

Romans 15:20~33

Here Paul refers to himself as a “*minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles...*” Paul was “*called & commissioned*” by God to take the gospel of Christ to the Gentile world, and to establish the “Church” throughout those regions. He was hand chosen and sent out by God himself, sent to proclaim the good news of Christ to people who had never heard. Paul had tried to preach Christ to his fellow countrymen, but to no avail, they rejected both him and his message of Christ. With that, he left the nation Israel, and went to the Gentiles.

And what an amazing journey it was... The book of Acts gives a good account of Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. It records some amazing and incredible things that God brought about through this man Paul. Countless lives were changed by his message, cities turned upside down... Literally, God changed the world through this man!

As he writes here in his letter to the church at Rome, we learn that at this point in his ministry, he had yet to visit Rome, but was making plans in the very near future. In writing here, he reveals he had nearly covered the entire Gentile region...reaching up as far as Illyricum. The only region left, was Spain. Which Paul says he plans to visit, right after he takes care of a very important matter in Jerusalem. He informs us that he is headed to Jerusalem to deliver a “*love offering*” to the poor saints there, given from the Gentile believers from the region of Macedonia. Allegiance to Christ resulted in the believers in Jerusalem being ousted by their own countrymen. The believers there were persecuted and suffered greatly because of their faith in Christ. To which, the believers in Macedonia wanted to show love for them by an offering of financial support. Speaking of the financial support, Paul says...

²⁷*It hath pleased them verily; and **their debtors they are**. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. (Briefly explain our support)*

He closes out this chapter by asking those in Rome to pray for him and this offering, that all would go well, and that he’d be delivered from those who do not believe in Judea. He declares that as soon as he’s finished there, he has plans to come to Rome...

And come to Rome he did... We know according to scripture, Paul eventually gets to Rome, but not how he might have imagined. He went to Rome as a prisoner. And this would be his last journey, Paul would die in Rome... But not before preaching the gospel of Christ throughout the entire Gentile world...just as God had called him to do...

²⁰*Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation: ²¹**But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.***

Here Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah 52:15, which is a reference to the Gentiles, what Paul has referred to on several occasions, as those without the Law, the uncircumcised. Gentiles is a reference to all those outside the nation Israel, those outside the covenant. Israel was the ones whom God had made this covenant, and the ones to whom all the holy writings had been given. If anyone should have known the Messiah when he came, it should have been Israel. But they didn’t...due to the darkness of their heart, God gave Israel a spirit of slumber, and they did not recognize Jesus. But rather, were the very ones who called for his crucifixion. Jesus often spoke of their blindness to the things of God...

(Matthew 13) ¹³*Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By **hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:** ¹⁵For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at*

any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. ¹⁶***But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*** ¹⁷*For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

Isaiah had prophesied that the nation Israel, who had all the writings and prophecies about the Christ, would blind and deaf to him. And that the Gentiles, who had never heard or seen would both see and hear! Which is exactly what happened! Though Israel rejected Jesus, the Gentiles gladly received him... To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Isaiah 52 & 53 are among the most well-known and most cited writings of the O.T. scriptures, especially chapter 53, which is commonly entitled, “*The Suffering Servant.*” Without a doubt, the most detailed, the most factually accurate account of the death of Jesus Christ in all of the prophetic word. Written around 740 years before Christ, the accuracy in which Isaiah describes the events of the crucifixion of Jesus, is nothing short of amazing.

Read 53:1~12... *The Suffering Servant.*...

A vivid description of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross... A close study of this passage will reveal that every detail was fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus. But even more amazing is the fact, that Isaiah prophesied of the nations rejection of this man.

¹*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* ²*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* ³***He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.***

Isaiah began this section insinuating that *for the most part*, this servant would not be rejected by the nation Israel. Which is exactly what happened. “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*”

Here Isaiah asked a question... *to whom is **the arm of the LORD** revealed?* A reference to the “*mighty work*” that God was going to bring about in Jerusalem, as declared here in chapter 52.

