

## **“They Did Not All Harken ...”**

Paul began this section of his concern for Israel by expressing his desire and pray for their salvation (10:1). While they had a zeal for God it was not according to knowledge (10:2). They were ignorant of God’s righteousness and they sought to establish their own (10:3). God’s righteousness was not difficult, they did not need to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down nor to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead (10:6f). What they needed to do was to believe in Jesus their Messiah, and to call on his name for God’s assurance was *“whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

*“But, they did not all harken unto the glad tidings”* (10:16). *“So believ cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (10:17). Paul had shown that while whosoever called on the name of the Lord would be saved, he showed that none could call upon God if they did not first believe, and they could not believe unless they had heard (10:14). Why had they not all harkened, that they might believe, that they might call?

That they would not all hear was no surprise to God. He anticipated their refusal to believe. 700 years before Isaiah had written, *“Lord who hath believed our report”* (10:16; Isa. 53:1). In that prophecy Isaiah states *“He was despised and rejected of men”* (Isa. 53). John’s gospel was written later than Paul’s letter to Rome and of Christ’s appearance to his nation. John wrote, *“He came unto his own and they that were his own received him not”* (Jn. 1:11). The national rejection of the Messiah was foreseen (but not foreordained) by God.

To the question again, *“Why had they not all harkened (obeyed) Christ?”* Was it because they had not heard? It was not. Again sacred scriptures is called upon to answer: *“Their sound went out into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world”* (10:18; Ps.19:4). Just as the majesty of the created world testifies of the greatness of God, so the good news of Christ had also been abundantly preached and proclaimed. Early disciples had unceasingly proclaimed the gospel in Jerusalem and everywhere. Israel’s reason for not hearing the word was not because they had not heard.

Paul’s sorrow for Israel was expressed in the words, *“They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”* But did they not know? Paul asked (10:19). Yes, they knew. Once more the apostle calls upon the prophets to testify. He quotes Moses’ words: *“I will provoke you to jealousy with them which is no nation ...”* (10:19; Dt. 32:21). Isaiah also is called upon to testify and his testimony was, *“I was found of them that sought me not; I be-*

*came manifest unto them that asked not of me*" (10:20; Isa. 65:1). How sadly true were these words of Moses and Isaiah! Nothing angered Jews more than the words, "*Lo we turn to the gentiles.*" Paul's defense of himself on the castle steps in Jerusalem was received in silence, which was shattered by angry cries "*away with him, it is not fit that such a one should live*" when Paul had rehearsed God's instructions "*Depart: for I will send thee far hence to the gentiles*" (Acts 22:20-22). And, gentiles who had not sought him, rejoiced and received his words. Why did Israel not hear? I was not (as Paul has shown) that the word was not preached to them. It had been. Why? Isaiah tells why: "*all the day long have I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*" (10:21; Isa. 65:2). To "spread out one's hands" signifies to tenderly plead, to appeal. And how was God appeal received? By a disobedient and gainsaying (quarrelsome, argumentative) people. Israel's condition was a great concern to Paul, but he knew the reason why Israel was lost -- ISRAEL! Next: "Did God Cast Off His People?"

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