

**T H E  
H O P E  
O F  
I S R A E L**

**by  
RUSSELL H. COLLINS**

## FOREWORD

When the nation of Israel was brought into existence in 1948, many Christians saw this event as a fulfilment of Scripture prophecy and an indication that the nation of Israel would be restored to Divine favour and that this favour would lead to Israel's pre-eminence over other peoples and nations in the coming Kingdom of God on earth. The entire nation of Israel, some Christians maintain, will be converted by the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ standing on the Mount of Olives. Jesus Christ will then restore the earthly kingdom of Israel, give it a glory surpassing that of the days of David and Solomon and exalt the Jewish nation to the position of supremacy over the nations of the world.

In this booklet this teaching will be discussed and brought to the test of Scripture. It is understood and acknowledged that this teaching is believed by many devoted Christian brethren, and I ask only that they examine closely the Scriptures which will be quoted and the interpretations offered, *"with all readiness of mind"* to see whether *"these things"* are so (Acts 17 :11).

The issue of the destiny of the nation of Israel is not an insignificant matter, or a matter we can in all good conscience ignore or set aside, because it involves the truth concerning the Gospel of Christ and the salvation of the human race.

The testimony of the New Testament Scriptures, particularly the writings of Paul, reveal that the above-mentioned teaching is not mentioned by the Lord Jesus nor any of the inspired New Testament writers, and sets up, for the benefit of the nation of Israel, another hope, added to the *"one hope"* of the Gospel of Christ. I see it as a Christian duty to bring to the attention of all the household of faith the true teaching of the Bible concerning the future of the Jewish people. It is with a view to fulfilling that duty that I offer this examination of the Hope of Israel.

It is a fact that Christian believers, as well as Jewish teachers and scholars, hold firmly to the full inspiration of *"the Scriptures of the prophets."* It is a question, then, of how these prophecies are to be understood, a question of interpretation.

It is also a fact that the teaching of Christ and His apostles on the hope of Israel came into violent collision with the teaching of the Jewish rabbis and leaders of Israel; and because of this **He was crucified** and His apostles were furiously persecuted.

The Jewish leaders and teachers either misunderstood or did not understand the Old Testament Scriptures, as it is written, *"they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day"* (Acts 13 :27).

We, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, must take care that we understand correctly the Scriptures *"written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* (Romans 15:4).

**Russell Collins.**

.....

# CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	<b>THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION</b> Interpretation Of Old Testament Prophecies Of Blessing To Israel An Illustration From Zechariah God's True Temple	6
2	<b>HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL ARE INTERPRETED BY PAUL</b>	18
3	<b>WHAT THE FAITHFUL FATHERS OF ISRAEL WERE LOOKING FOR</b>	24
4	<b>GOD'S WARNINGS THROUGH MOSES</b>	28
5	<b>GOD'S PROMISES TO ISRAEL FULFILLED THROUGH JOSHUA</b>	50
6	<b>SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b> From The Desert To the River Euphrates The Son Of The Bondwoman Shall Not Be Heir With The Son Of The Freewoman The Period Of The Judges	55
7	<b>SALVATION AND THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID</b> Salvation The Sure Mercies of David	61
8	<b>SOME PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH</b> A Voice From The Temple Isaiah's Prophecy As A Whole The New Nation A Resurrection	71

<b>Chapter</b>		<b>Page</b>
9	<b>THE NEW COVENANT AND ITS PEOPLE</b> The New Covenant The New Covenant People	78
10	<b>SOME PROPHECIES OF ZECHARIAH</b> In That Day	83
11	<b>THE PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL</b> A Survey of Some Relevant Prophecies In Ezekiel	88
12	<b>THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES</b>	97
13	<b>THE TEMPLE OF EZEKIEL</b> The Vision Itself The Purpose Of The Vision The Prince The Nation No Longer Divided Was The Pattern Shown To Ezekiel Followed? Pentecost and the Descent of the Spirit The Day of Pentecost The Source of the Living Waters	103
14	<b>THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S TRUE ISRAEL REVEALED</b>	120
15	<b>SUMMARY</b> The Mystery of God's True Israel Revealed Literal, Spiritual and Natural Until the times Of The Gentiles be Fulfilled The Figure Of the Olive Tree And The Prospect Of The Resurrection	128

# THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

## CHAPTER 1

### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION

The truth concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of the human race is involved in this question.

There is now a widely accepted doctrine that the promise of God to Israel through the prophets is that the revealing of the Messiah will restore the earthly kingdom to Israel, give it a glory surpassing that of David's and Solomon's kingdoms, and exalt the Jewish nation to the position of supremacy over the nations and peoples of the world.

This doctrine sets up, for the benefit of Jews, Israel "*according to the flesh*", the prospect of another hope, different from the one hope of the gospel of Christ.

What is the true and Biblical hope of Israel? Because of Paul's understanding and preaching of this hope, he was furiously persecuted by the Jews and finally sent in chains to Rome. We have his testimony to "*the chief of the Jews*" at Rome, to whom he said :

*"... Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.*

*Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.*

*But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.*

*For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you : because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28 : 17 - 20)*

Paul was preaching the gospel of Christ and nothing else. The true hope of Israel is an essential part of that gospel. Paul's preaching was so contrary to the Jewish notion of the hope of Israel that the people clamoured for his death. They said :

*"... Away with such a fellow from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live." (Acts 22 : 22)*

They also accused him before the Roman Governor, Felix, as :

*"a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world." (Acts 24 : 5)*

What Paul and all the Apostles preached was what God had promised by His prophets in the holy Scripture, namely, a kingdom over which Jesus Christ, the promised Seed, would reign in resurrection, an inheritance which flesh and blood cannot gain, and one into which Gentiles are called on terms of exact equality with Jews.

*"Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:" (Acts 13 : 23)*

*"And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." (Acts 13 : 34)*

*"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,  
Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."  
(Acts 17 : 2, 3)*

The Jews deliberately misinterpreted Paul's message, and imputed wrong motives to Paul and the early believers, saying :

*"... and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."  
(Acts 17 : 7)*

Paul's message did not concern earthly things, but rather spiritual realities :

*"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,) Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead :"* (Romans 1 : 1 - 4)

*"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 14 : 17)

*"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."* (1 Corinthians 15 : 50)

*"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."* (1 Peter 1 : 12)

*"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"* (Luke 24 : 26)

The teaching of Christ and His apostles came into violent collision with that of the leaders of Israel, and because of this He was crucified and they were persecuted.

The Jewish rabbis, as well as Christ and His apostles, held firmly to the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets. It is a question, then, of **how** those Old Testament prophets are to be understood, a question of **interpretation**.

The Jewish teachers understood the Scriptures literally, and still to this day understand them in a literal way, that is to say, Israel is an earthly people and Christ an earthly conqueror, as David was.

But Paul declared that it was :

*"because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, that they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." (Acts 13 : 27)*

## **Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies of Blessing to Israel**

Great care is needed to distinguish between the natural and the spiritual in prophecy. Our natural tendency is in favour of the literal or natural interpretation of the prophecies. Some prophecies do have a literal interpretation, and some a spiritual interpretation.

The New Testament teaches that the things seen are but shadows of the things that are, the latter being the spiritual and eternal realities with which the promises of future blessing have mainly to do.

The New Testament Scriptures state that *"the seed of Abraham"*, to whom *"all the promises of God"* belong, are those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ :

*"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ....  
And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3 : 7, 29)*

*"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Corinthians 1: 20)*

Further, in the New Testament it is revealed that even as *"Abraham had two sons,"* so likewise there is a natural "Israel", "Zion" and "Jerusalem" and also a spiritual counterpart of each; and that just as Ishmael preceded in time the true heir (though eventually he was to be *"cast out"* and not to be *"heir with the son of the free woman"*), even so the natural Israel, Zion and Jerusalem preceded the respective spiritual realities to which those names properly belong. God's order of procedure is :

*"first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." (1 Corinthians 15 : 46)*

If Old Testament prophecies of blessing, intended for the true Israel, the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6: 16), the "*holy nation*" (1 Peter 2 : 9) are interpreted as applying to "*Israel after the flesh*" (Romans 9 : 3), the literal interpretation destroys the meaning of the prophecies completely.

In **2 Corinthians 3** Paul explains the great differences between the **Old Covenant** (which was of the letter) and the **New Covenant** (which was of the Spirit); and compares the ministry of Moses, which had to do with things that are seen (an earthly sanctuary, vessels of service, animal sacrifices) with the ministry of himself and others whom God had made "*able ministers of the New Covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit.*" (2 Corinthians 3 : 6)

The apostle in **2 Corinthians 3** speaks of the **Old Covenant**, under which promises were made to natural Israel, as "*that which is done away,*" (verse 11); whereas the **New Covenant** is "*that which remaineth,*" (verse 11). The same truth is set forth at greater length in Galatians 4 : 21 - 31 and Hebrews Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

From the foregoing Scriptures, it is evident that all future promises of glory and blessing for Israel and Zion must belong to the **Israel of God** and the **heavenly Zion**.

In 2 Corinthians 4 : 18 we are admonished to "*look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*"

Note especially in **2 Corinthians 3: 11 and 13** that the apostle speaks of the Old Covenant as "*that which is done away*" and "*that which is abolished.*" This shows that the Old Covenant, under which the earthly nation of Israel had been constituted, was already in Paul's day a thing of the past.

To understand prophecies relating to Israel, it is vitally necessary to believe the revelations of the New Testament and accept as literally true that there is a realm of spiritual realities into which our risen Lord has entered, and we in Him.

By simply believing what is written in the New Testament we understand that God's purposes concerning His **City, Temple** and **People** are being fulfilled **now**, at this very time, in the spiritual realm, which the natural eye cannot see. **The true Zion, the holy nation, the royal priesthood** are spiritual realities which the world cannot see or understand.

## An Illustration From Zechariah

Zechariah is one of the books of the Old Testament that is frequently referred to as containing prophecies which await a "literal" fulfillment in the future. Zechariah, with Haggai, prophesied during the re-building of Jerusalem and the temple after the return from the Babylonian captivity.

In 538 B.C., Cyrus, King of Persia and conqueror of Babylon, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (Ezra 1 : 2 - 4; 6 : 3 - 5).

*"The elders of the Jews builded and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo." (Ezra 6 : 14)*

But the prophet looks beyond what the Jews were then building, to a temple and a city that were to be far more glorious.

*"For, lo I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee." (Zechariah 2 : 10, 11)*

The prophet continues and speaks of a high priest, Joshua, who was clothed at first in filthy garments, but to whom it was said :

*"Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (Zechariah 3 : 3, 4)*

Joshua and his men were to be "*men wondered at*" (KJV.), "*men of good omen*" (R.S.V.), "*men symbolic of things to come*" (NIV.). "*for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua.*" (Zechariah 3 : 8, 9) This passage seems to be a prophecy of Christ as the Branch of Jehovah and the Foundation Stone of the true Temple of God.

Peter quotes a similar prophecy by Isaiah (Isaiah 28 : 16) "*Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious;*" And he had said in the preceding verse : "*Ye also, as living stones are built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.*" (1 Peter 2 : 5, 6)

Peter's application of the prophecy shows that the prophecy relates to spiritual things and has its application **now** in this Gospel Age **in the spiritual realm**.

We may think of "spiritual" in two main senses :

1. Pertaining to sacred, unseen, non-material things which can be grasped and appreciated by the understanding, as opposed to fleshly and physical things which can be seen and touched by our physical senses, and
2. Pertaining to the realm of spirit beings in which the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ reign supreme. Satan and the fallen angels, at present opposed to God and the Lord Jesus, and held in bondage ("*chains of darkness*" - 2 Peter 2 : 4), also belong to this realm.

Believers now are "*living stones*", members of God's "*spiritual house*" being built "*in Sion*", that is, in heavenly places, and belong to a "*royal priesthood*". In other words, believers now are members of the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church which He is forming now in this Gospel Age to assist Him in His work of bringing righteousness and peace to the whole world in the age to come.

Zechariah 6 : 12 - 15 refers to "*the Man whose name is the BRANCH,*" who "*shall build the temple of the Lord,*" and says of Him that "*He shall bear the glory, and He shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne.*"

From Hebrews 2 : 9 and 8 : 1 we understand that the above-mentioned prophecy is being fulfilled now in this Gospel Age, and we can participate in its fulfilment.

In further support of this understanding the prophet writes in Zechariah 6 that crowns will be given to certain ones, whom he names, and also to them *"that are far off"* who *"shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."* Those that are *"far off"* are the Gentiles, as this term is used elsewhere to describe the Gentiles (Acts 2 : 39 and Ephesians 2 : 13).

Further in Zechariah 9 : 9 we have the familiar passage :  
*"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."*

We know for certain that this prophecy was fulfilled when Christ came to Jerusalem to suffer and die for our salvation. (Luke 19 : 38, Matthew 21 : 9)

In Zechariah 13 : 7 - 9, the atoning death of Christ is foretold in the words :

*"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts. Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."*

These words are applied by the Lord Jesus to Himself in Matthew 26 : 31.

What was to follow in regard to the Jewish people is foretold in verses 8 and 9 of Zechariah 13 :

*"And it shall come to pass that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts shall be cut off, and die; but the third part shall be left therein."*

The *"two parts"* of Zechariah 13 : 8 could refer to the Pharisees and Sadducees, the two great Jewish parties, or perhaps the Jewish leaders as one part and the majority of the ordinary Jewish people as the other; while the third part is surely the disciples of Jesus, because the prophecy continues : *"And I will bring the third part through the fire and will refine them as*

*silver is refined"* (compare 1 Peter 1 : 7; 4 : 12). *"They shall call on My Name and I will hear them. I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is My God."* (cf Romans 11 : 1, 2).