Read 52:1~9... *Redemption & Deliverance has come to Jerusalem!*

The prophet declares that God was going to do a work in the midst of Jerusalem, that would be declared throughout the entire world! The “*arm of the Lord*” shall be revealed... God will do a mighty work, a work that the whole world will see, and will know that it is the power of the God of Israel!

Given the incredible signs and wonders that God had performed among Israel in the past, no doubt this one was expected to be just as great, and just as miraculous.

The Exodus: God turned the Nile river into blood...
All the plagues...frogs, lice, flies...
The plague on the cattle, the plague of boils, the plague of hail, the plague of locusts...
The plague of **darkness**...the final plague, “*death of the firstborn.*”

Add to that the “*dividing of the Red Sea.*” All miraculous events, unquestionable the work of the hand of almighty God! The arm of the Lord was clearly revealed to all in Egypt! Signs and wonders that had no other explanation than God.

Well, here in Isaiah, the prophet declares yet another “*mighty work of God*” yet to come to the nation, in God’s redeeming the Holy city, Jerusalem! God promised to send a deliverer to Israel, to deliver them out

of bondage, to restore them to their former glory. It is to this deliverance, that Isaiah is referring to here in chapter 52. He begins by calling for the nation to wake up, and get ready, declaring that God was about to do a mighty work among them, (*reveal his arm,*) a work that would set them free! A work that would be witnessed by the whole world!

(52:10) ¹⁰*The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

Isaiah prophesies that God is getting ready to do a “mighty work” in the midst of Jerusalem, a work that will be witnessed by the whole world!

But this time...it would not be a “might display of the power of God” the way Israel imagined. It would not be the turning of water into blood, bringing darkness across the land, dividing the waters, etc... This time, it would be a manifestation of *the power of His love*. In verse 13...

¹³*Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, (wisely) he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. ¹⁴As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: ¹⁵So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*

(Vs 13) His *Exaltation*...Isaiah says, he will be “Exalted and Lifted up!” But it becomes apparent, by his next statement that it is not in reference to a political position or Kingly office.

(Vs 14) Many will be astonished at him...(stunned, amazed...to be in awe...) But notice the reason for their being in awe, their being stunned...because of *his appearance!*

(KJV) ¹⁴*As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:*

I like the way another translation puts it...*Many people were shocked when they saw him. His appearance was so changed he did not look like a man; his form was changed so much they could barely tell he was human.*

Another translation...*Many were amazed when they saw him, beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know he was a person.*

Beloved, Isaiah is referring to the cross! Declaring the “His servant” would be exalted and extolled and be very high, was a reference to his being placed up on the cross in His death! This is the “mighty arm” of the Lord! Isaiah speaks of the amazement of the people when they see him on the cross! This man is so badly beaten, so badly disfigured, that you could hardly tell he was a man! Think about that, he was beaten beyond recognition. And as Isaiah declares in 53:5, he suffered this for us!

⁵*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

Christ suffered and died...for us! For our sins, our iniquities...he took our punishment upon himself! He did this to redeem us! To redeem us from the hand of the enemy!

¹⁵*So shall he **sprinkle** many nations...*a very interesting statement...It refers to the sealing of a covenant. It is best explained in Hebrews 9, which is a reference to what Moses did with the “First Covenant” as recorded in Exodus 24.

Hebrews 9:19~28... ¹⁹*For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the*

book, and all the people, ²⁰Saying, *This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* ²¹Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. ²²And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. ²³It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ²⁵Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

To seal the covenant between God and the people, Moses used the sacrificial blood of animals. Of which he took and sprinkled the book and the people. Christ, shed his own blood...and by doing so, sealed the covenant between God and man, between those who trust in Christ, for eternity.

¹⁵*So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: ...for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*

This is a reference to the salvation of the Gentiles! They never had God's written word, they had no knowledge of the coming Messiah. But here Isaiah declares that they will see and hear about the crucified Christ, and many will be saved by faith! In Romans 15, Paul declares, that he went to the Gentiles, those who had never heard, to preach Christ crucified! And exactly as Isaiah had prophesied, many received him by faith!