Jesus Junk and Jesus Treasure
Romans 11:11-16

“What if I stumble, what if I fall, What if I stumble and make fools of us all”?
“One man’s junk is another man’s treasure”.

Introduction

At the Tucson Rock and Mineral Show a man finds a large green crystal in a rather ugly rock matrix. He buys it for a $100 dollars. He discovers the rock is one of the largest raw emeralds in the world with a value of over half a million dollars. A man purchases a rather ugly picture in an interesting old frame. He takes the ugly picture out and affixed to its back is one of five original handwritten copies of Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence conservatively valued in the millions of dollars. A grungy pair of Levi’s sold in March 1997 for $25,000. Levi Strauss & Company paid the money to a dealer in New York City. The Levi’s are believed to have been made between 1890 and 1900.

Few people knowingly reject something if they know its treasure. My mother had no idea my Spider-man comics would be worth big bucks. She simply put them in a pile and marched them to the trash, where they were escorted to the dump.

Jesus is God’s treasure for humanity. Paul has defended God’s plan for Israel and the world. God has unfinished business with the nation Israel. I believe Paul is talking about a literal nation (Israel) and a future plan. God is going to save many Jews and a worldwide evangelism is going to take place resulting in the salvation of many souls.

The callous heart of Israel is hardened and seared. Every once in a while a Jewish person comes to Christ. When a Jewish person comes to Christ, the callous softens, and heals. The callous on Israel’s heart is not final. Paul knows Israel is going to experience a remarkable restoration that results in worldwide evangelism. Many of Jacob’s children are going to embrace Messiah, return to the Lord and experience joy and salvation.

We as Christians face a danger. We face the danger of taking for granted the treasure of Jesus Christ and treating him like junk. Paul knows the danger. Paul knows that Gentiles might get puffed up and proud in their present position and fall into the same traps that ensnared Israel of old. There was a reason the Declaration of Independence was hidden in that old frame. During the British war, possession of such a document meant certain death. But the Declaration of Independence was only a declaration until men shed blood to free us from the yoke of bondage. The gospel of Jesus Christ is only a message until men and women embrace its message and acknowledge and appropriate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There was a time when most Jews viewed themselves as God’s favorite and the Gentiles as dogs destined for hell. Beware when you look down on the Jew. There was a time when he looked down on you. Beware of religious pride. The light you seek to show—may be trapped inside. Pride is a lead shield that traps the radiant glory of Christ’s love. Pride and hypocrisy are never attractive.
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One Man’s Trip and One Man’s Treasure (vv.11-12)

Romans 11:11 (NLT)  “Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! His purpose was to make his salvation available to the Gentiles, and then the Jews would be jealous and want it for themselves.”

What does Paul mean? Paul’s rabbinic mind was steeped in Old Testament Scripture. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 in Romans 10:19;

Deuteronomy 32:21 (NLT)
21 They have roused my jealousy by worshiping non-gods; they have provoked my fury with useless idols. Now I will rouse their jealousy by blessing other nations; I will provoke their fury by blessing the foolish Gentiles.

Deuteronomy 32:21 (NKJV)
21 They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.

The expression “move them to anger” or ‘provoke their fury’ translates a word ‘parazeloo’. The expression describes God’s jealousy for his people or a human being’s jealousy of another human being. Paul finds in these words hope for Israel. Paul plumbs the depths of Scripture to find hope for his people—lost and estranged from the living God.

When is jealousy a good thing?

From John Maxwell's book The Winning Attitude:

Two cows were grazing in a pasture when they saw a milk truck pass. On the side of the truck were the words, "Pasteurized, homogenized, standardized, vitamin A added."

One cow sighed and said to the other, "Makes you feel sort of inadequate, doesn't it?"

-- Ron Willoughby, Augusta, Georgia. Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 3.

Does this mean the majority of Jewish people will reject Christ forever? No! God would use Israel’s unbelief as an opportunity to reach out to the Gentile nations! Paul reminds the reader that God’s blessing should have the effect of provoking the Jews to jealousy.