The apostle Paul declared the same truth concerning the building of God's true temple now as declared by Peter. Paul makes known that those who believe in Jesus Christ are even now :

*"quickened together with Christ, ... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* Ephesians 2 : 5, 6

The building of God's true temple is therefore occurring now. We cannot see it with our natural eyes, nor is the world aware of it, but it is true. We live and reign with Christ in prospect, that is, if we remain faithful, the promise that we shall be a kingdom of priests in the heavenly places is certain to be fulfilled.

Paul also declares in Ephesians 2 : 20 - 22 that the saints of the Gospel Age, Gentiles as well as believing Jews, are being :

*"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

The expression *"in that day"* occurs twenty times in the book of Zechariah. *"That day"* of Zechariah is **this day, now the Gospel Age**, as Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 6 : 2 : *"now is the day of salvation;"* and Peter declares in Acts 3 : 24 :

*"all the prophets from Samuel ..., as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days."*

When Zechariah writes in chapter 13, verse 1, *"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness,"* we understand that he is foretelling the cross of Christ, as appears plainly from verse 7.

From the evidence presented it should be clear that many of the prophecies of Zechariah, and other similar prophecies, relate to things spiritual and have their fulfilment now in this present era of God's grace.

## God's True Temple

In John 2 it is recorded that the Lord Jesus drove the traffickers and money changers out of the temple that Herod had built. When the onlookers asked Him for a sign to demonstrate His authority to do these things, Jesus answered, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" (John 2 : 19) The Jews understood this literally and took the "*temple*" as applying to the building on Mount Moriah.

Had the record stopped there, credence might be given to the belief that the literal temple is to be restored in the millennium. But to the end that we should not be misled, and that we might have an indication of how to interpret prophecies such as this, the Spirit caused John to give an explanation :

*"But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."* (John 2 : 21, 22)

John's explanation shows us the prophecy in John 2 : 19 has a spiritual and not a literal application.

In John 7 : 37 and 38 the record states, "*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*"

Without an explanation, a literal interpretation of these words would pose great difficulties. Therefore we are thankful for the added words : "*But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive : for the Holy Spirit was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*" (John 7 : 39)

These words reveal to us the meaning of *"living waters"* as used in Zechariah 14 : 8 :

*"And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea : in summer and in winter shall it be."*

The **"former sea"** is translated in the RSV and the NIV as well as the AV margin as the **"eastern sea"** and therefore we understand the **Caspian Sea** is meant, while the **"hinder sea"** is surely the **Mediterranean**. In other words the living waters, the **Holy Spirit** would go out from Jerusalem **both eastward and westward**. ***"In summer and in winter ..."*** would mean **all the year round**.

In the light of John's explanation we understand that our Lord was foretelling not some extraordinary physical phenomenon, but the approaching era of the Holy Spirit, when the gospel was to be preached *"with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven,"* (1 Peter 1 : 12), both eastward and westward from Jerusalem.

Sufficient evidence has been provided at this stage to show that prophecies of future blessing for Israel, Zion and Jerusalem pertain to that *"holy nation"* (1 Peter 1 : 9), *"the Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16), and to the heavenly *"Mount Sion"* and to *"the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"* to which we already *"are come."* (Hebrews 2 : 22)

We therefore are to look for the fulfilment of the prophecies of glory and blessing for Israel in the **spiritual realm, now as spiritually discerned and experienced**; in the age to come in the heavenly places in the realm of spirit beings.

We know almost nothing of the realm of spirit beings, but enough is said in the Scriptures to reveal that it is a region of great activity, that the "principalities and powers" involved are numerous and mighty - good and evil angels, that is, holy angels as well as demons or devils, and we must infer that there are happenings there that are of immense importance. The apostle Paul writes :

*"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*  
(Ephesians 6 : 2)

Promises of glory and blessing for all the human race, the blessing of all the families of the earth, will be fulfilled in the age to come, the Kingdom Age.

The Scriptures tell us that the ruling authorities in that age will be :

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's appointed King.  
(1 Timothy 6 : 15; Revelation 17 : 14; 19 : 16);
2. The Gospel Age Church, the Israel of God  
(Acts 15 : 14; Galatians 6 : 16; 1 Peter 1 : 4);
3. The faithful of former ages from Adam to John the Baptist  
as *"princes in all the earth."* (Psalm 45 : 16).

The people of fleshly Israel will be as all other peoples and nations, subject to the requirements and considerations of that glorious age. There is no provision anywhere in the New Testament for any special blessing or favour to Israel *"according to the flesh."*

## CHAPTER 2

### HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL ARE INTERPRETED BY PAUL

When Festus remanded Paul for trial before King Herod Agrippa on the charges laid against him by the Jews, and when the king had given the apostle leave to speak for himself, he said

*"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers;  
Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews."  
(Acts 26 : 6, 7)*

The reference quoted shows that Paul, in preaching the gospel of Christ crucified and risen from the dead was proclaiming to the people of Israel the fulfilment of God's promise to that people, a promise that had been made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to all the people of Israel through Moses and the prophets.

This is also in exact agreement with the testimony of Peter, who, writing to the converted Jews of the dispersion and speaking of the prophets of Israel, said in 1 Peter 1 : 10 - 12 :

*"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:  
Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.  
Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."*

Paul's statement to King Agrippa further reveals that salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ was the hope of every true Israelite, all *"our twelve tribes."* (Acts 26 : 7)

Therefore the true hope of Israel was not, and is not, an earthly kingdom which Jews are to inherit now or in the future. The true Israel of God, as Paul explains in Romans, is composed of believing Israelites according to the flesh with believing Gentiles added to them, forming one body as presented by the olive tree of Romans 11.

The statement of Paul to King Agrippa makes clear what the apostle meant by saying :

*"Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."*  
(Romans 11 : 7)

The true hope and expectation of all Israel, *"our twelve tribes,"* lay in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which and by which the promise of *"the sure mercies of David"* (Acts 13 : 34) was to be fulfilled.

The truth of this promise is not affected by the fact that, as individuals, fleshly Israelites were nearly all *"blinded"* to it, and were looking for a kingdom of earthly grandeur with fleshly Israel predominant, suited to their carnal ideas.

The truth of the Old Testament Scriptures was, and is, that the kingdom of God which had been promised to Israel by their prophets, was a spiritual and not an earthly reality, and could be gained and entered only by those who are born again by the word and spirit of God.

The Lord Jesus himself had given the same teaching concerning the kingdom. He taught His disciples saying, *"verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18 : 3), and He went on to show that to enter into that Kingdom is to *"enter into life."* (Matthew 18 : 8 - 11) Jesus followed this up by declaring how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom (Matthew 19 : 16 - 26), calling it *"the kingdom of heaven"* in verse 23, and *"the kingdom of God"* in verse 24.

Jesus concluded the lesson by saying to those who had forsaken all and followed him,

*"verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 9 : 28)*

Returning to Paul's defence before King Agrippa, we should note Paul's concluding words in Acts 26 : 22 and 23

*"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:  
That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."*

Here is clear proof that the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims precisely what was foretold by the prophets.

Paul also revealed a mystery that had been hidden from former generations, namely, that in Christ Gentiles are now accepted by God equally with Jews, that all believers are members of one body and are fellow-heirs, sharing together the promise in Christ by the gospel. (Ephesians 2 : 11 - 22; 3 : 6 - 9)

The prophecies of light to the people of Israel and to the Gentiles were to be fulfilled after the sufferings of the promised Messiah and His resurrection from the dead. The order of revelation was :

1. The sufferings of Christ followed by His resurrection,
2. The revealing of the light of the gospel to
  - (a) the Jews, then
  - (b) the Gentiles.

The prophecies of the Old Testament foretold precisely what actually came to pass.

The apostle Peter says exactly the same, declaring that the salvation concerning which the prophets of Israel had enquired and searched diligently, prophesying of the grace that should come to gospel age believers, searching what *"the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."* (1 Peter 1 : 9 - 12).

In Acts 28 : 20 Paul declared to the leading Jews of Rome that it was *"for the hope of Israel"* that he had been brought to Rome in chains. The succeeding verses, particularly verse 23, make evident that the hope of Israel was the kingdom of God, as Paul had preached it everywhere he went (Acts 17 : 3, 7) and defined it in his epistle to the Romans (Romans 14 : 7).

The Jews who heard Paul were indoctrinated with current Jewish teaching, and needed much exposition, persuasion, and the Spirit of God to make it evident to them that what Moses and the prophets had foretold was, for believers, a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom to be established by the sufferings, death and shed blood of the promised Messiah to Israel.

It is most extraordinary that, after this truth has been so clearly set forth in the New Testament Scriptures, and has been understood by many Christians for nineteen centuries, there should arise in these last days a system of doctrine which proclaims the very same error concerning the true hope of Israel that turned Paul's fellow Israelites against him.

To those who *"believed not"* (Acts 28 : 24) Paul used great plainness of speech in Acts 28 : 25 - 28 :

*"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,*

*Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:*

*For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

*Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it".*

From the foregoing it appears that "*the hope of Israel*", "*the kingdom of God*" and "*the salvation of God*" are three different terms for one and the same thing.

And it also appears that as a result of natural Israel's rejection of Christ and the apostles, a supernatural and punitive blindness concerning the kingdom foretold by the prophets has been laid on unbelieving natural Israel, just as the prophets had predicted; which blindness, as we learn from Romans 11 : 25, is to continue "*until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.*"

But how is it and why is it that the very same error of unbelief which Paul denounced, and for the denouncing of which he suffered severe persecution and imprisonment, has found advocates among Christians in the twentieth century?

The "*hope of Israel*" is to be fulfilled in the resurrection. Christ had to suffer, to die, and rise again. He was the first, and afterward they "*that are Christ's.*" (1 Corinthians 15 : 23) There is no other hope for Israel, and never was.

If God's promise to Israel had been an earthly dominion, or if an earthly dominion for natural Israel had been even a part of the promise, it is surely impossible that Paul would not have declared it and make it part of his epistles, especially Romans, Galatians and Hebrews.

There are certain prophetic passages in the Old Testament which might be taken as relating to "*Israel after the flesh*" and as foretelling the restoration at some future time of their national greatness. But there is in such passages as Psalm 16 and Isaiah 55 : 3 no clear reference to the resurrection, and without the light of the New Testament, the natural mind could not possibly have discerned the fulfilment of these prophecies.

The Holy Spirit, inspiring the apostle Peter, has given us to know that David, in Psalm 16, was foretelling that God "*would raise up Christ to sit on His throne*" (Acts 2 : 30, 31) and the same Spirit inspiring the apostle Paul has made known that the promise of "*the sure mercies of David*" was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. (Acts 13 : 32 - 37)

The erroneous doctrine of the teachers of Israel that natural Israel was to have an earthly dominion was based on an unspiritual interpretation of their own scriptures. They "*knew not the voices of the prophets which were read every Sabbath day.*" (Acts 13 : 27) That doctrine was fatal to everyone who clung to it, and to the nation as a whole. Therefore, its revival amongst Christians today is a cause for serious concern.

## CHAPTER 3

### WHAT THE FAITHFUL FATHERS OF ISRAEL WERE LOOKING FOR

We must go back to the patriarchal age to learn what the Lord taught the faithful fathers of Israel to anticipate for themselves and their descendants. This is the proper time and place to begin the enquiry. When Paul was brought before King Agrippa by his infuriated countrymen because he preached a hope for Israel radically different from that held and taught by them and their rabbis, he declared that he was "*judged for the hope of the promise made of God to our fathers,*" and he went on to say that God's promise to the fathers was the true hope of all Israel, "*our twelve tribes.*" (Acts 26 : 6, 7)

The hope of the gospel has always been the coming of Him Who should bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3 : 15), and Who should Himself be bruised in the deadly conflict; Him who by death "*might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*" (Hebrews 2 : 14)

The faith of Abraham occupies a large part of Hebrews 11 (often called the faith chapter), for Abraham is "*the father of all them that believe.*" (Romans 4 : 11) Hebrews 11 does not say what the gospel was that was preached unto Abraham (Galatians 3 : 8), but it does tell us what its effect was on his life and conduct, and what his hope was, that is, what he was looking for.

It is recorded that "*by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.*" (Hebrews 11 : 9)

Hebrews 11 : 10 gives the explanation "*for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*" The Diaglott, RSV and NIV have "*the*" city where the AV has "*a*" city. The city we understand to be the kingdom of God, the "*New heavens and a new earth*" of 2 Peter 3 : 13.

Mention is also made in Hebrews 11 of Sarah's faith, which was also very important in the accomplishment of God's purposes.

