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"HAVE THEY NOT HEARD"?

"But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily their sound went into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world." Rom. 10:18.

By many, this scripture is understood to mean, that in Paul's day the Gospel had been preached everywhere and heard by everyone. This is a mistake, as we shall see. To make such a statement, would not only contradict Paul's utterance in the fourteenth verse of this same chapter and elsewhere, but it would also contradict facts, for we know that the Gospel was not preached before Jesus came, and that, since then – during the few years after, when Paul wrote this epistle – it never reached in the remotest sense, one-tenth of all the world. It could not have reached the vast countries then undiscovered and unknown – America, Lower Africa, Further Asia, Australia, etc.

The Apostle's meaning will be clear when his discourse is considered as a whole. The ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters should be taken together, and studied as one subject. Then it will be seen that the apostle, by reasoning from the Old Testament Scriptures, is showing that the Gospel is to be preached to all the world, and not to Israel only, as some had imagined. To support his argument he repeatedly quotes from the Prophets. This is not clearly shown by the ordinary translation, in reading which it is difficult to discern which are Paul's words and which the statements of the Prophets.

It should also be borne in mind that the Prophets seldom speak of things as future, but instead, they take a future standpoint and speak of things future as though they were accomplished in the past. Thus Isaiah, in referring to the birth of Jesus – a thing then future – spoke of it as though already accomplished, saying, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." (Isa. 9:6.) Thus also "went," in the

above text, should be understood; and the real meaning of the passage is seen to be "Verily their sound shall go into all the earth." In harmony with this custom of the Prophets, our translators should have rendered Paul's expression as future also. It would then read: "But I say, Shall they not hear? Yea, verily their sound shall go into all the earth." The same Greek word here translated heard (past tense) is in Acts 3:22,23, and elsewhere translated shall hear (future tense).

To set our view of Paul's argument clearly before you, we will briefly paraphrase Romans 9:30 to 11:36, placing Paul's quotations from the prophets in italics.

[Rom. 9:30-33.] What must we conclude, then, concerning God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles? We conclude that though Israel has been seeking to be right and justified before God for over 1800 years, and the heathen nations were indifferent to and ignorant of it, yet now that it is offered, Israel will reject and the heathen accept the Gospel. Why? Israel, as a nation, is really hindered because they expect it by works, while the heathen will be better prepared to accept it by faith in Christ's finished work. Israel, feeling so confident that she can approve herself to God by works of obedience, stumbles at the simplicity of the Gospel and cannot believe that

"Jesus died and paid it all,
All the debt we owe."

Therefore, instead of accepting of Christ's ransom, they stumbled over and rejected the only way to God. This was foreshown by the prophet's words: "Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

[Chap. 10:1-4.] Though I speak thus plainly about Israel and their stumbling, do not understand me to rejoice in their fall, for I

desire and pray that they might be saved. I do not accuse them of indifference and willful unbelief; nay, they have great zeal for God, but they have a plan and way of their own, and are thus blinded and cannot see God's way and plan of justifying through a ransom. Hence they are striving to keep the Law in every particular, which in their degenerate condition is an impossibility, and are rejecting Christ, who before the tribunal of justice became the ransom, substitute, or representative of all who will accept of his service; and for all such he met and fulfilled the claims of the Law – DEATH.

[Vs. 5-10.] Moses explains (Lev. 18:5) that the man who does right according to the Law shall continue to live, and not die; but in all the time since Moses thus wrote, none have succeeded in meriting life – death claimed all. It is therefore useless to longer look to works. We are proclaiming that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Jesus' death settled the claims of the law upon all who accept his ransom, and this is the glad tidings which we now proclaim, that a right to life may be had by accepting of the redemption provided through Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

But, my brethren, as Moses also said (Deut. 30:11-14), this thing is not hidden from them, neither is it far off, difficult to understand, and those who banish prejudice and exercise faith will not say, Who ascended into heaven to bring Christ down from above, or who descended into the grave to bring Christ back from the dead? But what will faith say? Faith will say just what Moses said (Deut. 30:14). The word (that is, the truth which we preach), is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart – it is reasonable and plain that you may understand. Faith accepts of the coming of Christ from above, his death, his resurrection and ascension, and finds abundant foundation in the words of Jesus, the Prophets and Apostles – unimpeachable witnesses. Unless you believe this, you

of course cannot accept of his sacrifice as being the end of the law and the cancelling of its death-penalty against you as a violator of it.

