**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon Series**

**Paul’s Letter to The Saints in Ephesus**

**~ This is Christianity ~**

***Chapter 2:14-22***

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August 29th In the Year of Our Lord - (Anno Domini A.D.) 2021

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

***6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.***

 ***7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.***

***(Isaiah. 9:6-7)***

We ended last week’s sermon with Ephesians 2:14-22. They were most fitting verses and worthy of additional reflection. Paul, being one of the most knowledgeable Jewish Pharisees when he surrendered to the Lord on the Damascus Road, obviously knew the book of Isaiah very well. The Jewish book of Isaiah is one of the most numerous scrolls (21) found within the Dead Sea Scrolls (220 Biblical, 730 non-biblical).

**The Great Isaiah Scroll** (1QIsaa) is one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947 AD. It is the largest (734 cm) and best preserved of all the biblical scrolls, and the only one that is almost complete. The 54 columns contain all 66 chapters of the Hebrew version of the biblical Book of Isaiah. Dating from ca. 125 BC, it is also one of the oldest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some one thousand years older than the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible known to us before the scrolls' discovery.

<http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaia>

<https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=143>

https://www.imj.org.il/en/wings/shrine-book/dead-sea-scrolls



The Dead Sea Scrolls are ancient manuscripts that were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran, on the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea. They are approximately two thousand years old, dating from the third century BCE to the first century CE. Most of the scrolls were written in Hebrew, with a smaller number in Aramaic or Greek. Most of them were written on parchment, with the exception of a few written-on papyrus. The vast majority of the scrolls survived as fragments - only a handful were found intact. Nevertheless, scholars have managed to reconstruct from these fragments approximately 950 different manuscripts of various lengths. The manuscripts fall into three major categories: biblical, apocryphal, and sectarian.

**What Do the Dead Sea Scrolls Prove?**

The find and presence of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirms the existence of the nation of Israel dating back to at least the 8th century B.C. The contents of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 29:22, 51:2, 41:8, 63:16) represents the historical record of the Hebrew people to be in the geographical area from the time of Abraham (2000 BC).

 Isaiah was written during the time of the First Temple period that Solomon built (by 920 BC). (Destroyed by 586 BC by the Babylonians.) The Dead Sea scrolls themselves were produced in about 125 B.C., obviously copied from older sources. The second Temple (built by 515 BC upon return from Babylonian Exile) was standing then. The Hebrews date the life of the prophet Isaiah back to the 700’s BC based upon historical records of not only their nation but the history of the surrounding nations.

**Isaiah’s Importance**

So, we can understand why Paul constantly referred to the book of Isaiah, as it was believed to be God’s Word providing revelation of God and direction for not only Israel but for all people of the world. Many us know that Isaiah 53 is a prophetic declaration about God’s incarnation as Jesus, the Messiah. Here in Ephesians 2, Paul references other parts of the book of Isaiah pointing to Jesus as the Messiah – the one who would come and bring peace, peace between God and people and a person and their neighbor.

**Key Words**

As we read through the passages, notice key words and phrases Paul uses to convey the message (example: enmity, peace, reconcile, His flesh, through the Cross). This is one of the passages that is conclusive about Jesus going to the Cross carrying through the one act in human history that brings all people to the attention of one singular need for redemption from their fallen state. Regardless of race, gender, culture, religion, education, age, or nationality - Jesus’ Cross is designed, intended and offered to unite all. The Cross is the grand-eternal offering to humanity.

**The Cross Unites**

Jesus’ Cross unites all people, because we all have the same eternal need - to be placed in a correct relationship with God our Creator and each other. In this need, we are all one. From a Jewish view, the Law highlighted sin in that the Law contained ordinances detailing wrong life practices. This is also a witness to the whole world. Not that the whole world was ever obligated to keep the Law about which they knew nothing. But more to the point - that God sets the standard of conduct, thought and belief that He seeks for us. God set the “good” standard for our lives to live.

The “good” created by God, by which all people are to live, has been revealed through what God has created from the beginning (Romans 1:18ff). This included His Word – The Bible. God’s “good” unites all people under His love. We see this in John 3:16 . . . “For God so loved the world. . .”

God’s “good” is represented through the Cross, calling for us to confess our sins and seek forgiveness from Him and our neighbor. This breaks down the dividing wall – the enmity in all relationships – and brings peace, making all people into one. “This is Christianity”.

**Searching for Answers**

We see around the world that people have different understandings of the why, when, what, who, where and how they arrived. Universally, people have looked to the heavens day and night to determine an understanding to these ultimate life questions. And – universally, people have searched inward, to their heart, soul, and mind in the quest to answer these same basic questions of existence.