Sarah is said by Paul to be an allegory, that is, a figure or representation of a spiritual truth embodied in a natural person or object, of the heavenly city upon which Abraham's hope was fixed; the "*Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all*" (Galatians 4 : 26). Further, it is expressly declared that Isaac and Jacob were co-heirs with Abraham of "*the same promise.*" (Hebrews 11 : 9)

Then, concerning the four people of faith, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, to whom "*the promises*" were directly given, we have this testimony in Hebrews 11 : 13 - 16 :

*"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

*For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*

*And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

*But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city".*

Hebrews 11 : 13 - 16 gives us clearly to know :

1. That "*the promises*" exerted a great and mighty influence over those to whom they were first given, showing that their faith in what God had promised was unwavering and strong;
2. That the nature of the promises turned their thoughts away from this unrighteous order of things to a new order, a "*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" (2 Peter 3 : 13)

The promised land, the land of Canaan, was indeed promised to Abraham's natural seed, but that promise was never *"the hope of Israel"*. God's promise that He would bring Abraham's descendants unto the promised land was fulfilled, as recorded in Joshua 21 : 43 - 45 :

*"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.*

*And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.*

*There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."*

But the possession of that land by later generations was forfeited through disobedience, apostasy and idolatry, even as Moses and Joshua had foretold. In consequence of their abandonment of Jehovah their God, they were *"plucked off from the land."* (Refer : Deuteronomy 28 : 63 - 68; Joshua 23 : 15, 16)

Eventually, as Paul records, the fulfilment of the prophetic allegory of Abraham's two sons came to pass, according to which the bondwoman (Hagar) and her son, representing Israel after the flesh under the Law Covenant, were to be *"cast out."* (Galatians 4 : 30). That is the end of Israel as a nation favoured by God.

When centuries of time had passed in the Jewish age, faith virtually vanished from among the children of Israel; the true spiritual and eternal nature of the promises faded from sight; fleshly desires took the place of spiritual hopes and longings, and there arose among the natural seed of Israel the ruinous doctrine that *"the hope of Israel"* was earthly dominion.

The doctrine was the product of degenerate times. It was tenaciously held and zealously propagated by the scribes, pharisees, rabbis and lawyers of first century Judaism, that *"generation of vipers"* (Matthew 3: 7; 23 : 33; Luke 3 : 7), and it wrought in them such devilishness that they eagerly carried out the will of their *"Father, the Devil"* (John 8 : 44) in crucifying *"the Lord of glory"* (1 Corinthians 2 : 8).

We in these "*perilous times*" (2 Timothy 3 : 1) should bring that doctrine to the test of Scripture, and inquire how it has arisen and spread amongst believers in Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews 11 : 16 the apostle reaches a climax in his discourse. He writes that the faithful fathers of Israel desired :

*"A better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."*

And from Revelation 21 : 2 and 3 we learn that He will dwell with them in that city forever.

This is truth of the highest importance. The eternal and almighty God, the creator of our Lord Jesus Christ and through Him all things visible and invisible, infinite in power, wisdom and holiness; condescends to call Himself "*the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.*" (Exodus 3 : 6, 16; Matthew 22 : 32)

This is a clear assertion of the oneness of God's elect, the true "*seed of Abraham*" (Galatians 3 : 7, 29) and of the fundamental truth that there is only "*one hope*" (Ephesians 4 : 4) and one "*common salvation*" (Jude 3) for all, whether Jew or Gentile. That "*one hope*" is in Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). There is no other hope and no other gospel. To assert that the biblical "*hope of Israel*" concerns earthly dominion for the nation is very different from the gospel preached to faithful Abraham.

Abraham and all the faithful ancient worthies "*until John*" (Luke 16 : 16) are promised dominion. They are to be "*princes in all the earth*" (Psalm 45 : 16) not because of any earthly descent or lineage, but because of their faith.

They will be earthly rulers in the kingdom of God, whereas those who have not possessed their faith, whether Jew or Gentile, must learn to gain that faith in God's kingdom.

## CHAPTER 4

### GOD'S WARNINGS THROUGH MOSES

God's first covenant with Israel was very broad in scope, but was conditional in character, that is to say, the performance of its promises by Jehovah was dependent on certain express conditions which the Israelites bound themselves to fulfil :

*"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine :  
And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." ( Exodus 19 : 5, 6)*

God promised three favours to the children of Israel if they remained obedient and faithful. The three favours that God promised to fleshly Israel are that He would make of them :

1. A peculiar treasure to Himself, that is, belonging exclusively to Him above all other people and nations.
2. A Kingdom of Priests.
3. A Holy Nation.

There was no promise of earthly territory in that Sinaitic covenant.

Moses, as mediator of that covenant, called for the elders of the people and set before them the words which the Lord had commanded him :

*"And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.  
And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." (Exodus 19 : 7, 8)*

So the terms of the contract were agreed to by both the contracting parties.

God spoke the "words" in the hearing of the children of Israel that they were to keep, these being the ten commandments (Exodus 20) and He also gave to Moses "the judgments" by which their dealings with one another were to be governed (Exodus 20 - 23). Then we read in Exodus 24 : 3, 4 :

*"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.*

*And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel."*

The contract was written down and then implemented in a most solemn manner, being a blood covenant, which was the most binding of all covenants.

Moses took "the book of the covenant", that is, the scroll of parchment on which the terms of the contract were written, read it in the audience of the people, then took the blood of his sacrifices to the Lord (Exodus 24 : 5, 6), sprinkled it on the people and said,

*"behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."*  
(Exodus 24 : 6 - 8).

This is the blood of the old covenant with which we should compare what is written concerning the "blood of the new covenant". Matthew 26 : 28, Mark 14 : 24 : "This is my blood of the new covenant," Luke 22 : 20, 1 Corinthians 11 : 25, Hebrews 13 : 20 : "The blood of the everlasting covenant."

Within forty days **that first blood covenant with Israel was broken** by the abominable idolatry of the golden calf and the shameless rites by which the people, led by Aaron, worshipped it (Exodus 32). It should be noted particularly that the terms of that first blood covenant were **never again ratified with that people**, although God continued to deal with them under the terms of that blood covenant.

God made another covenant with the children of Israel, different from the covenant they had broken :

*"And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee." (Exodus 34 : 10)*

It is **truth of the highest importance** that the three wondrous and glorious promises of the first blood covenant (Exodus 24) are reserved for another people, the Israel of God (Galatians 6 : 16). These people, made up of Gentiles and believing Jews, are the church of Jesus Christ, set apart by the Lord God as *"a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people"*. (1 Peter 2 : 9)

When the Israelites made and worshipped the golden calf, God was minded to destroy them and make of Moses a great nation (Exodus 32 : 10). But Moses interceded for the people and God spared them, commanding Moses to lead them to the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Exodus 33 : 1).

The second covenant which God made with the children of Israel was very inferior to the covenant they had broken, for this second covenant was not a blood covenant, and was restricted to the terms and conditions on which God would permit them to continue in possession of the land of Canaan. Those terms and conditions are set forth in detail in the book of Deuteronomy, where, after the recital of them, Moses writes :

*"These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. (Deuteronomy 29 : 1)*

The subsequent history of the Israelites shows that they broke this second covenant also; and not simply in one particular but in every particular, thereby forfeiting irretrievably all the promised blessings, and incurring all the prescribed curses for disobedience. Although two covenants were made with Israel, it is the first blood covenant that is referred to as the Law Covenant or the Old Covenant.

That covenant in all respects and details was finally annulled after centuries of disobedience : *"done away"* (2 Corinthians 3 : 11), *"taken away"* (Hebrews 10 : 9), *"nailed to the cross of Christ"* (Colossians 2 : 14).

There remains now, of all the covenants ever made by God with people in this world, none but *"the everlasting covenant"* or *"new covenant"* (Hebrews 7 : 22); of which Jesus Christ is the surety or guarantor (Hebrews 7 : 22), and also the mediator (Hebrews 9 : 15; 12 : 24). The new covenant is also a blood covenant, and is sealed with the blood of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In summary, God's covenants with fleshly Israel contained conditional and unconditional promises. Certain promises were conditional upon obedience and faithfulness : *"if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant"* (Exodus 19 : 5); and certain promises were unconditional : *"the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore unto their fathers to give them, and they possessed it, and dwelt therein."* (Joshua 21 : 43 - 45)

The conditional promises were all nullified by the Israelites' breach of covenant, while the unconditional promises were all fulfilled to the last detail through Moses and Joshua. Moses had recorded details concerning the covenant under which the Israelites entered into possession of the land that God had sworn to their fathers to give them.

A comprehensive prophecy is found in Numbers 33 : 55, 56 in which God says through Moses that in case the Israelites should fail to drive out the inhabitants of the land, as He had commanded them to do, then *"it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."*

What God purposed concerning those idolatrous nations was their national extermination and expulsion from the land. This prophecy concerning and applying to earthly Israel has been completely fulfilled.

The second covenant is summarised in Deuteronomy 4. The children of Israel were to hearken always to God's statutes and judgments, and on that express condition were to go in and

possess the promised land. Every blessing recorded in Deuteronomy depends on that condition.

Deuteronomy chapter 4 places special emphasis on the second of the ten commandments, because the breaking of that commandment by the Israelites caused the original Sinaitic covenant to be nullified.

God proclaims to the whole nation the punishments that will befall them if they should break this second covenant. The Lord God confirms His word with a solemn oath, saying :

*"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you." (Deuteronomy 4 : 26, 27)*

Careful note should be taken of the promise of mercy which should be fulfilled to them if, when scattered among the heathen, any of them should turn to the Lord.

*"And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.  
But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.  
When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.  
(Deuteronomy 4 : 28 - 31)*

Note particularly that this promise is to the individual. There is no collective promise for the nation as a whole. The promise foreshadows the Gospel of Christ. It is repeated in Isaiah 55 : 3 and 7 (the sure mercies of David), in Acts 13 : 34 and 2 Corinthians 3 : 16.

The Gospel of Christ is the one and only hope for natural Israel as for all mankind. The conditions are *"turn to the Lord thy God"* that is, repent, and *"be obedient unto His voice,"* that is, obey the gospel by coming in faith through Jesus Christ. This is the mercy of the everlasting covenant which God had sworn to the fathers of Israel (Deuteronomy 4 : 31).

Compare this with the current doctrine that God will bring the Israelites in a body again, after the day of gospel salvation is ended, to Palestine and there convert the entire nation, not by faith, but by the sight of Jesus Christ returning visibly to Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

Here we must remind ourselves of the warning and oath of God that He would, if the Israelites lapsed into disobedience and idolatry, destroy them *"from off the land."* This warning was repeated again and again and never revoked or modified.

*"Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;  
(For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."  
(Deuteronomy 6 : 14, 15)*

*"When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it; and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;  
And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:  
Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son."  
(Deuteronomy 7 : 1 - 3)*

In Deuteronomy 7 : 1 - 3 the Israelites are forbidden to make any covenants with the Canaanites and to intermarry with them (they subsequently did both); the penalty for disobedience being stated thus : *"so will the anger of the Lord be kindled*

*against you, and destroy thee suddenly."* (Deuteronomy 7 : 4). It is also stated that God *"keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments,"* yet He *"repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them."* (Deuteronomy 7 : 9, 10)

Deuteronomy 8 is a most important chapter. In this chapter Moses exhorts the children of Israel to remember all God's dealings with them in Egypt and in the wilderness saying :

*"And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.*

*As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God."* (Deuteronomy 8 : 19, 20)

Here God declares explicitly Israel's destruction was to be such as obliterated those nations which the Lord had destroyed before them. These are the Lord's words. They must be fulfilled. In the face of these words, how can it be maintained that national Israel is to be restored as a nation specially favoured by God?

In Deuteronomy 11 Moses recalls God's judgments on Pharaoh, his land and his army, also his judgments on Dathan and Abiram, and Moses admonishes the children of Israel to be warned by these judgments and keep the commandments of the Lord, *"that ye may prolong your days in the land."*

Time and time again Moses declares to the children of Israel that God was giving them the land solely because He had promised their fathers that He would do so; and that their continued possession of it depended upon their obedience and fidelity. Again in Deuteronomy 11 : 16, 17 Moses bids them take heed that :

*"ye turn not aside and serve other gods and worship them; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you ... and ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you."*

Here is the choice presented by the Lord God to the children of Israel :

*"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day : And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." (Deuteronomy 11 : 26 - 18)*

Then follow in Deuteronomy a number of chapters (12 to 28) containing *"the statutes and judgments"* (12 : 1) the children of Israel were to obey as a condition of their remaining in possession of the land enjoying God's favour and blessing.

In **Deuteronomy 27 : 14 - 26** are twelve curses which, after they had entered the Land of Canaan, the Levites were to recite, as coming upon those who should sin against the Lord. To each curse, after it was read, all the people were to respond "Amen."

14. *And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,*
1. 15. *Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.*
2. 16. *Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
3. 17. *Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
4. 18. *Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
5. 19. *Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
6. 20. *Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
7. 21. *Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
8. 22. *Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.*

9. 23. *Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
10. 24. *Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
11. 25. *Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
12. 26. *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.*

In Deuteronomy 28 is the solemn declaration that, if Israel would not hearken and obey, *"all these curses shall come upon thee ... until thou be destroyed"* (verses 15 - 20).

Then after reciting a long list of the appalling evils that were to overtake them, Moses says :

*"Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;  
Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."  
(Deuteronomy 28 : 47, 48)*

The *"yoke of iron"* was fulfilled in the Roman oppression of Israel, iron being the symbol of the Roman empire.

*"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things : and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." (Daniel 2 : 40)*

*"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." (Daniel 7 : 7)*

Then follows that wondrously exact and graphic prophecy, which God gave through Moses, of the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the horrors of which were unsurpassed in history to that time. Deuteronomy 28 :

49. *The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;*

50. *A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young;*

51. *And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.*

52. *And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.*

53. *And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:*

54. *So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:*

55. *So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.*

56. *The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,*

57. *And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.*

58. *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD;*

59. *Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.*

60. *Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.*

61. *Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed.*

62. *And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God.*

63. *And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.*

64. *And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.*

65. *And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:*

66. *And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:*

67. *In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.*

68. *And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.*

Note the prediction in verses 63 - 67 with which this prophecy concludes.

From Deuteronomy 29 : 1 we learn that the covenant under which the Israelites were given possession of the land of Canaan was not the covenant of Sinai, as is commonly supposed.

