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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 universally proclaimed and heard; but it requires only a little reflection and observation to see that this view is not correct. For instance, it would be contrary to the reasoning of verses 12-15. – "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" Besides, it could not have reached the portions of the earth then almost or entirely unknown, – e.g., America, Lower Africa, Eastern Asia or Australia. Nor had it gone in a full, clear sense to all even of the then known world.

The Apostle's meaning is clear, however, when his discourse is considered as a whole, and when it is remembered that he is addressing Israelites – those who had been under the bondage of the Law Covenant. The ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters should be taken together and studied as one subject. Then it will be seen that the Apostle, reasoning from the Old Testament Scriptures, is showing that the [R1970 : page 94] gospel is to be preached to all the world, and not to Israel only, as some had imagined. To support this argument he repeatedly quotes from the prophets.

It should also be borne in mind that the prophets seldom spoke of things as future, but instead, they took a future standpoint and spoke of things future as though they were present, or 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 *goeth*, or *shall go* into all the earth. The statement of Colossians 1:23, properly understood, is in harmony with this: the gospel which the Colossians heard was not to them exclusively, nor to be confined as heretofore to Israel, but was to be preached, declared or made known, irrespective of birth or nationality, to every creature who has ears to hear it.

To make clear Paul's argument, we will briefly paraphrase Romans 9:30 to 11:36, as follows, calling special attention to Paul's quotations from the prophets: –

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 1600 years, and the heathen nations were indifferent to and ignorant of needed justification, yet now that it is offered, Israel will reject, and the heathen will accept, the gospel of justification and reconciliation. Why? Because Israel, as a nation, vainly expect it by works, while the heathen will 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 will not believe that Jesus was the propitiation (satisfaction) for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, instead of accepting of redemption through Christ, they have stumbled over and rejected the only way to God. This was foreshown by the prophet Isaiah (8:14). "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 wilful unbelief; nay, they have a zeal for God, but they have a plan and way of their own, and are thus blinded to God's way and plan of justifying through a ransom. They hope for salvation through the

keeping of the Law in every particular, which in their degenerate condition is an impossibility; and they reject Christ, who before the tribunal of justice became the ransom, the substitute for all who will accept his service; and for all such he met and fulfilled the penalty of the Law, which is death.

Vss. 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 longer to 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 under it who accept of his ransom; and this is the good 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. [R1970 : page 95]

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 we preach) is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart – it is reasonable and plain, that you may understand. Faith, finding abundant foundation in the teaching and mighty works of Jesus and his apostles and in the testimony of the prophets (unimpeachable witnesses), accepts the facts of the coming of Christ from above, of his death, his resurrection and ascension. 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 violators 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 rose 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, your 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 be stubborn they will not believe. Brethren, get your hearts right, and then you will be able both to believe on and to confess Jesus as your Lord.

Vss. 11-13. – This general principle, that faith is the condition of release from condemnation before God, is proved by the Prophet's words to apply, not only to Israel, but to all mankind, for the Prophet declared, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (Isa. 28:16.) This shows that, no matter how much preference was shown the Jew under the Law, there is to be no preference 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 the benefits of his ransom sacrifice. We have proof of this also in the prophecy which says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." – Joel 2:32.

Vss. 14-17. – This brings us to another question, namely: Is it not very proper to preach the good tidings of ransom and salvation through Christ to the Gentiles, as well as to Israel? Certainly; the quotation last made implies this; for how could they 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 with this message unless authorized of God? Hence it is evident that God meant this good news to be preached to all the Gentiles as well as to Israel – to every creature. Not only can we reason it out logically thus, but we find a positive statement that the good

tidings will be preached, which implies that the Law Covenant will be at an end to every one who hears and believes. The prophets Isaiah and Nahum testify of this preaching, saying: "How beautiful the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of peace [reconciliation through his blood – the remission of sins], and bringeth good tidings of good [things which come as a result]." – Isa. 52:7; Nahum 1:15.

But we must not hastily suppose that when preached all will receive the good tidings; for the Prophet, speaking of things future as though they were past, again testifies of the result of the preaching, saying, "Who hath believed our report [our preaching], and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. 53:1.) This implies that the real believers and confessors would be few, at least for a while. But this proves that faith is to be the result of hearing – of hearing God's truth – and not a result of keeping perfectly the Law.

