



ROMANS Part 130

Chapter 15:8-13

Vague, OT promises to nations become specific under Paul's gospel.



For I am saying that Christ has become the Servant of the Circumcision, for the sake of the truth of God, to confirm the patriarchal promises. 9 Yet the nations are to glorify God for His mercy, according as it is written, "Therefore I shall be acclaiming Thee among the

nations," "And to Thy name shall I be playing music."

10 And again he is saying, "Be merry, ye nations, with His people! 11 And again he is saying, "Praise the Lord, all the nations," And "let all the peoples laud Him." 12 And again Isaiah is saying, there will be "the root of Jesse, And He Who is rising to be Chief of the nations: On Him will the nations rely."

13 Now may the God of expectation be filling you with all joy and peace in believing, for you to be super-abounding in expectation, in the power of holy spirit.

Back in verse four of this chapter, Paul wrote the following—

For whatever was written before, was written for this teaching of ours, that through the endurance and the consolation of the scriptures we may have expectation.

The "endurance and consolation of the Scriptures," here in verse four, is different, in scope, than "the *God* of endurance and consolation" referenced in verse 5. The former is specific, the latter broad. The Scriptures themselves have been miraculously preserved ("endurance") and they are full of solace and succor ("consolation") to the nations in light of Paul's unfolding revelations to them. The *God* of endurance and consolation, on the other hand, is the Author of *anything* that endures and consoles, *including* the Scriptures. In a broad sense, He is the One giving human beings (who are quite more valuable to Him than words on a page) whatever endurance and consolation they need to keep on trucking and plugging away during an evil eon. Here in the "behavioral" section of Romans, Paul continues to remind the nations to retain their justifiable expectation of grace and glory from a God Who is now working among them and revealing things in their midst. It would be bad behavior *not* to retain it.

NEW DEAL

How easy, especially during Paul's early career, for Greeks and other non-Israelites to give up on any real expectation of God. The non-Israelite's history with God was too new to warrant any normal expectations, let alone enduring ones. The nations would have had no history to rely upon; no record of dependability from a God Who, in past eras, stylized Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For centuries, God played only with Israel in the sandbox of relevance. "How nice that Israel has such a long-running history," the nations might have mused. The length of that history would, to the nations, have made Israel the certifiable darling of God's heart. As for them? They were likely to be expelled from the left ventricle of God's blood-pumping organ at the merest whiff of divine dissatisfaction. Paul is out to assure these non-Israelites that no such ejection is possible.

THAT LITTLE ISRAELITE THING

En route to this goal, Paul does feel obligated to confess to the nations the little factoid that, yes, "Christ *has* become the Servant of the Circumcision, for the sake of the truth of God, to confirm the patriarchal promises." But Paul quickly moves on from there to detail how the nations are to glorify God for His mercy to *them*. This is why I call Paul's mention of Christ as the Jewish Messiah obligatory. Paul states it for the record, not as a springboard to other Jewish considerations. He's departing *from* Jewish considerations—*pronto*.

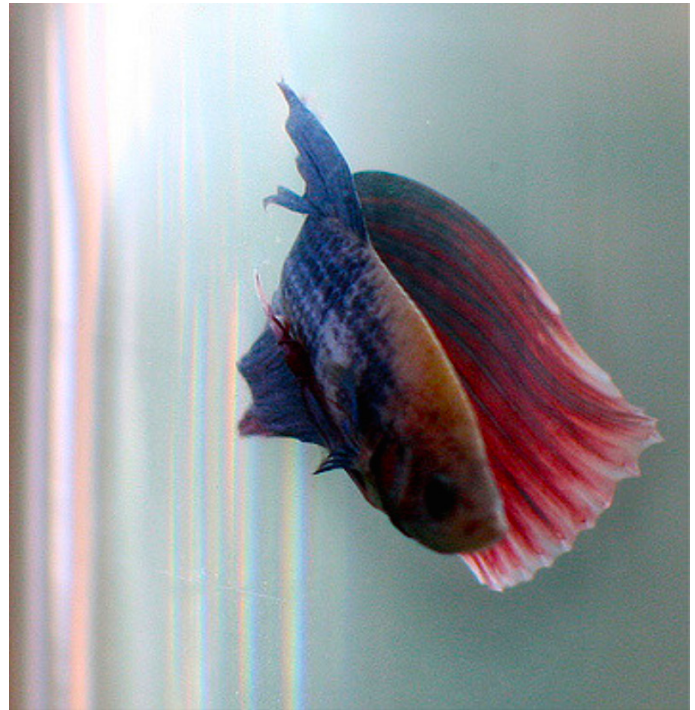
There is consolation, I believe, to the nations in Paul's phrase "has become," as in, "Christ *has become* the Servant of the Circumcision." This is not what Christ always was. It is, rather, *this* role of Christ's that smacks of a thin history.