The covenant of Sinai said nothing about any earthly territory. The covenant giving the Israelites possession of Canaan was the second covenant, for we read in Deuteronomy 29 : 1 :

*"These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb."*

This is followed by a further warning that breach of this latter covenant would be punished by an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, that is, an irrecoverable ruin. (Deuteronomy 29 : 23)

*"And it shall come to pass when all these things come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee."* (Deuteronomy 30 : 1).

And so all was to happen.

Special heed should be given to Deuteronomy 30, because here mercy is promised to Israel, and here are stated the conditions under which they might obtain that mercy after they have been destroyed as a nation, plucked from off their land, and scattered among all the nations of the earth.

First there is the promise of a return from captivity if, among the nations whither the Lord had driven them, they should *"return unto the Lord thy God"*. Then follows this passage in Deuteronomy 30 : 11 - 14 :

*"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."*

Paul the apostle makes reference to this passage in Romans 10 : 6 - 18 :

*"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)*

*Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*

*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;*

*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

In this passage Paul makes clear to us that "the word" spoken of by Moses is "the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Thus we find that **the very last hope of mercy** that is held out through Moses to that "disobedient and gainsaying people" to whom God says "I have stretched out my hands all the day long" (Romans 10 : 21, Isaiah 65 : 2) **is the "one hope" of the gospel of Christ.**

Deuteronomy 30 :

15. *See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;*

16. *In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.*

17. *But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;*

18. *I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.*

19. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

20. *That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord aware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

These verses are intensely solemn. The pledge by the Lord God must mean exactly what it says. The meaning is plain.

It is recorded in Deuteronomy 31 : 15 - 21 that God appeared to Moses and told Him plainly that :

*"this people will rise up, and go a-whoring after the gods of strangers, and will forsake me and break my covenant, and my anger shall be kindled against them."*

Therefore God commanded Moses to teach the Israelites that remarkable prophetic song, which witnessed beforehand what they would do, and what was to befall them :

*"For I know their imagination even now, before I have brought them into the land." (Deuteronomy 15 : 21)*

To this Moses adds in Deuteronomy 31 : 27 - 30 that he knew their rebellion even while he was with them. *"And how much more" he asks, "after my death? For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves and evil will befall you in the latter days."* It is important to note here that no subsequent recovery is mentioned or even implied.

In Deuteronomy 32 : 1 - 43 we have that prophetic song which bears so clear a testimony against the nation of Israel.

**Note the following points :**

1. **verse 5** *"they have corrupted themselves; they are a perverse and crooked generation."*
2. **verses 7 - 14** *"remember"* all that the Lord did for them.

3. **verses 15 - 20** *"but"* they did great evil in the sight of the Lord, and because of that the Lord says : *"I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be."*
4. **verse 22** *"for a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell."* (Hebrew "sheol" : the grave)
5. **verses 23 - 26** Threats of vengeance are found here, and there is the declaration in verse 27 that, were it not for the fact that Israel's enemies would be gratified by God's punishments, God would have made *"the remembrance of them to cease from among men."*
6. **verses 28 - 42** tell us more of what was *"laid up in store"* for them *"and sealed up among my treasures."* These *"treasures"* would be manifestations of God's wrath. "Treasure" is so used in Romans 2 : 5 (*"treasurest up unto thyself wrath"*). Job speaks of his transgression *"sealed up in a bag"* and says also *"thou sewest up mine iniquity."* (Job 14 : 17)
7. **verses 34 and 35** prophesy that *"their foot shall slide in due time."*
8. Finally in **verses 40 - 42** we read that the Lord lifts up His hand to heaven and swears a great oath of vengeance against all enemies.
9. **verse 21** is especially significant because of the prophetic reference to that new *"nation"* which was eventually to displace natural Israel.

*"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."* (Matthew 21 : 43)

*"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:  
But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* (Romans 2 : 28, 29)

*"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:"*  
(Romans 9 : 6)

10. **verse 43** is most important in the light of the interpretation given by the inspired Apostle Paul in Romans 15 : 10 *"rejoice ye Gentiles with His people."* This makes known to us that the promise of **Deuteronomy 32 : 43** is a promise of the Gospel to the Gentiles, to whom Paul was made the special messenger of God.

Paul had already shown in Romans 11 that the Lord's people were not the nation of Israel in its entirety, but only part of it,

*"the remnant according to the election of grace."*  
(Romans 11 : 5)

The Lord foreknew this eventuality, namely, that His true Israel would eventually incorporate the **remnant of natural Israel** who came into Christ, and **Gentiles** who would also come into Christ, the whole forming **the Israel of God**, represented by the *"good olive tree"*. (Romans 11 : 24)

Thus it was foreknown of God, from the beginning of earthly Israel, that the **only hope** for earthly Israel is to **believe in Jesus Christ** and be saved. What better hope could they possibly have?

By the covenant at Sinai, God offered the children of Israel the highest blessings, but only upon the express condition of obedience; the terms being *"if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant."* (Exodus 19 : 5, 6) To this the Israelites all agreed, saying *"all that the Lord hath spoken, we will do."* (Exodus 19 : 8). This pledge of obedience was twice repeated by them after the ten commandments had been spoken to them. (Exodus 24 : 3 and 7).

Nevertheless that covenant was broken by them within forty days by the idolatry of the golden calf. We are forcibly reminded of the words of Jeremiah, *"which my covenant they brake."* (Jeremiah 31 : 32)

The Lord God, however, in response to Moses' intercession, continued to acknowledge them as His people, and consented to be with them in the land that He had promised to their fathers.

But the covenant of Sinai was broken, and a second covenant was made with them at the end of their wilderness journey when they were about to enter and occupy the land of Canaan. This additional covenant was made with the next succeeding generation following that which had broken the covenant of Sinai (also known as the covenant of Horeb).

This second covenant is very different from the first. The gracious and precious promises - *"ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, ... and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation"* (Exodus 19 : 5, 6) are entirely omitted.

These wondrous promises reappear in connection with God's new covenant people, the **"Israel of God"** (Galatians 6 : 16), the **"Holy Nation"** of 1 Peter 2 : 9.

The second covenant made at the end of Israel's wilderness journey is limited to a recital of the terms and conditions upon which the children of Israel would be permitted to occupy the Land of Canaan, which land God promised the fathers He would give to their children.

The children of Israel failed completely to keep this second covenant, just as they had failed to keep the first covenant of Sinai. Moreover, though the Lord God repeatedly sent His messengers the prophets to them in order to warn them, and to recall them to Himself,

*"because He had compassion upon His people, and on his dwelling place," yet "they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy."*

(2 Chronicles 36 : 15, 16)

It is recorded that both Israel and Judah *"kept not the commandments of the Lord their God;"* wherefore *"the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hands of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight."* (2 Kings 17 : 18 - 20)

No repentance was ever expressed by the nation of Israel for this national rebellion and apostasy. Jesus Christ declared concerning the generation of His day that they would fill up the measure of their fathers and would bring upon themselves the wrath of God to the uttermost. (Matthew 23 : 29 - 36)

This prophecy was repeated by Paul a short time before the final storm of judgment burst upon them. (1 Thessalonians 2 : 14 - 16)

Close attention should be given to Moses' last prophecy in Deuteronomy 28 and 32. This prophecy foretells the history of the children of Israel down to the very end, showing that it would be a history of continued apostasy and rebellion, and of stubborn refusal to hear the voice of Jehovah by His servants the prophets. Moreover the prophecy declares with marvellous exactness and detail what the end of the nation of Israel was to be. (Deuteronomy 28 : 49 - 68). This is one of the great wonders of prophecy.

'Keith on the Prophecies' contains an instructive comment upon this passage, from which I quote the following :

"The commonwealth of Israel from its establishment to its dissolution subsisted for more than fifteen hundred years. In delivering their law, Moses assumed more (much more) than the authority of a human legislator; for he asserted that he was invested with a divine commission; and he who founded their government foretold, notwithstanding the intervening of so many centuries, *the precise manner of its overthrow*.

"While they were yet wanderers in the wilderness, without a city and without a home, Moses threatened them with the destruction of their cities and the desolation of their country. Even while they were viewing for the first time the land of Palestine, and victorious and triumphant, they were about to possess it, he represented the scene of desolation that it would present to their vanquished and enslaved posterity, on their final departure from it. Ere they themselves had entered it as enemies, he describes those enemies by whom their descendants were to be subjugated and dispossessed; though they were to arise from a very distant region, and though they did not appear till after a millenary and a half of years: 'The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the

earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young' etc. (quoting Deuteronomy 28 : 49 - 52)

"Each particular of this prophecy has met its full completion. The remote situation of the Romans, the rapidity of their march, the very emblem of their arms, their unknown language and warlike appearance, the indiscriminate cruelty they manifested toward old and young, could not have been represented in more descriptive terms. The Roman generals, Vespasian, Adrian and Julius Severus, removed with parts of their armies from Britain to Palestine, the extreme points of the Roman world."

And this writer proceeds to show, as many other commentators have done, how, point by point, in the minutest detail, the judgments executed by the Romans in the years 66 - 70 of our era, were predescribed by Moses.

The judgments executed by the Romans in 66 - 71 AD were foretold in detail by Moses some fifteen centuries before they took place.

From this national destruction by the Romans there was to be no recovery to nationhood under God's special favor. The prophecy of Moses is in complete harmony with that of Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. Moses said,

*"God will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked off from the land whither thou goest to possess it.  
And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even to the other." (Deuteronomy 28 : 63, 64)*

This, according to this prophecy, was to be the end of Israel as a nation specially favored by God.

There is no promise of God, by any later prophet, of recovery for the earthly nation from the final destruction and dispersion at the hands of the Romans.

Prophecies concerning "Israel" "Zion" and "Jerusalem" yet to be fulfilled relate to the *"Israel of God"* and the *"New*

*Jerusalem*" the "*New heavens and a new earth*" as prophesied in the New Testament.

All prophecies of recovery relating to "*Israel after the flesh*" (1 Corinthians 10 : 18) were fulfilled in and after the return from the Babylonian captivity.

Correct interpretation of prophecies relating to Israel after the flesh is very important. The matter needs to be settled according to the Scriptures so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be properly understood and its work accomplished.

For as long as another hope is presented for a section of the human race (the scattered descendants of Jacob), and that hope pertains to earthly dominion or preference, just so long and to that extent will the emphasis of the New Testament teaching of the Israel of God be diminished.

This was so at the beginning of the Gospel age when the notion of earthly greatness of Israel made the Jewish people the implacable enemies of the Gospel and of Jesus Christ, Who is the Christ, the anointed of Biblical prophecy.

There is but one hope, one Gospel, one salvation, and one Saviour for all people.

Israel after the flesh was a nation under the Law, and, as such, promises were made to them, all promises being conditional upon obedience to the Law. Judgments from God came upon fleshly Israel for disobedience, and these judgments culminated in national extermination because their disobedience was persistent.

The Law has now been superseded by the gospel with its "*better hope.*" The Law with all its shadows - temple, priesthood, sacrifices - has been set aside, and set aside forever.

For the glory of the gospel and of Him Who died and rose again in order that all the human race might be blessed and gain eternal life, it is needful to understand clearly and proclaim constantly that there is one hope, and only one hope, for all mankind. There is no provision in the plan and purpose of God for any other hope than "the hope of the gospel."

All promises to fleshly Israel under the Law of Moses have been forfeited and annulled because of disobedience. There is but one escape from the Law and its bondage, and that is acceptance of the mercy which God freely offers to all people through "*Jesus Christ of the seed of David raised from the dead.*" (2 Timothy 2 : 8)

It is a remarkable fact that Moses foretold in that last prophecy of Deuteronomy 28 that the children of Israel would set a king over them. He also foretold the consequence of that act :

*"The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other Gods, wood and stone."* (Deuteronomy 28 : 36)

That wicked act was the culmination of Israel's apostasy, for it meant their repudiation of the sovereignty of Jehovah. We have God's own word for this; for He said to Samuel, when commanding that prophet to give them their desire,

*"they have not rejected thee; but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."* (1 Samuel 8 : 7)

The setting up of Israel as a kingdom with an earthly king was not the kingdom of God, nor did it in any way resemble the kingdom of heaven proclaimed by John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 3 : 2; 4 : 17, 23) It was an earthly kingdom "*like all the nations.*" (1 Samuel 8 : 5)

It is strange indeed that at this time Christians should proclaim the restoration of that earthly kingdom, born as it was from apostasy and rebellion, the more so after God had clearly said, "*I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.*" (Hosea 13 : 11) God also said, "*Remove the diadem, and take off the crown : ... it will be no more, until He come Whose right it is; and I will give it Him.*" (Ezekiel 21 : 26, 27)

The ending of that earthly kingdom is precisely what Moses had foretold long before it came into existence. His words were, "*the Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known.*" (Deuteronomy 28 : 36) That prophecy was fulfilled by the Babylonian captivity. The kingdom ended then, but not the nation.

In agreement with these prophetic words, which became historical fact, the prophecy given by Moses goes on to speak of the subsequent experience of the nation as an experience of continued servitude to, and oppression by, other nations. The prophecy shows too that the post captivity period was to be an era in which the Israelites would have, not peace and plenty in their land, but dearth, distress, and various other miseries and afflictions. (Deuteronomy 28 : 37 to 48)

The fact that Moses speaks of the continued existence of the nation after the Babylonian captivity provides strong reason for the understanding that his prophecy foretells the history of the nation down to its very end. From the national destruction wrought by the Romans there was to be no recovery to that of nationhood specially favored by God.