Israel has not fallen in a permanent fashion. They have been tripped up, they have stumbled over Christ. Their trip has resulted in Gentile treasure. The Gentiles have been offered salvation. This should provoke Israel to jealousy! The blessings of salvation should provoke and lead Jews to desire those same blessings!

Twice Paul has turned from ministry to the Jews to reach out to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6). Paul is writing this note from Corinth. He has experienced first hand the bitter opposition of the Jew. Later when Paul would give his testimony to a mob in Jerusalem,
the Jews heard him patiently until he said, “I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles”. They they “lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live” (Acts 22:21-24). Kill the bum!

The Jews became enraged when Paul suggested they would embrace the Messiah who they despised! The thought of the Gentiles receiving any kind of religious advantage created white hot anger!

Are the people you meet provoked to jealousy because of your relationship with Jesus Christ, or just provoked?

Do you radiate and communicate a life of love and joy? Is your life marked by the fruit of the Spirit of the works of the flesh?

Romans 11:12 (NKJV)
12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

The word ‘fullness’ is important. It is the Greek word pleroma. Sometimes the word has a quantitative meaning, like ‘the complete number of Jews’. Most of the time—in the New Testament the word has a qualitative meaning—like ‘completeness’. I suspect Paul is making reference to the full restoration of Israel of her kingdom blessings in Jesus Christ the Lord. What is Israel’s fall or loss? The rejection of Jesus Christ the Lord. That rejection has allowed the Gentiles to enter in and receive riches. Israel’s loss is our gain. Israel’s refuse is our treasure.

There is an event that will take place in the not too distant future. Israel will be saved. God’s Holy Spirit is going to indwell and empower the Jewish people. There will be a worldwide explosion of evangelism with literally millions of people coming to Christ.

In spite of the resistance, rebellion and rejection, Paul looks forward to a day when Israel embraces her messiah! When Israel recovers her treasure—it will mean more treasure for the whole world.

Rejection, Reconciliation and Resurrection (vv.13-15)

Romans 11:13 (NLT)
13 I am saying all of this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I lay great stress on this,

Paul is magnifying his ministry—not to be self serving—but to encourage his Gentile readers. Paul is doing this for at least two reasons. One, to provoke jealousy, and two to remind people what a remarkable change takes when Jesus Christ is a person’s savior, and to hasten the day of Israel’s restoration.
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Paul is writing a letter, but he uses a figure of speech—“I am talking to you”. “You talking to me?” “Yes, I am talking to you!”

Paul affirms and states his authority, “the apostle to the Gentiles”. Paul’s mission in life was to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But Paul admits another motive. If Paul’s preaching results in jealousy to his Jewish brethren—so be it.

Rejection

Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NKJV)  
19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Romans 5:10 (NKJV)  
10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Colossians 1:20 (NKJV)  
20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

How are we to understand reconciliation? We have to first understand our poor miserable hopeless condition apart from the Lord Jesus Christ!

Resurrection

“what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”

Paul believes so strongly in the restoration of Israel, that their restoration will result in a global crusade like the world has never seen!

Life from the dead means resurrection life, new life! The New Testament often pictures our life in Christ as a new kind of life. Paul anticipates again Jewish revival. In that day “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”(Isa. 11:9).

Romans 6:13 (NKJV)  
13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Paul knew there would be a full and final resurrection that takes place at the end of time. How can we make sense of the past? Where is the future going? The ancient Jews often engaged in what has been called, ‘apocalyptic thinking’. Apocalyptic in that sense
meant ‘revelation’ of heavenly mysteries with a view towards the future. How will it all end?

The prophecies in the Bible point to a time of global catastrophe but also a time of global ingathering as Israel is restored and Israel embarks on a campaign of global evangelism.

Ezekiel 37:10 (NKJV)
10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Times Past and Times Ahead (v.16)

Romans 11:16 (NKJV)
16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Sometimes we look at the past in order to understand the present.

