

(2) Romans 10:16-18

Translation:

16 But not all responded to the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who believed what we heard?"

17 Thus faith is by means of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

18 But I say, they did not hear, did they? On the contrary, "Into all the earth their sound went out, and into the extremities of the world their words."

Note: In the phrase "the word of Christ" in verse 17, the UBS text gives Word of Christ a "B" rating, which indicates that there is some degree of doubt. The evidence for the alternate reading, Word of God, is not as strong. -- 17 ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ κοῆς, ἡ δὲ κοὴ διὰ ῥήματος
□Χριστοῦ. [Note: Χριστοῦ WH Treg NIV θεοῦ RP]

Commentary:

Verse 18b is obviously a quotation of Psalm 19:4 (English enumeration): "Into all the earth their sound went out, and into the extremities of the world their words." This speaks of what the heavens are telling; and we note that whatever the heavens are telling about God's glory and handiwork has gone to the ends of the earth. This is a general revelation to all mankind (divine self-disclosure in mediate, nature mode), and does not refer to the redemptive gospel.

The question in verse 18a -- "they did not hear, did they?" -- is answered in 18b by the assertion that the general revelation has reached (and reaches) to the extremities of the world. Thus all human beings have heard (and hear) this "word", which reveals God's glory and handiwork.

However, in verse 17 hearing is spoken of as means to faith ("faith is by means of hearing"); and what is heard is "the word of Christ". The order of sequence seems to be: (1) "the word of Christ" is proclaimed; (2) human beings hear this word; (3) faith comes by hearing this word. Thus we have the sequence: word, hearing, faith.

But when in verse 18a Paul says, "they did not hear, did they?", the answer is that they did indeed hear; and the evidence that they did indeed hear comes from Psalm 19:4. But in Psalm 19:4 what they heard was external general revelation!

However, in verse 16 Paul says that not all Israelites (speaking of the nation of Israel during the Old Testament period) responded to the gospel; and he quotes Isaiah as