That, of course, was not the view of Jewish teachers who, "*because they knew not the voices of the prophets*" (Acts 13 : 27), and because their thoughts and desires were carnal as opposed to spiritual, interpreted the promises as pertaining to a kingdom such as their forefathers had demanded of Samuel, one "*like all the nations*" (1 Samuel 8 : 5).

## CHAPTER 5

### GOD'S PROMISES TO ISRAEL FULFILLED THROUGH JOSHUA

*"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.*

*And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.*

*There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."*

(Joshua 21 : 43 - 45)

Joshua means "*Saved of Jehovah*". Joshua, by God's express command, led the Children of Israel across the River Jordan into the land which the Lord had promised their fathers to give them.

After "*The captain of the host of the Lord*" (Joshua 5 : 14 to 6 : 5) appeared to him, Joshua led Israel victorious against their enemies, subduing one after another until "*He left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.*" (Joshua 11 : 15). Finally, Joshua divided the entire land among the twelve tribes, assigning to each tribe its inheritance, and to the Levites cities in different parts of the land. God was with Joshua in a special way. Through Joshua God completed all He had pledged Himself to do for the Children of Israel under His unconditional covenants with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The confusion and misunderstanding that now exist concerning the present status and future prospects of "*Israel after the flesh*" would not have arisen if due and proper attention had been given to the following two facts of Scripture :

1. **God's promise to the patriarchs of Israel concerning the land of Canaan was that He would bring their descendants into that land, give them complete possession of it, and would subdue their enemies under them.**
2. **Israel's continued possession of that promised land would depend on their faithfulness to Him and their obedience to His commandments.**

Accordingly, when God had fulfilled to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all that He had promised to do for them, notwithstanding their many and great provocations during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, then the unconditional covenants with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were fulfilled so completely that *"There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the House of Israel; all came to pass."* (Joshua 21 : 45). Therefore, the Nation of Israel from that time onward, as to their relations with God, stood wholly upon the conditional covenants He made with them through Moses. (Deuteronomy 29 : 1)

The details of that second covenant, which is strangely overlooked by many Bible Students, occupy the greater part of the book of Deuteronomy. The substance of that second covenant was as follows :

1. Upon the express condition that Israel would keep God's commandments, He would plant the Children of Israel firmly in the Promised Land, establish them in permanent possession of it, and would grant them certain specified blessings.
2. However, if they should be disobedient, adopt the customs of the Canaanites and forsake Him to worship heathen gods, then He would bring curses upon them, and eventually, for persistent rebellion and apostasy, He would destroy them from off the land and scatter them among all the nations of the world. (Deuteronomy 28 : 15 - 68)

**These warnings are stated again and again in the clearest and strongest terms.** (Deuteronomy 29 : 23 - 28; 30 : 17, 18)

In the face of these Scriptures, and the assertions to follow, it is impossible to maintain that God had bound Himself to give the Land of Canaan to the natural seed of Abraham for an everlasting possession. If God had so obligated Himself, then it would have been a breach of covenant on His part to pluck them from the land and scatter them among all the nations of the world as He has now done.

This is the record. Joshua 21 : 43 - 45. This record declares in the most emphatic terms that God had fulfilled and completed all that He had promised and sworn to do for the Children of Israel, inasmuch as *"There failed not ought."*

But there is more. Joshua, shortly before his death, assembled Israel with their elders, their heads, their judges and their officers (Joshua 23 : 2) and, after rehearsing briefly what Jehovah had done for them, he earnestly exhorted them to be *"very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses"* (Joshua 23 : 6), to shun the idolatries of the Canaanites and cleave steadfastly to Jehovah their God as they had done during the period of His leadership. (Joshua 23 : 6 - 8)

Then, with the utmost solemnity, Joshua warned the Children of Israel that if they should *"in anywise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of those nations ..... and make marriages with them,"* then they were to *"know for a certainty that the Lord"* would no more drive out those enemies, but would make them instruments of His judgements upon the apostate people *"until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you"* (Joshua 23 : 11 - 13). Joshua concludes with the weighty words recorded in Joshua 23 : 14 - 16 :

*"And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*

*Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.*

*When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then*

*shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you."*

Note especially that Joshua's last message changes in character at verse 15 from an exhortation to a prophecy. In that prophecy Joshua declares that the generations of Israelites, unborn when he spoke, would transgress the covenant of the Lord, and that He would therefore destroy them from off the land. The prophecy refers to future generations, because in Joshua 24 : 31 it is recorded that *"Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel."*

The whole world has witnessed for nineteen and nearly twenty centuries that God has done just what He said He would do. There is no statement or even a hint in the Scriptures of the reversal of God's decree and of a return to the old order of things. Further, the terms in which God announced through Moses and Joshua the destruction of the Jewish nation, exclude the possibility of its restoration as a nation favored by God.

It was necessary that the Old Covenant, and all that was connected with it, should wax old and vanish away, in order that place might be found for the New and Everlasting Covenant, the *"better covenant, which was established upon better promises."* (Hebrews 8 : 6 - 13). It was under that Old Covenant, which had only the *"shadow of good things to come"* that the Children of Israel took possession of the land of Canaan.

Now the Old Covenant and all the shadows contained in it have passed away, and have been entirely replaced by the eternal realities in Christ and the New Covenant. *"The darkness is past and the true light now shineth."* (1 John 2 : 8), so there can be no going back to the time and dispensation of dimness, types, and shadows.

It is of the highest importance that this truth be clearly understood and firmly maintained. It is the essence and substance of the Gospel that there is mercy now for all people - pardon, life and eternal blessing *"through the blood of the everlasting covenant."* (Hebrews 13 : 20), and there is no mercy and no blessing for any, whether Jew or Gentile, under any other covenant.

There remain now no promises for any except the *"better promises"* of the Gospel of Christ; and for those who refuse that Gospel - it matters not what their ancestry - there is only the abiding wrath of God, nothing ***"but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."*** (Hebrews 10 : 27). It is due to the honour and glory of God and the Gospel of Christ to insist upon this.

## CHAPTER 6

### SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

#### From The Desert To The River Euphrates

*"In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:"*  
(Genesis 15 : 18)

Those who hold the doctrine of a national restoration for the Jews, with a territorial dominion greater (so we are told) than any they had in their past history, usually refer to Genesis 15 : 18. The argument is that this promise has never been fulfilled to the seed of Abraham, and therefore there must be a restoration of national Israel for this promise to be fulfilled. This argument, however, is based on a two-fold misunderstanding as to ***the facts of history*** and as to ***the nature of the promise***.

#### **The Facts Of History.**

At Mount Sinai God showed Moses how He would proceed to put the Children of Israel in possession of their promised inheritance. (Exodus 23 : 27 - 33) This passage shows that the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, insofar as it concerned his natural seed, was to be accomplished in the dispensation of the Old Covenant; and so it was.

When Moses had brought the Israelites to the river Jordan, and was about to leave them, He reminded them of the word of Jehovah spoken at Horeb :

*"The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:  
Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.  
Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them." (Deuteronomy 1 : 6 - 8)*

From this we see that, as soon as the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River, they were prospectively in possession of all the promised land from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River. And again, in his last message, Moses says :

*"Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be." (Deuteronomy 11:24)*

*"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,  
Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.  
Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.  
From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." (Joshua 1 : 1 - 4)*

This is the record of the fulfilment of God's promise considered as a promise of an earthly possession to an earthly people. Later records also confirm that nothing remains to be fulfilled of God's unconditional promise to fleshly Israel. In 2 Samuel 8 : 3 we read that *"David smote also Hadadeger, the son of Rehob, King of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates."*

This record in 2 Samuel 8 confirms that the eastern boundary of the territory of the nation of Israel was the river Euphrates. It shows moreover that part of the territory had been wrested from them and was occupied by the King of Zobah; and when David defeated the latter, he did not conquer new territory, but merely recovered his own proper *"border at the river Euphrates."*

Further in 1 Kings 4 : 21 and 24, we read, *"and Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river (that is the Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt ... for he had dominion over all the region on this side of the river, from Tiphseh even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side of the river."* This is confirmed also in 2 Chronicles 9 : 26.

All the foregoing is confirmation of the fulfilment of God's unconditional promise to Abraham's fleshly descendants.

## **The Nature Of The Promise**

We learn from the New Testament that God's promise to Abraham recorded in Genesis 15 : 18 was much more extensive and far-reaching than appears from the words themselves that were spoken. The promise had Abraham's natural seed immediately in view, but was ultimately intended for Abraham's spiritual seed, that is, those who become Abraham's seed by faith in Christ.

In Romans 4 : 9 - 25 Paul expounds the great truth that Abraham was the Father, not only of a natural line, but also *"the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised."* Paul further says, *"For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."*

In Romans 4 we are given a view of the vast extent and true character of the promise. We see also that the heirs of the promise are, not Abraham's natural descendants, but his spiritual children. This is confirmed in Galatians 3 : 7 *"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham";* and in Galatians 3 : 29 *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

The promise referred to in Galatians 3 is surely that of Genesis 22 : 18 *"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."*

This promise encompasses the promise contained in Genesis 13 : 15 and 15 : 18. Verse 16 of Galatians 3 contains an illuminating explanation : *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."*

Thus we learn that the promise to Abraham involves the whole human race, and that the true and sole heir of that promise is Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Christ in this Gospel Age are reckoned *"The children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."* (Romans 8 : 16, 17)

Eventually, in the Age to Come, the majority of people raised to life on the earth will believe and also become God's children, but the promise of joint-heirship will no longer continue once the Gospel Age has come to an end.

There is no indication in the New Testament of a future fulfilment of the promise to Abraham pertaining to Israel *"after the flesh."* (1 Corinthians 10 : 18)

### **The Son Of The Bondwoman Shall Not Be Heir With The Son Of The Freewoman.**

In Galatians 3 Paul states the positive side of the truth that Christ and His true believers are the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promises, and are in fact *"the Israel of God."* (Galatians 6 : 16)

In Galatians 4 Paul presents the negative side of the same truth, making it abundantly clear that natural Israel has no longer any standing before God, or any part in His future purposes. There is surely reproof in Paul's words :

*"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman."*  
(Galatians 4 : 21, 22)

Paul demonstrates that these things *"are an allegory"* in which Hagar stands for the Old Covenant, and her son Ishmael for the fleshly Children of Israel, while Sarah represents the New Covenant, and her son Isaac stands for the Children of Promise, the true seed of Abraham.

The climax of Paul's exposition is found in the words of Sarah, which the Apostle declares to be the voice of Scripture. In declaring what was to be the outcome of the controversy between natural Israel *"born after the flesh"* and true Israel *"born after the spirit"* and the persecution of true Israel by natural Israel, the Apostle says,

*"Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."*  
(Galatians 4 : 30)

Paul concludes his exposition with the comforting statement *"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."* (Galatians 4 : 31)

## **The Period Of The Judges**

The period of the judges is one of repeated departures by the people of Israel from the right ways of the Lord, and of repeated lapses into idolatry. Yet the Lord showed great patience and forbearance with them, not casting them off for one offence, or even for many offences; but permitting them to have one bitter experience after another at the hands of their enemies, to teach them that their welfare, indeed their very existence as a nation, depended upon their faithfulness to Him and their obedience to His law.

Again and again, during that long period of decline, He intervened for their deliverance by the hand of one or other of the judges. It is recorded in Deuteronomy 32 : 17, in the completeness of their apostasy and the depth of their degradation, that they *"sacrificed unto devils."* Further, the Scriptures record the extent of the Israelites' denial of God in the era of the judges.

*"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord and served not Him"*  
(Judges 10 : 6)

Finally, during the regency of Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, the wickedness of the people culminated in their demand for a king. Notwithstanding that *"the thing displeased Samuel"* they persisted in their demand, saying, *"make us a king to judge us like all the nations."* (1 Samuel 8:5,6)

This was a national sin of rebellion against Jehovah. Nevertheless, He did not cast them off, but directed Samuel to let them have their desire, saying,

*"Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."*  
(1 Samuel 8 : 7)

This was the origin of the earthly Kingdom of Israel, over which David and his descendants reigned, and which the carnally minded Jews were, and are, expecting their Messiah to restore. Far from this being the Kingdom of God, that earthly kingdom involved the repudiation of the Kingdom of God.

Later, by the Lord's command, Samuel gathered the people together, reminded them what the Lord had done for them, and said :

*"And ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations, and ye have said unto Him, Nay but set a king over us." (1 Samuel 10 : 19).*

Finally, when Samuel was about to die, he addressed "all Israel," reminding them of their grievous sin, and saying :

*"And when ye saw that Nahash the King of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your King." (1 Samuel 12 : 12).*

And he went on to say :

*"Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king." (1 Samuel 12 : 16, 17)*

These passages make it clear that God regards that earthly kingdom with detestation. He will never restore it. The kingdom announced by John the Baptist when he said, "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,*" is not a national kingdom, but a world-wide Kingdom with God's rightful King, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the throne.

## CHAPTER 7

### SALVATION AND THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID

#### Salvation

"Salvation" means "saving" or "delivering". The Scriptures promise saving or delivering from sin and death to all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Belief is the necessary starting point. Belief in Jesus Christ must then be maintained, and the believer's life must remain consistent with the commands and requirements of the Lord Jesus. The believer must remain "*faithful unto death.*" (Revelation 2 : 10)

While this Gospel Age lasts, it is necessary for all to die, whether believers or unbelievers, as Paul explains :

*"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* (Romans 5 : 12)

Death, however, is not final. The Scriptures promise a resurrection for all the dead, the just as well as the unjust.