Paul is saying the Patriarchs give a heritage of holiness. Do not underestimate the importance of this scripture in the restoration of Israel. Paul is painting a picture to show that Israel can never be totally or finally rejected. Both pictures have to do with first-fruits. The Jew always dedicated the first fruit of his harvest to the Lord. He gave the first part to God, and by giving the first part, the man was saying to God that he was dedicating all his food to the Lord. It was not necessary to offer every mouthful to God. The offering of the first part sanctified (made holy) the whole. The second picture is that of a little tree being planted and the sapling being offered to God. Every branch thereafter was looked upon as being sacred to the Lord. It was not necessary to dedicate each branch separately.

Paul is again alluding to the Old Testament (Num.15:17-21).

“. . .the Lord commands the people to offer to the Lord “a cake from the first of your ground meal.” The word “firstfruits (aparche) is common in both secular Greek and the Old Testament to denote the initial or representative portion of a commodity to be offered in sacrifice (e.g. Lev. 2:12; 23:10; Deut. 18:4). Paul applies the imagery to the situation of Israel. Some part within Israel (the “firstfruits”) is still holy; and that holiness of that initial portion makes holy the rest of Israel as well. This holy part within Israel might be the remnant of Jewish believers in Paul’s day (see Rom. 11:5-7). But the following image makes it more likely that Paul is referring to the patriarchs”(Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary; Clinton Arnold editor; Vol.3 p.68).

If the root is Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the young plant is Israel. Israel benefits from the fact that God still cares about his promises to the Fathers.
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“Patriarchs were holy and Israel is holy, one might conclude that the text teaches that all Jews will be saved. But Paul is using the word ‘holy’ here in the way it is used in Old Testament sacrificial texts. It does not mean ‘set apart for salvation’ (as usually in the New Testament), but ‘set apart’ for God’s special attention” (ibid pp.68-69)

Leviticus 26:40-42 (NKJV)
40 ‘But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, 41 and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt— 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.

Conclusion

In the ancient world Jews were viewed with distrust and suspicion by both Greeks and Romans. Why? It was not simply because of they way they dressed or personal appearance. There were a lot of odd looking people in the ancient world. Jews were viewed with extreme prejudice because they stubbornly clung to their own traditions. Jews refused to serve in the Roman armed forces.

Even some Christians fell prey to this anti-semitism.

I suspect Paul was very proud to be a Jew. Paul reminds us that our participation in Christ is in part due to the faithful works and determined ministries of Jewish people.

God’s treasure Jesus Christ has enriched the world. Millions of Gentiles have come to Christ. Millions are going to heaven. Millions have been spared eternal death and hell. Millions of women and children have been liberated from a life of slavery, bondage and addiction. The gospel has promoted purity and morality world wide. Jesus has stirred justice and just laws among nations. God has allowed millions of Gentiles to enter into eternal life. Think of the benefits Christians have brought to the world. Hospitals were essentially began during the Middle Ages by Christians. Universities were started by Christians for Christian purposes. Literacy and education for the masses, civil liberties, the abolition of slavery, both in antiquity and in more modern times, modern science, the elevation of women, the discovery of the New World by Colombus, the condemnation of adultery, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions—this has helped to preserve the human race, and spare us from heartaches. The civilizing of many barbarian and primitive cultures. The codifying and setting to writing of many of the world’s languages (including Russian) (adapted from James Kennedy “What if Jesus had Never been born? p.3).

As glorious as it has been—it will be more glorious still. When Israel is restored, when large numbers of Jewish people embrace their Messiah, the world will experience an
耶稣的宝藏和耶稣的废物
罗马书11:11-16

前所未有的祝福的流出。甚至可以说，以色列国将被重新建立。

耶利米书24:7（和合本）
7 然后我必赐他们一颗心，使他们知道我，是耶和华；他们必作我的子民，我也作他们的神，因为他们必回转过来，用全心归向我。

耶稣是犹太人的宝藏。