But if you would lay hold of this great salvation, you must publicly and openly confess that Jesus is Lord – your Master; that by his death he purchased you and thus became your owner; for "To this end Christ both died and revived, that he might be LORD [owner, master] both of the dead and living." (Rom. 14:9) And you must not only own and believe that he is your purchaser, Redeemer and LORD, but also that he is a living LORD – that God raised him from death and highly exalted him to a higher nature than that which he gave as our ransom. To believe and thus confess is acceptable with God, and to such believers it will be plain that Christ settled all the condemnation of the Law against them, and such may have joy and peace in thus believing. After all, it is with the heart that men believe. No matter how much their minds may be convinced of the truth, if their hearts are stubborn they will not believe. Brethren, get your hearts right, and then you will be able both to believe on and confess Jesus as your Lord.

[Vs. 11-13.] This general principle of faith and release from condemnation in God's sight, is proved by the prophet's words to apply not only to Israel but to all mankind, viz: "WHOSOEVER believeth on him shall not be ashamed." This shows that no matter how much preference was shown the Jew under the Law, there is to be no difference shown under the Gospel, for the same Lord over all is rich enough to settle the claims of all that come unto him and ask for a share in his ransom. We have proof of this in the prophecy which says: "WHOSOEVER shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved."

[Vs. 14-17.] And this brings us to another question, namely: Is it not very proper to preach the glad tidings of ransom and salvation through Christ to the Gentiles or heathen, as well as to Israel?

Certainly, the quotation last made implies this; for how could all call on Christ as Lord without believing? and how could they believe on him except they should hear? and how could they hear without a preacher? and how can preachers go forth truly unless commissioned and sent of God. Hence it is evident that God meant this glad tidings to be preached to the Gentiles and to every creature. Not only can we reason it out logically thus, but we find a positive statement that the glad tidings will be preached, which implies that the Law will be at an end to every one who heareth and believeth. The prophets Isaiah and Nahum testify of this preaching, saying: "How beautiful the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace [reconciliation through his blood – the remission of sins] and bring good tidings of good things," which come as a result.

But we must not hastily suppose that when preached all will receive the glad tidings; for the Prophet, speaking of things future as though they were past, again testifies of the result of the preaching, saying: "Lord, who hath believed our report?" Which implies that the real believers and confessors would be few, at least for awhile. But this proves that faith is to be the result of hearing – hearing God's truth.

[Vs. 18-21.] Now we inquire, Will the fact that few will believe prove that the testimony will reach all, in proof of which I again quote from the Prophet. He says: "Their sound went [shall go] into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." This proves that the Gentiles shall yet have this Gospel preached to them. Now how about Israel? Shall not they as a people come to know – understand and appreciate – the glad tidings? Yes, but not for a long time; they are yet a stiff-necked and stubborn people. As Moses said, God will (have to) provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will anger you.

But Isaiah speaks yet more pointedly of Israel's rejection of the message and the acceptance of it by the heathen, saying: "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." And speaking of Israel he says, "All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying [or self-willed] people."

[Chap. 11:1-5.] In view of these declarations of the Prophets showing that Israel will have to be thus dealt with and disciplined, I ask: Hath God utterly cast away his people Israel? God forbid; for I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not utterly cast away his people whom he formerly recognized and favored. Call to mind Elijah's prayer against Israel, saying: "Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life." But what was God's answer? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so at this present time there is a remnant who through God's favor will accept the glad tidings and will not stumble. I, Paul, rejoice that I am of that favored remnant.

[Vs. 6-8.] But now another point; this remnant is not saved by the works of the Law, nor because they almost kept it, but by accepting of God's favor through Christ. While Israel as a nation fails to receive the blessing sought by works of the Law, the chosen ones, the remnant of Israel and those of the heathen who receive the glad tidings – these get the blessing. These being justified, not by works, but by faith in Christ as their Redeemer (substitute), thereby gain the privilege of becoming sons of God in the divine plan and joint heirs with Jesus Christ in the coming kingdom. The rest, both of Israel and the nations, will be blinded to the Gospel glories. The God of this world will blind them all except those who by faithfulness make their selection sure – a "little flock."