*"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (that is, judgment)."* (John 5 : 28, 29)

*"And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."* (Acts 24 : 15)

Salvation is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. It is offered now in this Gospel Age and will continue to be offered in the age to come, the Kingdom Age. It means life everlasting for all who believe. The everlasting life promised, however, is not in the same realm for everyone. Believers in this Gospel Age are promised life in the heavenly realm, while believers in the age to come are promised life on earth.

There are, therefore, two distinct salvations :

1. The first is life everlasting in heavenly places as spirit beings, as the Scriptures declare in John 13 : 33 - 36; John 14 : 1 - 3; 1 Corinthians 15 : 44 - 51; 1 Peter 1 : 3 - 5 and Romans 8 : 16, 17.
2. The second salvation is life everlasting on earth promised to faithful believers up to and including John The Baptist, as we are told in Psalm 45 : 16 and Acts 7 : 2 - 5; and promised also to all the resurrected millions who will believe in the age to come, declared in such passages as John 3 : 16 and Revelation 21 : 1, 3 - 5; as well as 1 Timothy 2 : 3, 4.

The hope of the Gospel, as is also the hope of Israel and all people, is the promised kingdom of God, of which *"God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began"* (Acts 3 : 21), and *"Promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures"* (Romans 1 : 2). It is the promised *"New Heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (2 Peter 3 : 13) for which we all pray when we say *"Thy Kingdom come."* (Matthew 6 : 10)

The Scriptures speak of one kingdom, one gospel, one faith and one hope. They do not speak of more than one of any of these. (Ephesians 4 : 4, 5).

There is now in existence among Christians a belief that Old Testament prophecies may be understood as indicating that there is another hope for Israel in the nature of a special privileged position to be given to the Jewish nation as a whole, the nation which has rejected Jesus Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom that was preached *"To the Jew first."* (Romans 1 : 16; 2 : 9, 10).

It is certainly true that in the Old Testament Scriptures the Kingdom was promised to Israel only. God said again and again, in one form of words or another, what He inspired Isaiah to write : *"I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my Glory."* (Isaiah 46 : 13); and it is expressly reaffirmed in the New Testament that to them (Israelites) pertain *"The adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;"* (Romans 9 : 4).

But while this is the truth concerning the promised kingdom, it is not all the truth.

For when Christ came, natural Israel divided into two parts, one of which (a small remnant) accepted Christ, and the other (the greater mass of the nation) rejected Him. As it is written, *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God."* (John 1 : 11, 12).

The Apostle Paul declares expressly that the unbelieving part of natural Israel is not the true Israel : *"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,"* (Romans 9 : 6), and He goes on to say that *"Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election* (that is, the believing part) *hath obtained it."* (Romans 11 : 7).

Furthermore, in Romans 9, 10 and 11, the Apostle declares this election, the true Israel, which has obtained the promises, embraces believing Gentiles along with believing Jews. (Romans 9 : 24 - 31; 10 : 19, 20; 11 : 11 - 27)

Now we have the whole truth concerning *"The Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16) as revealed in the Scriptures. It is not the truth concerning *"The hope of Israel"* (for the preaching of which Paul was accused and made a prisoner by the Jews) to hold that the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation is to receive the blessings promised by God through His prophets.

This teaching, that the unbelieving part of natural Israel is somehow to receive special blessing from God, reverses completely that of Scripture which states plainly that *"They are not all Israel which are of Israel"* that *"they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God"* (and hence not the heirs of God's promises), but that *"the children of the promise are counted for the seed."* (Romans 9 : 6 - 8, Galatians 3 : 16)

This teaching, relatively new among the people of God (though it was the very core of the teaching of apostate Judaism), detracts from the unity of the Kingdom of God, the one Israel of God, the one hope of the Gospel, the one everlasting covenant, and introduces an additional group into the whole plan of God as revealed in His word.

This teaching necessitates that time and place be found in the future for another people of God apart from the joint heirs, the ancient worthies and the great masses which constitute the human race, living and dead.

### **The Sure Mercies of David**

Israel's great King, David, prophesied much of the Hope of Israel and the Kingdom of God. His prophecies are so numerous, and often couched in poetic and figurative language, and so abounding in imagery, that patient investigation of them must be left to another occasion.

But happily the general purport of God's promises recorded by David have been given to us in a single comprehensive statement by the great Apostle Paul, spoken in a Jewish synagogue.

*"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

*And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you **the sure mercies of David.**"*

(Acts 13 : 32 - 34)

These words declare plainly that the promise, which God made to the faithful fathers of Israel, He had fulfilled by raising Jesus Christ from the dead; and that His promises to David, among which the Kingdom was prominent, depended upon and were fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ.

The original passage from which Paul took the phrase "*The sure mercies of David,*" connects those mercies with the everlasting covenant, thereby locating the fulfilment of this great promise in this present era of the gospel.

This is the original passage which is surely a prophecy of the **Gospel invitation** :

*"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Isaiah 55 : 1 - 3)*

We have also the plain declaration that the everlasting covenant and the sure mercies of David are **one and the same**. The everlasting covenant, the New Covenant, is the only covenant of God that is now in existence.

The Old Covenant with the Jewish nation was but a fleeting shadow, likened in Scripture to the light that shone for a little while in the face of Moses, then quickly faded away.

*" And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:*

*But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.*

*But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." (2 Corinthians 3 : 13 - 15)*

It is true that the teachers and leaders of the Jews were, and still are, blinded to the fact that the Old Covenant *"is done away in Christ."* (verse 14). But this is no wonder, for both David in Psalm 69 : 23, and Isaiah in 6 : 9 foretold that they would be blind to the passing away of the old Law Covenant.

Moreover, Paul also points this out in Romans 11 : 8 - 10, and in 2 Corinthians 3 : 13 - 15 he explains that the veil which Moses put over his face was a prophetic sign that the Jewish nation would be blinded to the passing away of the Old Covenant and its promises. So, *"even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart."* (Verse 15).

It is, however, a wonder that present day Bible Students, endeavouring to follow the teachings of Paul, Timothy, and other disciples, whom God had made "*able ministers of the New Covenant*" (2 Corinthians 3 : 6) should permit themselves to disregard a truth so plainly declared; and should in consequence be reviving promises and other incidents of the Old Covenant, which the Jewish nation forfeited by its flagrant rebellion and apostasy, and which God has long ago "*abolished*." (2 Corinthians 3 : 13; Hebrews 8 : 13).

In raising Jesus Christ from the dead, God fulfilled His promise that He would give to the world "*the sure mercies of David*."

Firstly, God made a covenant with David, as recorded in 2 Samuel 7 : 16 : "*And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever*." This covenant was that David's throne would be established forever. God kept that covenant by raising up "*Christ to sit on His throne*." (Acts 2 : 30; Psalm 2 : 6 - 9)

Secondly, Christ by His death provided a ransom for Adam, and by His shed blood provided remission for all sins, and sealed the New or Everlasting Covenant with His blood. (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 1 Timothy 2: 5,6; Hebrews 7: 27; 8: 10 - 12; 9: 12, 24 - 26).

Christ's resurrection made it possible for the New Covenant to come into operation, bringing with it :

- \* forgiveness of sins for all believers now and in the age to come;
- \* the means and possibility of reconciliation with God for everyone, living and dead; and
- \* the basis for the Kingdom of God, the kingdom which will one day fill the earth with righteousness and peace.

With the sacrificial death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the old system of natural things passed away completely and forever, and the new system of spiritual and eternal things came into being.

These new things under the new system are :

- \* the heavenly Zion;
- \* the new Jerusalem which is above and which is the mother of us all; (Galatians 4 : 26)
- \* the heavenly sanctuary; (Hebrews 9 : 24)
- \* a chosen people, not blessed with all natural blessings in earthly places through Moses and Joshua, but "*blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places through Christ.*" (Ephesians 1 : 3).

The two systems cannot co-exist, now or in the future, for they are mutually exclusive.

That which had to do with an earthly people and earthly localities was in force only "*until the time of reformation.*" (Hebrews 9 : 10), "*but Christ being come*" ... and having "*through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God.*" and having assumed the office of "*mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance*" (Hebrews 9 : 11 - 15), the former system has completely served its purpose and has been wholly abolished.

**Careful study of Hebrews, chapters 8 to 10, inclusive, must lead to the conclusion of the utter impossibility, in the plan of God and its implementation, of a restoration of the earthly nation of Israel and the abolished shadows of the Old Covenant.**

The Scriptures declare in the prophecies of Moses, the founder of Israel under God, of Joshua, the vanquisher of the original possessors of Canaan, of David, the greatest of Israel's kings and one of its greatest prophets, of Paul and the Lord Jesus Himself, that the nation would completely apostatise, reject His Son, and that God would disown them, "*Pluck them off the land*", and scatter them "*among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other.*" (Deuteronomy 28 : 63, 64).

But, some ask, have not the later prophets of Israel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, foretold the return of the children of Israel to Palestine, and by implication prophesied the reconstitution of the nation? In reply it must be said that in God's

word the later prophets could not contradict the words of the earlier prophets because they were all inspired by the same Holy Spirit of God.

What has misled some Bible Students is the fact that prophets of later times, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, predicted the captivity of the Jews in Babylon and their return from that captivity (Isaiah 6 : 12, 13; 44 : 26 - 28; 45 : 13; Jeremiah 30 : 3). Such prophecies as these have all been fulfilled.

There are also prophecies declaring that a "*remnant of Israel*" would return to the Lord in the latter days. The degenerate and carnally-minded Jewish teachers of Christ's earthly ministry interpreted such prophecies as foretelling the restoration of Israel and its earthly grandeur.

But Christian teachers and expositors should not make that same mistake. The great apostle Paul has declared plainly that such prophecies and promises have their fulfilment in God's New Covenant people, the true "*Israel of God*". Here is an example :

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that **the remnant of Israel**, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.*

***The remnant shall return**, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.*

*For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet **a remnant of them shall return**: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness."*

*(Isaiah 10 : 20 - 22)*

According to Paul's inspired interpretation, Isaiah was speaking of the few Israelites who, in these Gospel Times, would believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. The apostle quotes the passage thus : "*Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.*" (Romans 9 : 27) Further on in Chapter 11 he explains that such prophecies have their fulfilment in the "*remnant according to the election of grace.*" (Romans 11 : 5)

There are also prophecies concerning those who in future times should "*come to Zion.*" Here are two examples :

*" And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and **come to Zion** with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35 : 10)*

*"Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and **come with singing unto Zion**; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."*  
(Isaiah 51 : 11)

The New Testament Scriptures make it evident that such prophecies have their fulfilment in Christ and the Kingdom of God.

The apostle Peter, writing to converted Jews, the Diaspora "*scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia*" (1 Peter 1 : 1) says :

*"Ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

*Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious : and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."*  
(1 Peter 2 : 5, 6 quoting Isaiah 28 : 16).

And the writer of Hebrews, addressing believers in Jesus Christ, says :

*"For ye are not come unto the Mount that might be touched" (the earthly Mount Sinai);  
"But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,  
To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect  
And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant ..."*  
(Hebrews 12:18 - 24)

There is no prophecy of the later or earlier prophets, or of any New Testament writer, which foretells the return of the Jews to Palestine and their repossession of that land as God's people.

## CHAPTER 8

### SOME PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH

#### A Voice From The Temple

A passage in the last chapter of Isaiah is sometimes quoted as foretelling the conversion of the Jewish nation at a future time :

*" A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies.*

*Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.*

*Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."*

(Isaiah 66 : 6 - 8)

There is nothing in this passage about any salvation for the Nation of Israel, and nothing about its conversion as a nation at any time. The subject of the passage is clearly the birth of another nation. Zion is represented as being in travail, and as bringing forth a child. A child, which is a nation (verse 8), born of Zion is surely that "*Holy Nation*" concerning which Peter wrote (1 Peter 2 : 9), a nation composed of all who have been "*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.*" (1 Peter 1 : 23 - 25).

The "*one day*" foretold in Isaiah 66 : 8 is surely that great day of Pentecost, which marked the birth of that holy nation, the like whereof had never been known in the world before.

The predicted "*voice of noise from the city*" (Isaiah 66 : 6) had a striking fulfilment as recorded in Acts 2 : 6 : "*Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together.*"

Furthermore, the predicted "*voice from the temple*" (Isaiah 66 : 6) was fulfilled when "*Peter standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice, and said unto them ...*" (Acts 2 : 14); and when by the miracle of tongues, the apostles and disciples

all spoke in different languages, "*as the spirit gave them utterance*" (Acts 2 : 4), proclaiming the wondrous truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It was then, on that remarkable day, that a nation was "*born at once*" (Isaiah 66 : 8). The miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit must have taken place in the temple precincts, very likely in Solomon's porch.

There is striking significance in the words "*before she travailed she brought forth*" (Isaiah 66 : 7). The travail of earthly Zion did not come upon it immediately after Jesus' crucifixion. God in His mercy, and in answer to our Lord's prayer on the cross for His murderers (Luke 23 : 34), granted a reprieve of some forty years before the storm of judgement burst upon the earthly Zion, and her travail was fully upon her.

The travail as foretold by Isaiah and confirmed by the Lord Jesus as "*great tribulation*" (Matthew 24 : 21), is identified by Him as being amongst "*the beginning of sorrows*" (literally "birth pangs") (Matthew 24 : 8). The travail was the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman armies under Titus, the incredible sufferings of the Jewish people during that siege in AD70, followed by the subsequent slaughter and dispersion of the Jewish people under the Roman rule. At that time Christians were for the most part spared by the Roman armies, and permitted to flee from Jerusalem during the siege, as the Lord Jesus had foretold.