Vss. 18-21. – Now we inquire, Will the fact that few will believe prove that the testimony will reach only a few? No, it is bound to reach *all*, in proof of which I again quote from the Prophet. He says, speaking from a future standpoint: Their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. This proves that *all* the Gentiles shall yet have this gospel preached to them. But what about Israel? Shall not they as a people come to know – understand and appreciate – the good tidings? Yes, but not for a long time; they are yet a stiffnecked, stubborn people. As Moses said (Deut. 32:21), God will [have to] provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will he anger you. Isaiah speaks yet more pointedly of Israel's rejection of the message, and of 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 [self-willed] people." – Isa. 65:1,2.

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 mark God's answer: I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the **[R1970 : page 96]** knee to Baal. (1 Kings 19:10,18.) Even so at this present time there is a remnant who through God's favor will accept the good tidings and will not stumble. I, Paul, rejoice, that I am of that favored remnant.

Vss. 6-8. – But now another point: This remnant is not saved by works of the Law, nor because they *almost* kept it, but by accepting of salvation as God's free 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 gospel, will obtain a special blessing far higher than Israel ever dreamed of. These being justified, not by works, but by faith in Christ as their Redeemer (substitute), thereby gain **[R1971 : page 96]** the privilege of becoming sons of God on the divine plane and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, in the coming kingdom. The rest, both of Israel and the nations, will be blinded to this privilege. The God of this world will blind all except those who, by faithfulness, make their calling and election sure – a "little flock."

Vss. 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 foreshadowed 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]." (Psa. 69:22,23.) Thus their eyes were darkened, and they were bowed down to see only the earthly promises.

Vss. 11-14. – But now we come to another question: Admitting that Israel will stumble, and is stumbling, as foretold, I ask, Have they stumbled to fall irrecoverably? will they never 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 Jews and Gentiles. 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.

Vss. 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 would 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 may be reconciled to God because their sin was atoned for by the ransom, we may reasonably conclude that "life from the dead," restitution, will be offered 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 (the world in general) will be holy.

The covenant promise of God out of which the kingdom classes are being developed is the root, and fleshly Israel as branches were first developed. But, because of unbelief and pride, most of these were broken off, and wild, heathen branches were grafted in instead, with them to partake of the life of the root, yea, the very fatness of the promise; yet they should not be puffed up against the broken-off branches, but humbly and thankfully remember that they are occupying the place originally belonging to the natural descendants. Walk humbly, for if because of pride and unbelief they failed and were cast off, God would be as likely to cut off the wild branches under similar circumstances. [How we see this fulfilling in the breaking off of many of the Gentile branches – now blinded and being cast off. They are no more respected than were the natural branches, and are broken off for the same cause. (Rev. 3:15-17.) Only the elect few branches, the "little flock," will remain.]

Vss. 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 manifested by the promise and the blessings it contains, and his just severity in the cutting off from those favors of all the unfaithful. But even in cutting Israel off, God is merciful and kind; for even though cut off as a people from the chief favor, they still have every advantage as individuals, and as such, any may be reengrafted, if they exercise the needful faith, though, as we have already seen, their hearts are hardened by the past favors of God, so that most of them are less ready than the Gentiles to accept of the gospel.

"THIS MYSTERY."

Vss. 25-27. – Here is a fact 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, [R1971 : page 97] it will last only 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 of 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 engrafted branches – Israel restored – the natural seed of Abraham through which the spiritual seed will principally operate in blessing all nations.

Thus seen, Israel as a whole will be saved from their blindness in due time, and will 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*, then 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. What I state as to the recovery of Israel from her cast-off condition is already stated, but obscurely, by Isaiah the prophet (59:20,21), and I will throw light upon it by stating it clearly, as follows: "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."

Vss. 27-30. – This prophetic statement shows us that though the natural branches are treated as enemies for the present, 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 fulfillment. He fully foreknew this temporary lopping off before he made his promises concerning them, and, knowing the end from the beginning, it is unnecessary for him ever to repent of a promise.

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 will not be 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 also, when they become believers in the ransom. He will thus take away their sin through the same ransom which he gave for our sin – even his Son.

In turning away ungodliness a *Deliverer* is required. 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. 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*, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. (Gal. 4:26.) He is the first-born of Zion, 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."

Vs. 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 you 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.

Vss. 32-36. – God treated Israel as a nation of unbelievers, and cast them aside nationally, in order that he might have mercy upon them nationally, 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 of what is *past*, how wonderful it is! 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 we are [R1972 : page 97] 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. 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 well illustrates both his goodness and his just severity. Of him is all the plan; through his power it is all brought to pass; and to him be the glory forever.

When the spirit of Paul's argument is caught, it can be clearly seen that he quotes the words, "*Their sound went into all the earth and their words to the end of the world,*" AS PROPHECY yet to be

fulfilled, and not to prove that the gospel had been universally published, but that it *would be* in due time.