Prior to His incarnation as Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ was the firstborn of every Creature (Colossians 1:15). So, Christ's history with Israel is *not* His default setting; likewise, it is *not* His primal history, so much so that He had to *become* the servant of the Circumcision. What was He before? Oh, only the origin of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14), the Creator of the eons (Hebrews 1:2), and the source of all creation besides God (Colossians 1:16). Was He, at that time, the Servant of the Circumcision also? How could He have been, when there was no such thing *as* the Circumcision? At the creation of the universe humanity did not even exist, let alone a segment of that humanity out there cutting the ends of their penises off.

Jesus Christ was, at this early point in universal history, the Son of God's love (Colossians 1:13); the firstborn of

every creature (Colossians 1:15); the Alpha (Revelation 1:8) and eventually the Omega (Revelation 1:8). Thus it seems as though Paul is almost apologizing for the fact that the first Being in the universe (besides God) had to temporarily humble Himself to take on the role of a Jew born under Abraham, enabling Him to confirm the promises God made to that patriarch. "Sorry about that," Paul might have added on side. "Don't let it throw you off. Let's quickly move on from here into what Christ is doing for the majority of humanity, namely *you*."

“What was Christ prior to His incarnation as Messiah of Israel? Only the source of all creation besides God.”



FIRST THINGS FIRST

While writing to the Romans, Paul's revelation of Christ as the source of everything is yet future; in other words, the apostle has yet to pen his letter to the Colossians. Paul's revelation of when Christ decided which members of the future human race would be members of His body and which wouldn't—Christ figured this out before the disruption of the world of Genesis 1:2—was also yet future;

Paul would write of this pre-disruption appointment five years hence in his letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:4). In the meantime, the apostle can at least show the nations how Israel's own Scripture—*of all things*—contained hints of God not only visiting them, but lavishing them with heart-gladdening hobnobbery; He'd *hang* with them, as Jesus did with hookers and wine guzzlers. He'd stage-dive into their midst and reveal to them secrets unknown, even to the so-called favored nation.

Paul now lists several verses announcing this very thing—a future blessing to the nations. No doubt these are the same verses that beamed into Paul's head shortly after his conversion on the Damascus road. You know how it is: You suddenly notice a Scripture verse (a verse such as 1 Timothy 4:10, describing the salvation of all humanity) that you seem to be seeing for the first time. You say, "Where has *that* verse been?" Of course it was there all along, but God had to give you new eyes for its apprehension. Before that, you weren't predisposed to it. You were predisposed to see something else.

Paul underwent a similar phenomenon. On the day of his conversion, he learned from God that he would be a herald to the nations. Suddenly, here were all these Old Testament verses springing up out of seemingly nowhere, talking about God someday being acclaimed among the nations. *Geez*, Paul must have thought. *I'm the guy that God has chosen to do this. I'll actually be fulfilling Scripture.* Paul then probably turned to his new Damascus friend, Ananias, and said, "Where did *these* verses come from?"

Paul lays these sleeper verses upon the Romans in chapter 15. Here they are, all from the Hebrew Scriptures—

▶ "Therefore I shall be acclaiming Thee among the nations" (Psalm 18:49).

▶ "And to Thy name shall I be playing music" (Psalm 18:49).

▶ "Be merry, ye nations, with His people! (Deuteronomy 32:43).

▶ "Praise the Lord, all the nation" (Psalm 117:1).

▶ "Let all the peoples laud Him" (Psalm 117:1).

▶ "[There will be] the root of Jesse, and He Who is rising to be Chief of the nations: On Him will the nations rely" (Isaiah 11:10).

Paul says that the nations are to "glorify God for His mercy." Well, why wouldn't the nations do this? God hinted at what He would do among them even in that part of His Word not written to them. God carefully avoids elaborating on exactly *what* He will do—this was a secret kept for Paul—but how helpful to Paul and to the nations-at-large that God would drop bread crumbs along the way to indicate His future intention.

JOY AND PEACE

Our apostle finishes this way—"Now may the God of expectation be filling you with all joy and peace in believing, for you to be super-abounding in expectation, in the power of holy spirit (Romans 15:13).

In light of the Old Testament references just shared by Paul, how can he not refer to the God of the Romans as "the God of expectation"? The practical result of so sure a prospect is joy and peace. Paul's exuberant desire follows, "for you to be super-abounding in expectation." Why not? Expectation leads to more expectation, and on it goes until one is awash in the stuff.

Those things that are expected—detailed by Paul elsewhere—await deliverance. The expectations themselves occur by the power of the holy spirit, for only the holy spirit (the power of God) can cause a people formally without God in the world to expect so *many* things (grand things) from this same God. It's true that these things are not yet being observed, but what *is* being observed (i.e., nothing) is temporary, while what is not being observed—a weight of glory beyond even the expectation of Israel—is eonian. (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Let us console one another with these words. —MZ