The "*Jerusalem*" with which the prophet bids us rejoice in Isaiah 66 :10, and concerning which God says, "*Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream:*" (Isaiah 66 : 12) is the "*Jerusalem which is above*" (Galatians 4 : 26), the "*New heavens and a new earth*" (Isaiah 65 : 17), of which God says:

*"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (Isaiah 65 : 17 - 19)*

The Lord Jesus spoke of this "*people*", the new and holy nation, when He said "*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" (Matthew 21 : 43) He also said, "*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" (Luke 12 : 32)

Clearly then, the kingdom was not to remain with the earthly Jewish nation, nor is there any promise that the earthly nation is to be converted as a whole in the future.

On the contrary, the kingdom was to be "*taken from*" them and given to another nation. The divine action of taking the Kingdom from one nation and giving it to another "*bringing forth the fruits thereof*" was a finality, for with God there "*is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*" (James 1 : 17)

In this connection there is a remarkable prophecy in Isaiah immediately following chapter 53, the chapter in which the sufferings, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord are foretold. The prophecy in Isaiah 54 concerns the barren woman who was to become a joyful mother of children, whose maker was to be her husband, and of whose children it is said that they shall be all taught of the Lord, that their peace shall be great, and "*their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*" (Isaiah 54 : 17)

Paul applies this prophecy in Galatians 4 : 26 to the "*Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all.*" In the same passage he proves, by a remarkable appeal to the earthly types, that the earthly Jerusalem and her children (Hagar and Ishmael) were to be "*cast out*"; and that "*the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.*" (Galatians 4 : 30)

In God's plan, this casting out of the earthly nation from all part and place in that plan, and the disinheriting of the "*son of the bondwoman*" is to be forever. The only hope for Israelites after the flesh is personal and individual in coming to Christ.

The doctrine of restoration of earthly, fleshly Israel directly contradicts New Testament teaching. This doctrine reverses the order of the revealed plan of God in that it claims to bring back the earthly nation, re-establish the abolished shadows of the Old Covenant, and make "*the son of the bondwoman*" the recipient of the promises forfeited by apostasy and disobedience.

## Isaiah's Prophecy As A Whole

The general purport of God's message through Isaiah is indicated by the opening words :

*"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*

*The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

*Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."*  
(Isaiah 1 : 2 - 4)

Then follow words of sternest reproach, words to the nation which clearly indicate that God has completely rejected them, but is prepared to spare them for the same reason that He would have spared even Sodom and Gomorrah if He had found as many as ten righteous persons in those cities. Note these words in Isaiah 1 : 9 and 10 :

*"Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

*Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."*

Isaiah 1 : 10 is quoted by Paul in a passage in Romans 9 : 24 - 29, and he combines with it a quotation from Isaiah 10 : 21 and 22, from which he deduces that, though the number of natural Israel were as the sand of the sea, yet only *"a remnant shall be saved."*

Further from Hosea 2 : 23 Paul declares that to this saved remnant, God would add believing Gentiles. Paul applies these words :

*"I will call them (Gentiles) my people, which were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved."*  
(Hosea 2 : 23)

In Romans 11 Paul traces God's saving work still further, for there he indicates a working of God's grace among natural Israelites after the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; a divine working whereby a number of Jews will be converted and added to the one body to be saved in the Gospel Age (the one "*olive tree*" of Romans 11 : 25 - 27) "*and so all Israel shall be saved;*" the "*all Israel*" being, as the context shows, the whole company of God's Gospel Age elect.

In Isaiah's prophecy we notice that, in the verses immediately following verse 10 of Chapter 1, God declares in the strongest terms His rejection of all their assemblies, sacrifices and ceremonies.

Their oblations were "*vain,*" their incense "*an abomination,*" their new moons and appointed feasts "*my soul hateth*" the Lord said. He also said, "*they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*" And this is the Lord's word to the end of the prophecy, for in the very last chapter we have the following words :

*"He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations."* (Isaiah 66 : 3)

It is surely impossible to maintain in the face of these strong words of rejection, that God purposes in the Millennium to establish once more the whole rejected system : incense, oblations, ceremonies and sacrifices. Nothing surely could be more directly contrary to the revealed purposes of God, or more contrary to the declared effect of the "*once for all*" sacrifice for sins offered by the Lord Jesus. (Hebrews 10 : 1 - 18)

From the foregoing Scriptures, and especially from the inspired illustration of the one olive tree in Romans 11, which represents God's true Israel, we may know with certainty His plan for bringing about for Himself an elect nation, "*a people for His name*" (Acts 15 : 14), chosen from among Jews and Gentiles.

Space does not permit further examination of the many passages which bear directly on "the hope of Israel" and which confirm the view that there is but *"one hope"* for the human race, for Jews and Gentiles on equal terms; in other words that *"the hope of Israel"* and *"the hope of the Gospel"* are one and the same. There is but one hope for all in this Gospel Age, as there is one gospel for all.

### **The New Nation A Resurrection**

In Isaiah 66 the Holy Nation, the true Israel, which is the rightful heir of God's promises, is depicted as coming into existence through a new birth; national fleshly Israel being the mother through whose *"travail"* the new nation is brought forth. The whole situation is analogous to the new birth of the individual believer when he or she is converted and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

*"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3 : 3)*

*"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5 : 17 )*

*"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Galatians 6 : 15)*

*"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6 : 4)*

In both cases, that is, natural Israel and the individual believer, the natural serves as the "vessel" or "containing body" of the spiritual; the beginning of the existence of the new creature is accompanied by *"travail;"* and in both cases the natural creature remains in evidence after the birth of the spiritual, the new creature, and remains in direct antagonism with it. (Romans 6 : 3, 4; 7 : 21 - 25; 8 : 5, 6; Galatians 5 : 16, 17; Ephesians 4 : 22 - 24)

In another figure, the beginning of the new Israel is a resurrection, and this too is analogous to the saved believer, who is viewed in Scripture as one raised from the dead, a new creature in Christ Jesus, yet preserving the same identity as an individual. (Romans 6 : 3, 4; Colossians 2 : 12; 3 : 1 - 3).

So, likewise, the true Israel is a nation of people who are "*risen with Christ,*" a nation raised up out of the mortal and decaying remains, the dust and ashes of natural Israel. And manifestly, birth and resurrection are processes that cannot be reversed.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE NEW COVENANT AND ITS PEOPLE

#### The New Covenant

In the Scriptures the term "covenant" is used in two ways:

1. As signifying a promise, such as the promise to Noah in Genesis 9 : 9 - 11.
2. As signifying an agreement, such as the Law Covenant made between the Lord God and the Jewish people as we see in Exodus 24 : 3-8; 19 : 3-8; and Romans 10 : 5.

Many covenants are mentioned in Scripture, but only three have to do with the divine arrangement for salvation from sin and death. These are :

1. The Abrahamic Covenant.
2. The Law Covenant (comprising two covenants, the first at Mt. Sinai in Horeb, the second in the land of Moab).
3. The New Covenant.

The third, the New Covenant, and the people with whom the Lord God in this Gospel Age is graciously prepared to make this covenant, will now occupy our attention.

In God's covenants with Israel, the covenant of Horeb (Mt. Sinai, Deuteronomy 5 : 2, 3), and the second or substitute covenant made in the land of Moab some forty years later (Deuteronomy 29 : 1), all the promises were made to depend on conditions to be fulfilled by the Israelites, which conditions they utterly failed to perform. It therefore follows that under the two law covenants the Jewish people inherit not blessings, but curses and punishments only.

Of the utmost importance to Jews, as well as Gentiles, is the "*New Covenant*", also called the "*Everlasting Covenant*", which God promised through Jeremiah.

The truth concerning that New and Everlasting Covenant is of vital importance to all believers.

Of this covenant Jesus Christ is the "Surety" (Hebrews 7 : 22), the "Mediator" (Hebrews 9 : 15; 12 : 24), and the "Covenant Victim" (translated in Hebrews 9 : 16, 17 in the Authorised Version by the word "Testator", which has a very different meaning in modern English).

Next follow God's words through Jeremiah, and two New Testament applications of these words :

*"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*

*Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:*

*But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

*And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord: for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: **for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**"*  
(Jeremiah 31 : 31 - 34)

*"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*

*For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:*

*Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.*

*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.***

*And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for **all shall know me**, from the least to the greatest.*

*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and **their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.***

***In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.***" (Hebrews 8 : 6 - 13)

*"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,*

*And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:*

***But ye are come unto mount Sion**, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*

*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

***And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Hebrews 12 : 18 - 24)*

In Hebrews chapters 7 to 10 great prominence is given to the truth that Jesus Christ is the "*Surety*" and the "*Mediator*" of this covenant (Hebrews 7 : 22; 8 : 6; 12 : 24); that this covenant has been ratified "*by His own blood*" (Hebrews 9 : 12 - 24; 13 : 20); and that it is therefore "*a better covenant, established upon better promises.*" (Hebrews 8 : 6).

Further, it is revealed in Hebrews chapters 7 to 10, that when Christ had offered "*one sacrifice for sins forever, and sat down on the right hand of God;*" (Hebrews 10 : 12), not only was the New Covenant put into operation, but the Old Covenant and all its appointments - temple, priesthood, sacrifices, ceremonies - were forever abolished. The priesthood and all requirements were nothing but "*a shadow of good things to come.*" (Hebrews 10 : 1).

Moreover, God had never taken pleasure in the Old Covenant ceremonies and sacrifices (Isaiah 1 : 11; Psalm 40 : 6; Proverbs 21 : 3; Hosea 6 : 6; Hebrews 10 : 8); because *"it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."* (Hebrews 10 : 4).

Surely, as we meditate on Hebrews 9 and 10, we must come to the conclusion that God would abhor even the thought of setting up again that same system of vain sacrifices and ceremonies which He abolished at the awful cost of the sacrifice of His own Son, the *"one sacrifice for sins forever."* (Hebrews 10 : 12).

We also have the plain statement that Christ, in coming to do His Father's will by the sacrifice of Himself, *"taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."* (Hebrews 10 : 9). These words signify the removal forever of the Old Covenant, and the establishment forever of the New Covenant.

It is manifestly impossible that the **"shadows"** should remain after their corresponding realities have come; and it is equally impossible that there should be at any time a return to the system of shadows.

## **The New Covenant People**

In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is most clearly revealed that the blessings of the New Covenant, namely the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits deriving from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, are freely bestowed on those who are of the faith of Jesus Christ, those *"that believe to the saving of the soul."* (Hebrews 10 : 39). These are *"the heirs of salvation"* (Hebrews 1 : 14), the *"many sons"* God is bringing *"unto glory"* (Hebrews 2 : 10). They are those whom the writer of Hebrews addresses as *"holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling"* (Hebrews 3 : 1), and concerning whom he says they are *"made partakers of Christ"* and *"partakers of the Holy Spirit."* (Hebrews 3 : 14; 6 : 4).

Through Jeremiah God promised the New Covenant to *"the house of Israel and the house of Judah"* (Jeremiah 31 : 31). At the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, the Jewish nation was divided into two kingdoms, Israel (the Ten-Tribe Kingdom) and Judah (the Two-Tribe Kingdom).

There is no mystery here, no contradiction, and no change in God's plan. The Gospel of Jesus Christ based on the New Covenant was preached *"to the Jew first"* (Romans 1 : 16; 2 : 9, 10), that is, the whole nation. But only a small minority, a *"remnant"* accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The majority of fleshly Israel who did not believe were rejected by God and excluded from His promises.

God then, as Paul tells us, called the Gentiles, and all who believed, the *"remnant"* of Jews and converted Gentiles, became members of the true Israel, the *"Israel of God."* (Galatians 6 : 16).

For God has now revealed that *"He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; .. but he is a Jew who is one inwardly"* (Romans 2 : 28, 29) and that *"they which are of faith"* - believing Gentiles equally with believing Jews - *"the same are the children of Abraham,"* and heirs with Jesus Christ of the promises of God, including particularly the promises of the Everlasting Covenant (Galatians 3 : 7, 29; 4 : 28, 31; Romans 4 : 13 - 16).

Especially relevant are the words :

*"for we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* (Philippians 3 : 3)

We should recall again in this connection the allegory of Galatians 4 : 21 - 31, which teaches the broad lesson that the personal and family history of Abraham were shadows or allegorical figures of the spiritual realities of this Gospel Age.

Specifically the allegory teaches that Abraham is the Father of the one house-hold of faith. In Romans 4 : 16 He is called *"the Father of us all."* Hagar represents the Old Covenant of Mt. Sinai, and Ishmael the Old Covenant people (Abraham's fleshly descendants); while Sarah stands for the New Covenant, and Isaac for the New Covenant people (the true children of Abraham by faith).

The allegory further makes known that the natural descendants of Abraham (*"the son of the bondwoman"*) were to be *"cast out"* and have no part with the spiritual seed in the promises of the New Covenant.

## CHAPTER 10

### SOME PROPHECIES OF ZECHARIAH

#### In That Day - Zechariah 12 : 9, 10; 14 : 4, 7 - 9

The question that concerns us is : **Are these passages in Zechariah 12 and 14 to be understood as predictions of the national conversion of the Jews in a "day" to come, as some teach?**

*"And it shall come to pass **in that day**, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."  
(Zechariah 12 : 9, 10)*

*"And his feet shall stand **in that day upon the mount of Olives**, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*

*But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.*

*And it shall be **in that day**, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be.*

*And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; **in that day** shall there be one Lord, and his name one."*

*(Zechariah 14 : 4, 7- 9)*

To begin our response to this question, the context makes it clear that the recurring phrase "*in that day*" refers to this present "*day*" of grace, and not to the "*day*" of judgment to come.