In man’s quest to look upward into the heavens, we now have space probes that have been traveling for years. Voyager 1, called a “flyby” spacecraft (launched 1977), has traveled 14.2 billion miles from Earth (August 5, 2021). It is the most distant man-made object from Earth. The probe takes pictures of planets and objects it passes and will flyby. All this in search of whatever is out there - but specifically signs of life. In 2012, Voyager 1 entered interstellar space traveling about 38,000 miles per hour. In 2025, the power supply will have reached its limit and be unable to operate in order to send pictures back to earth. However, Voyager 1 will continue to fly.

The flight of Voyager 1 may continue well past a time when humanity destroys itself. In our current world situation, it seems possible this could happen. We are a world at war. Regardless, if the power supply on Voyager 1 fails, there may not be anyone to receive pictures here on earth. In the secular sense and biblical truth – the hate, that is ignoring God’s “good” – mankind can kill itself.

**Victims of Hate – Call-out for a Savior**

 Thus, war-torn humanity, life on earth, needs a Savior. This brings in the Jesus question. Obviously, people cannot produce their own Savior. God, our Creator, is the One who provides Himself as Savior through the Incarnation of Himself as Jesus/The Christ/Messiah going to the Cross paying the price for the sins of the world. God created this world and us and has the power and authority to incarnate Himself as one of us.

**Christ-Credit**

The Jesus question leads to the Christ-Credit. Okay, remember, the term I use “Christ-Credit” is a wording used to symbolize the power of the Cross to save. That is, those who surrender to God in Faith have access to the atoning unblemished sacrifice of God as Jesus “The” Christ at the Cross - which will satisfy a person’s debt owed to God for the commission of sin. This surrender also ushers in (rebirth) God’s Spirit into a person’s heart, soul, and mind to guide them through life. Therefore, loving their neighbor as God intended and not being at war with them. **This is the heart of Christianity** and points to the singular need of the whole world. Who will bring the peace? Mankind has failed to ever bring a lasting peace between neighbors. Why? Because one or both parties leave the love of God from the relationship.

How does Paul respond to this need of a Savior to bring peace?

**Ephesians 2**

14 For He Himself is our peace,

who made both groups into one

and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity,

which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances,

so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man,

thus, establishing peace,

 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God

through the cross,

by it having put to death the enmity.

 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED **PEACE** TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND **PEACE** TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

**Isaiah 57:19** Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "and I will heal him."

**Isaiah 26:12** LORD, You will establish peace for us,

Since You have also performed for us all our works.

**Isaiah 32:17** And the work of righteousness will be peace,

And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.

18 for through Him

we both have our access in one Spirit

to the Father.

 Paul writes to those outside of Judaism - to the Gentiles, in order for them to know they are one with the Jews who have also accepted The Cross of Christ and surrendered to God. Paul is saying they are not second-class citizens in the kingdom of God but full heirs (fellow citizens). The path to a restored relationship to God is not different but the same, through faith in God, as was promised to Abraham over 1800 years before the birth of Christ and 430 years before Moses received the Law. Once again, the Law was added due to the hardness of people’s hearts (Galatians 3:17-19).

 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,

but you are fellow citizens with the saints,

and are of God's household,

 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

 In verse 20, we see Paul acknowledge the Old Testament prophets and “apostles”. Paul wrote the letter to the saints in Ephesus in about 61 A.D. This is about 28 years after the Cross and the eyewitness of Peter, John, Mark, and Matthew – to be specific. We do not have all the written history of the apostles, but we see their work. So, Paul references to the “apostles” is no doubt a reference to the “apostles” of Jesus, being the “twelve” (minus Judas, but replaced by Matthias). Their foundation of “faith” is the rock of faith Peter demonstrated correctly in identifying Jesus (Matthew 16). Take note that Peter is not the person upon which the Church is built . This is not in context with the whole Word of God. Christ, God in the Flesh, is the corner stone which is exactly who Paul identifies in Ephesians 2:20.

**Acts 4:10-12** 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16

 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Take note that when Paul wrote to the Believers in Rome, they were already there. Someone had gone many years before Paul and witnessed the resurrected Christ to the people in Rome. It was not Paul. God had already worked through apostles to lay a foundation in Rome, but Christ was the chief cornerstone.

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together,

is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

 22 in whom you also are being built together

into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

 We see that Paul is constructing a visual picture of the Body of Christ. Paul identifies the Jews and Gentiles to be stones but spiritual stones, joined together with the Cornerstone (Christ) and considered the making of the “holy temple” where Believers are united and dwell with God in the Spirit.

 Where else do we see the description of Believers analogous to rocks or stones? Peter, under the direction of God’s Holy Spirit, writes to all of us.

**1 Peter 2:4-10**

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,

 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"

 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

**This Is Christianity . . . . . . . . .** **AMEN**