared by Paul to be complete in Christ on Thursday (Colossians 2:10). And this without circumcision, baptism, Sabbath-keeping and—worse yet for the Israelite psyche and the vexation glands—any adherence to law. The rock-worshippers were no more seeking God than a homeless man seeks scalloped drapes. Not even rudely did they inquire of Him. In the morning, the men and women of the nations did not rise early to read Scripture or pray. No. Rather, they ate Frosted Flakes. The nations happily did whatever occurred to them, then washed it down with 2% milk and warm beer.



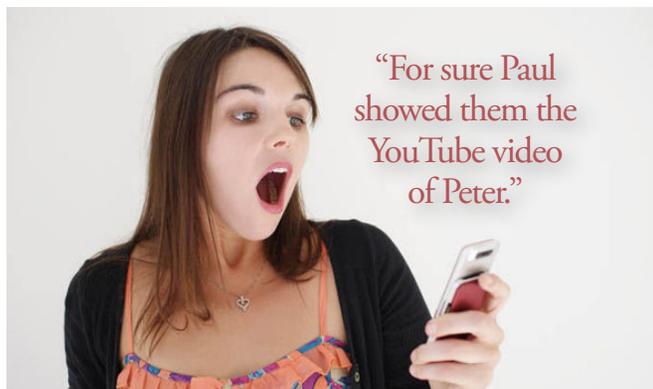
PAUL AMONG THEM

Around this time, God apprehended the Phari-see Saul on the road to Damascus to give him a new

message of unadulterated grace for the very people who were not praying or reading Scripture. Then He sent this very same converted man among the aforementioned people and their unhealthy breakfasts. It sounds dangerous, but it's not. The Frosted Flakes people were completely harmless. Paul simply showed up in their towns, much as a Fuller brush salesman shows up, or a Mary Kay representative, or a kid selling newspaper subscriptions—except Paul wasn't selling anything, he was giving things away. (A man once said to me, "Zender, you make grace cheap!" To which I replied, "My mistake, sir. I meant to make it free.")

It was easy to find Paul. He was the one being thrown out of the synagogues on his ass—and I'm not talking about his donkey. This fascinated the non-Israelites. It was hard to miss Paul. He was the guy people were literally throwing rocks at. This impressed the rock worshippers. Freaks attract other freaks, it is said. (This statement is true.) Paul talked to the non-Israelites in the marketplaces—probably in the cereal aisles.

He told them who he was and compared his present state to what he used to be. He told them about the God of the rocks. He pointed to their hearts, then pointed into



heaven. He told them about Jesus. He told them about the miracles that Jesus did. He probably mentioned that little deal with his friend Peter, when the fisherman walked on water. For sure he would have shown them the YouTube video of it (recorded by Peter's brother Andrew), which by this time had thirty-six views. He told them that Jesus was now brighter than the sun. He asked them if they wanted to see God without having to do anything to earn the privilege. Most of them said, "Sure! Why not?"

ISRAEL GETS WIND

Israelites heard about this unlawful conviviality between the former Pharisee and the Frosted Flake

eaters, and they pulled their beards out—even the women did this. The Jews couldn't believe, first of all, that a fellow-Jew would visit Gentile grocery stores and—*holy Moses, are you kidding me?*—Gentile homes. Secondly, it shocked them to hear that rock worshippers were getting more of God than they were by doing far *less* than them and, in fact, by doing nothing at all—no, actually *worse* than doing nothing at all because they were eating Frosted Flakes, which the law of Moses surely condemned because everyone knows that God hates malt flavoring and BHT. (It's a good thing that they did not find out about the bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches that the goyim regularly ate for lunch.) Not to mention the fact that the goyim had been so recently worshipping rocks. Paul said, "But they don't worship rocks any more." (Notice how Paul made no comment about the Frosted Flakes or the sandwiches.) This failed to appease the offended Jews.

“It’s a good thing that the Jews never found out about the sandwiches the goyim ate for lunch.”



If anyone sought God with all their might (or purported to), and if anyone inquired after Him until their noses turned red and ran, it was Israelites. Yet they did not find Him. Why? They tripped over the stumbling stone of the simplicity and the completeness of the work of the resurrected Messiah (Romans 9:33). They wanted to be great without the humility insisted upon by that very Messiah. They wanted the greatness shining from *their* breasts; they despised reflected glory. The nations suffered no such pretensions. (I refer now to the bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches eaten by those men and women—among other

things.) The juice from the tomatoes of the goyim sandwiches would run down the goyim chins as they sat and listened to Paul teach grace. Paul said to them, “Jesus is the Savior of the world,” and they said, “Sounds good to us, Paul.” Paul said, “You’re complete in Christ!” And they said (without swallowing their food first), “Mmmff...souffnds... sounds good again, Paul!” Then they invited Paul into their homes, and everyone woke up to Frosted Flakes and warm beer and it was off to the races and on to the celestials.

GOD JUMPS INTO HIS OWN PRODUCTION

“Now to Israel He is saying, The whole day I spread out My hands to a stubborn and contradicting people!” (Romans 10:21).

This is God playing another game. It’s not really a game this time but rather a view of the relative rather than the absolute perspective of God’s operation. As we will see in the next chapter (which I will begin commenting upon next week), God is the One who made Israel a stubborn and contradicting people in the first place. Why is God then spreading out His hands in frustration over a people behaving just as He intended them to? Because God has jumped into His own script. He is like the playwright who jumps out of the shadows onto the stage of his own production to play a part. They guy is such a good actor that it’s easy to forget that he’s the author of the play. He’s so good that he acts like he doesn’t even know what’s going to happen next. But who knows better how to act in the play than the author of the play itself? The author knows every character; he invented each one.

Truly, God jumping onto *our* stage *is* an act. God is not literally at loose ends over the behavior of His darling Israel. It’s a brilliant act on account of the Tony Award-level acting executed by the Deity. This is to say nothing of the impressive stage layout. No one in the audience can

see the lights or the curtain or the orchestra in the pit or the Director and Writer just off-stage. But it’s all there. Israel can surely see none of it because the action must all be real to them so that their hearts can be vexed and then changed. Because of God jumping into His own production, God is on record now (on the stage, if you will) as wooing Israel. This is for the sake of Israel. On her day of judgment, Israel must be convinced that she is, on her own, an abject failure. In the days of her humiliation she was completely woo-resistant. She must know beyond a doubt that nothing good resides in her breast that was unplaced there by God. Only then will she be drained of the self-righteousness long afflicting her, and be gained of an appreciation of the sufficiency of Christ.



This has been the plan all along.

To facilitate this plan, God uses *us*. We are the ones who will yet provoke Israel to jealousy. It won’t happen until after we’re gone. When God gives Israel that heart He has long advertised, Israel will realize what she has missed. She will strive to be everything then, even in the midst of the afflictions of the day of God’s indignation.

I am not complaining about my role in this production. Israel may be complaining at present, but she will soon bow silently and in awe at the wisdom, righteousness, and, yes, the love of God.

It’s about time. —MZ