[Vs. 9,10.] David also foretold Israel's stumbling, saying: "Let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumbling-block and a recompense unto them" [i.e., their downfall shall be over the very blessings which God gave them; over their blessings they shall stumble. God had given them food such as he gave to no other people – to them God had committed the oracles of truth, the prophecies and the types which shadowed forth the sacrifice for sin, and the blessings following that atoning sacrifice; yet becoming proud and vain of the honors conferred; they thereby stumbled over the very graciousness of God's plan shown to them in types.] Thus their eyes were darkened, and they were bowed down to see only the earthly promises.

[Vs. 11-14.] But now we come to another question – admitting that Israel will and is stumbling as foretold – I ask: Have they stumbled to fall irrevocably – will they ever again come into fellowship with God? God forbid that they should forever remain cast off; the significance of their fall is rather to be a blessing to the Gentiles than a permanent injury to Israel. And we may reason that if their fall from favor results in riches to the world – the Gentiles – then their restoration to favor, which God's promises guarantee, will imply an abundance of divine favor both to Jew and Gentile. I speak to you Gentiles thus, because being the apostle to the Gentiles I desire to show the importance of the Gentiles in God's plan, and to stimulate my countrymen to emulation, and thus recover some of them from blindness.

[Vs. 15-21.] Thus is seen the breadth of God's plans. We know that there are certain promises made to Israel which must yet be fulfilled; and if they be temporarily postponed and a blessing unexpectedly given to the Gentiles, it argues that God's plans, as we now see them, are broader than we had at first supposed, and include Gentiles as well as Jews; for if the casting away of them opens a

door of favor to the Gentiles, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead. That is to say, God's promises to Israel are such as imply their resurrection from death – their restitution – and now that we learn that the World in general is reconciled to God and their sin atoned for by the ransom, we may reasonably conclude that "life from the dead" – restitution – will come to all the heathen as well as to Israel. We see Israel to be merely a first-fruit of the world, the first favored; and if God has a blessing for them as promised, it follows that he has the same blessing for other nations, for if the first-fruit, or sample, be holy – acceptable and blessed of God – so also the mass which it represents.

If the root or original promise of God made to Abraham and Israel retain its life, it must bring forth the promised fruit – the blessing of all the families of the earth. The root of these promises is Abrahamic and Israelitish, and though some of the natural branches or offspring were broken off, and wild heathen branches grafted in instead, with them to partake of the life from the root –

*How we see this fulfilled in the breaking off of the Gentile branches – the nominal Church – now blinded and cast out and only the elect few branches, "the little flock," remaining. They are no more respected than were the natural branches, and are broken off for the same cause. – Rev. 3:15-17.

[Vs. 22-24.] Here we find two prominent characteristics of our Heavenly Father illustrated – his love and his justice – his goodness and severity. He is abundant in mercy and goodness, but will by no means clear the guilty. His goodness is manifest by the promise and the blessings it contains and his severity or justice in the cutting off from those favors of all the unfaithful. But even in cutting Israel off, God is merciful and kind; and even though cut off they may be re-engrafted, if they exercise the needful faith.

THE MYSTERY.

[Vs. 25-27.] Here is a point not generally known; it is a secret as yet – a mystery – and will show you that God's plan is more comprehensive than you have yet appreciated; and by showing you that you have not all wisdom, it will enable you to keep humble and to search for the further unfoldings of God's plans. The mystery is this: The blindness and breaking off of Israel will not continue forever, it will only last until the choicest, fittest branches from the Gentiles have been properly engrafted on the root – the Abrahamic promise. Then the broken off branches shall be reunited to the root. The fact is, the root or promise contains a double set of branches first: the select branches (natural and engrafted) the spiritual seed of Abraham – the Christ which is to bless all nations; and secondly, a lower order of re-engrafted branches (Israel restored) – the natural seed of Abraham through which the spiritual seed will principally operate in blessing all nations.

