

saying, "Lord, who believed what we heard?" The idea here appears to be that although Isaiah heard the word of the Lord concerning the suffering Servant and His sacrificial death for men's sins, and although he communicated this word to the Israelites of his day, comparatively few believed Isaiah's report and thus few responded in faith to the gospel.

But now we must ask the difficult question: how does verse 16 correlate with verse 18?

Verse 16 is speaking of the special revelation of the redemptive gospel in Jesus Christ, and verse 18 is speaking of the general revelation of God's glory and handiwork in His creation. This would be no problem if the two verses were not connected by verse 17. But they are! And verse 17, as immediately subsequent to verse 16, seems to continue speaking of the special revelation in God's Son; whereas verse 17, as immediately antecedent to verse 18 and joined to verse 18 by the antecedent to the question, "they did not hear, did they?", seems to be speaking (at least partially) of the general revelation in God's creation.

If we begin with verse 16, which clearly speaks of the special revelation of the gospel in Christ; then proceed to verse 17 with the understanding that it continues to speak of the special revelation of the gospel which, when heard, is a means to faith; then when we come to verse 18, which just as clearly speaks of the general revelation of God's glory and handiwork in creation and at the same time refers us back to verse 17 (for the answer to the question in 18a), we have a problem!

Now, however, if in verse 16 we understand that comparatively few Israelites in Isaiah's day listened to (heard) the word concerning Christ and responded in faith; and if in verse 17 we understand that faith comes through hearing the word (whether the word of general revelation of God's glory and handiwork in creation, or the word of special revelation of the redemptive gospel in Christ); and if in verse 18 we understand that the Israelites heard both the word of general revelation and the word of special revelation, but responded to neither one in faith; this may help explain the apparent discrepancy between verses 16 and 18.

Even if we accept this explanation, there is a special problem that requires resolution. It is the reference to "the word of Christ" in verse 17. If this phrase is understood to refer to the gospel of Christ's redemption, then when verse 18 asks, "they did not hear, did they?", and quotes Psalm 19:4 to support the implied answer that the Israelites did hear, then one of two options is true: either the gospel of Christ's redemption is revealed in external general revelation and the Israelites heard the gospel but rejected it; or the sequence of