Thus seen, all Israel will be saved FROM THEIR BLINDNESS in due time, and shall yet share in the very blessings they expected when they were broken off, viz.: the natural or earthly part of the blessings – the better or spiritual part of the Abrahamic blessing being conferred upon the elect, the chosen, who through much tribulation and crucifixion of the flesh and following of the Master are counted worthy of the chief honor – the spiritual

blessings. In proof of what I state as to the recovery of Israel from her cast-off condition, I quote Jehovah's words by the prophet: "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins."

[Vs. 28-30.] This prophetic statement shows us, beloved Gentile grafts, that though the natural branches are treated as enemies for the present, and for your exaltation, yet really they are still beloved of God, and he has blessings yet in store for them, as promised to their fathers; for any free gift and promise which God makes is sure of fulfilment. He knew all about this temporary lopping off, before he made his promises concerning them, and knowing the end from the beginning makes it unnecessary for him ever to repent of a promise made to any.

Let us now analyze this prophecy and see that it implies what we have before suggested to be God's plan, viz., to bring the natural branches again into God's favor. Jacob clearly means fleshly Israel, and from these ungodliness is to be turned away – but not until God himself shall "take away," or "put away," or "blot out" their sins. As elsewhere shown, the sins of the world are not put away, until the close of the Gospel age, until the sufferings of the body of Christ are ended. During this age, only the sins of those who now believe are cancelled or put out of sight by God. But he who now justifies believers will then justify them, as believers in the ransom, and he will thus take away their sin through the ransom which he gave for sin – even his Son.

In turning away ungodliness a Deliverer is made use of. This is none other than Christ, the great Deliverer whom Moses promised. He shall deliver from all evil, from death, from pain and sickness, from ignorance and blindness, from every oppression of the Devil. He shall bind Satan and set free his captives, for he is

Jehovah's Deliverer. This deliverer is the complete Christ, the members of the body with the Head united, complete – no more twain, but one. This deliverer comes out of Zion; it is the first-born of Zion's offspring – the overcomer and heir of all things. Hence, before the promised blessings come to Jacob (fleshly Israel) the heir of the spiritual blessings must first be developed.

Nor should we suppose that the blessings and deliverances will stop with Jacob, for, as already shown, they are but a first-fruits of restored mankind, and when they are turned to God, they shall become a channel through which the Deliverer will bless and release "all the families of the earth."

[Ver. 31.] Lift up your eyes and take now a comprehensive view of God's dealings with Israel – both spiritual Israel and "Israel after the flesh" – and see how grand and large is the plan of God which as yet is only budding. As for a long while you (Gentiles) were strangers and aliens from God, and seemingly unloved and uncared for, yet now have obtained mercy and favor, while fleshly Israel is cut off, even so these of the fleshly house are now unbelievers and cut off, that by and by they may obtain mercy and find favor through you: that is to say, God is blessing them at the very time he is cutting them off, for in blessing you and preparing the spiritual seed and Deliverer, he is making ready to bless them through you, when you as the body of Christ are complete. (Gal. 3:29.) Thus through the mercy which God now shows you, he is also providing mercy for them, to be manifested in his due time.

[Ver. 32.] God treated Israel as a nation of unbelievers, and cast them aside nationally in order that he might have mercy upon them, and bring them as a people to inherit the earthly promises made to them.

Looking at the deep workings of God's plan thus, in the light of what he tells us is future, as well as past, we can but exclaim: Oh,

the rich depths of God's wisdom and knowledge! how useless for us to try to discover his dealings except as he is pleased to reveal his plans to us. His doings are all mysteries to us except as enlightened by his Spirit. Who knew this gracious plan, so much beyond human conception? Who helped the Lord to arrange such a plan, think you? This is not human wisdom and supposition. God only could be its author. A Jew never would have planned to graft in Gentiles to share the chief blessings of the promise! A Gentile never would have arranged the original stock and branches Jewish and himself a favored graft. No, the plan is clearly of God, and illustrates well both his goodness and just severity. Of him is all the plan, through his power it is all brought to pass, and to him be all the glory forever.

When the Spirit of Paul's argument is caught, it can be clearly seen that he quotes from Isaiah the words "Their sound went into all the earth and their words to the end of the world," not to prove that the Gospel had been universally published, but that it would be in due time.