Zechariah 13 : 7 is a prophecy of the cross: "*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd ....*" The Lord Jesus quoted these words in Matthew 26 : 31, on the eve of His crucifixion, as having their fulfilment in His death. The passage in Zechariah 13 begins with the words (verse 1) "*In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness.*"

This is a most precious Gospel promise. The "*house of David*" is surely a symbol for the royal house of Christ, the rightful King on David's throne, and those whom "*He is not ashamed to call brethren*" (Hebrews 2 : 11, 12); "*whose house are we.*" (Hebrews 4 : 6). There is a striking correspondence here with the words of John in the Revelation :

*"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God."* (Revelation 1 : 5, 6).

In the reference from Revelation we have the reigning house ("*kings and priests*" answering to "*the house of David*"), and these are "*washed in His own blood*" which answers to the promised fountain for cleansing from sin and from uncleanness. (See also 1 Peter 2 : 9).

*"The inhabitants of Jerusalem"* (Zechariah 13 : 1) are those who now "*are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*" (Hebrews 12 : 22), "*The Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all.*" (Galatians 4 : 26).

In the immediate context we find the prediction, "*and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced*" (Zechariah 12:10). The sense of the passage is clearer when we read "*Look unto me*" instead of "*Look upon me.*" The Hebrew preposition translated here by "*upon*" has a wide range of meanings and applications, and is better translated by "*unto*" as it is in Isaiah 45 : 22, "*Look unto me and be ye saved.*"

The fulfilment of this prophecy takes place in this "*day*" of the Gospel, beginning at the crucifixion (John 19 : 37) and declared at the day of Pentecost. For it was then that Peter, standing up with the eleven, set forth before a great company of Jews the truth of Christ crucified and risen.

Peter addressed the great gathering of Jews with the memorable words : *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ."* (Acts 2 : 36). Thereupon some three thousand souls looked with repentance and belief unto Him whom they had pierced and were baptised. (Acts 2 : 36 - 41).

The new believers mourned for Him as the prophecy had foretold. It is recorded that

*"They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2 : 37).

According to Zechariah's prophecy, chapter 12, verses 12 to 14, every family was to mourn apart, and their wives apart. This signifies that *"repentance unto life"* and the *"Godly sorrow"* that leads to it, were to be personal and individual, and not national as the Jewish rabbis taught, and some Christians teach today.

But what of the passage beginning *"and His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives"?* (Zechariah 14 : 4). Verses 1 and 2 of Zechariah 14 are a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when the city was *"taken"* and the other horrors outlined in verse 2 were perpetrated by the Roman armies, which were made up literally of *"all nations"*. This further tends to fix the time referred to by the phrase *"in that day"*, and ensures that the time of application remains consistent throughout.

We should always keep in mind that in Bible prophecy, any period of special judgment or divine intervention may be spoken of as *"the day of the Lord."*

The prophecy in Zechariah declares, by a series of figures and metaphors, in the usual prophetic manner, how the Lord would *"go forth"* for the deliverance of His people in those days. The *"Mount of Olives"* is surely a symbol of the nation of Israel, to which Jesus was to come (John 1 : 11). In Bible prophecy a mountain is frequently the symbol of a nation, and the Mount of Olives is a most suitable figure to represent the nation of Israel.

The result of Jesus coming to the nation was that it was cloven "*in the midst*", that is, divided into two parts.

We read in John 7 : 43 and 9 : 16 that there was a "*division*" among the Jewish nation, and that "*division*" or rift was indeed "*a very great valley*". "*One part*" of the divided nation (the word translated "half" means simply one of two parts, which may be very unequal in size) was removed "*toward the north*" and the other part "*toward the south*." "*Toward the north*" is symbolic of the region from which Israel's enemies came, and whence Israel was taken into captivity (Jeremiah 1:14,15), and stands figuratively for God's judgment upon the rebellious and apostate part of the nation. "*Towards the south*" stands for the region of light, warmth and blessing, a figure of the privileged position of acceptance with God.

The words "*and it shall be in that day that living waters shall go forth from Jerusalem*" (Zechariah 14 : 8) are being fulfilled in this age of grace and salvation. "*Living water*" is a familiar figure of the truth of the Gospel.

On the day of Pentecost and subsequently it went forth from Jerusalem, both "*toward the former* (Eastern : AV Margin, RSV, NIV; that is either the Dead Sea or the Caspian) sea (**meaning the nations of the east**), and "*toward the hinder* (Western : RSV, NIV; that is the Mediterranean) (**meaning the nations to the west**); "*in winter and in summer*", that is in all seasons.

From that time Jesus, the Risen One, was proclaimed as God's King with all power in Heaven and Earth, the "*King Invisible*", the "*One Lord*", whose name is the "*One name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*." (Acts 4 : 12; Ephesians 4 : 5; 1 Timothy 1:17).

"*The hope of Israel*" is "*the hope of the Gospel*", the one and only all-sufficient hope for the whole human race. Apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is no hope for any, whether Jews or Gentiles, and there is no salvation of any kind for those who "*obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*." (2 Thessalonians 1 : 8).

This wonderful hope is based on the New Covenant, the agreement that God has so graciously made with all true believers, to the effect that all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour are forgiven by God, reckoned righteous and accepted as His children, and *"if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."* (Romans 8 : 17).

## CHAPTER 11

### THE PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL

Certain prophecies of Ezekiel are sometimes quoted as lending support to the idea of a future earthly dominion or pre-eminence of the Jewish nation. However, Ezekiel's prophecies contain many clear warnings of judgements to come upon the House of Israel and the City of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's prophecies also contain predictions which are capable, as are many Old Testament prophecies, of being interpreted according to the desires of the carnal Jewish mind. These predictions concern the recovery that was to be accomplished through the work of the Redeemer to come.

We must always remember, when considering Old Testament prophecies which relate to the future of the Jewish people, that we have a sure guide as to their interpretation in the way that such prophecies are applied in the New Testament, especially by the Apostle Paul.

We have two guiding facts :

1. All prophecies of mercy to the Jewish people quoted in the New Testament are declared to have their fulfilment in this present Gospel Age, the era of the Holy Spirit. We read that *"All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise (that is, like Moses who had been mentioned previously in verse 22) foretold of these days."* (Acts 3 : 24) There is never an instance where fulfilment is assigned to a future dispensation.
2. In the New Testament all promises of future blessing for the Jews are applied to the true Israel, the *"Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16); for it is declared that *"He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter"* (Romans 2 : 28, 29); and that *"We (Christians) are the circumcision."* (Philippians 3 : 3).

It is very easy to say of every prophecy concerning the Jews that it must be taken "literally", that it has not yet been fulfilled, and that it will be fulfilled to *"Israel after the flesh"* (1 Corinthians 10 : 18) in the Kingdom of God. Such interpretations do not require searching of the Scriptures, or effort of the mind or spiritual discernment.

On the other hand, patient effort and spiritual understanding are required to interpret a prophecy :

1. according to its intent,
2. according to the true spiritual significance of the symbols and figures employed, and
3. according to relevant New Testament Scriptures which guide and direct our understanding.

## **A Survey of Some Relevant Prophecies in Ezekiel**

The prophecies surveyed are those prophecies of Ezekiel which have a bearing on the Hope of Israel.

### **Chapter 14**

In Chapter 14 God declares through the prophet the four sore judgements (the sword, the famine, the noisome beast and the pestilence) He purposed to bring upon Jerusalem *"to cut off from it man and beast"* (verse 21). But some of its inhabitants were to be saved, for He continues : *"Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters"* (verse 22).

Isaiah had previously foretold the salvation of a *"remnant"* at the time when God's judgement should fall upon Israel and Jerusalem (that is, Judah), and as Paul has explained that Isaiah's prophecy referred to those who were to be saved through the Gospel, this section of Ezekiel's prophecy is made clear.

### **Chapter 15**

In Chapter 15 God foretells the complete rejection of Jerusalem under the figure of the branches of a vine, which, when broken off, are fit only for the fire. There is no mention of mercy or recovery in this chapter.

## Chapter 16

In Chapter 16 the sins of Jerusalem are denounced as worse than those of Sodom and Samaria.

Verses 48 to 55 take us into the Kingdom Age, when all people will be brought back from the grave and come again to their own borders as indicated in Jeremiah 31:17. But before this time of world-wide blessing is ushered in, **Jerusalem**, symbolising **the Jewish people under the Law Covenant**, would be overthrown, just as Sodom, Gomorrah and Samaria were overthrown. God said to the people of Israel through Moses that their overthrow would be "*like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah . . . which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.*" (Deuteronomy 29 : 23) **Samaria** is a symbol of the **Northern Ten-Tribe Kingdom**, being the capital city of that Kingdom. Ezekiel 16 :

*48. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as **thou** hast done, **thou** and thy daughters. (Jerusalem symbolising Israel under the Law.)*

*49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.*

*50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.*

*51. Neither hath **Samaria** committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. (A symbol of the Northern Kingdom which had become apostate and departed far from the Law Covenant.)*

*52. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, by thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.*

*53. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:*

54. *That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.*

55. *When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.*

Verses 53 to 55 are a prophecy of the Kingdom of God in the Age to Come.

God said through Hosea concerning the Northern Kingdom (Samaria) that He would "*cause to cease the kingdom of the House of Israel*" and would "*no more have mercy on the House of Israel.*" (Hosea 1 : 4, 6)

God concludes His threat of judgement on Jerusalem by saying, "*For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant*" (verse 59). This means that there was a complete breach of the covenant that God had made with earthly Jerusalem. That covenant will never be renewed, for Christ has nailed it to His cross. (Colossians 2 : 14).

The prophecy goes on to declare, as Jeremiah had already foretold, that God would work out His purposes under a new "*everlasting covenant*", and would one day restore relationships between the people of Israel, Sodom and Samaria, "*but not by thy covenant*" (verses 60 and 61).

In the light of the New Testament Scriptures, and of the way Old Testament prophecies are interpreted by Christ and Peter and Paul, it can be seen that the latter part of Chapter 16 foretells the work of the Gospel, which was proclaimed "*to the Jew first*" (Romans 1 : 16), and would have the effect of separating the true Israel (Romans 9 : 6) from the mass of the apostate nation. The words are, "*nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant*" (verse 60).

In full agreement with Ezekiel 16 : 60 Paul declares that *"as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake"* (Romans 11 : 28). So in this way God remembers His covenant with that nation in the days of its youth by preaching to them first, of all the peoples of the earth, the wondrous blessings of the New Covenant.

### **Chapter 17**

This chapter foretells, in the form of a parable, God's coming judgements on *"the rebellious house"* (verse 12). The chapter closes with the promise of Christ coming as a *"branch"* to be planted *"in the mountain of the height of Israel"* (verse 23). This is a prophecy of the Gospel Era (refer also to Isaiah 11 : 1; 2 : 2; Zechariah 3 : 8, 9).

The context supplies us with a further indication that the prophets were always looking to *"these days"* (Acts 3 : 24), in which they foresaw mercies in the future for the people of Israel.

### **Chapter 20**

There is in this chapter a withering indictment of the Nation of Israel for its persistent sins and rebellions, first in **Egypt** (verses 5 to 9), secondly in **The Wilderness** (verses 10 to 27), and thirdly in **The Land of Canaan** (verses 28 to 32). Therefore, said the Lord God, *"I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me"* (verse 38).

The chapter closes with a view of the true Israel on God's *"Holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel"* (verse 40), surely a prophecy of the true Israel formed in the Gospel Age and eventually ruling in power to bless all families of the earth in the Kingdom Age.

### **Chapters 21, 22, 23 and 24**

Chapters 21, 22 and 23 foretell further judgements that were to fall upon Jerusalem, and give details of the general corruption of priests, prophets and people. Chapter 24 again foretells the approaching *"woe to the bloody city"* (verse 6 and 9).

### **Chapter 25 to 33**

These chapters are occupied with prophecies that were to come upon various nations, the Ammonites, Moab, Edom, Tyre, Egypt and Babylon.

**Chapter 28** contains a remarkable promise :

*"Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, **and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen**, then shall they dwell in their land I have given to my servant Jacob.*

*And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgements upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the LORD their God."*

(Ezekiel 28 : 25, 26)

The promise applies to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, but in that the Jews did not meet the stipulated condition that God would *"be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen"*, the promise was forfeited.

### **Chapter 34**

This chapter contains a clear Old Testament prophecy of the coming of the Saviour. The chapter begins with the Lord God's reproof of the shepherds of Israel because they had shamefully neglected His sheep: not healing the sick, or bringing again that which was driven away, or binding up that which was broken, or seeking that which was lost.

*"My flock" said the Lord, "was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them" (verse 6).*

In view of this woeful state of things, what does God promise to do? His promise is in Ezekiel 34 :

*11. For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.*

*12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

*13. And I will bring them out from the people, and father them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.*

14. *I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.*

15. *I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.*

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgement.*

The Lord Jesus Himself has declared the fulfilment of this prophecy in John 10:

1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

2. *But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

3. *to him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

4. *And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

6. *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.*

7. *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*

8. *All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

9. *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

10. *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

11. *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth this life for the sheep.*

12. *But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*

13. *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

14. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

15. *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

It is surely beyond dispute that Ezekiel 34 is a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ to seek His own sheep, to lead them out from the mass of the apostate Jewish nation, to give His life for them, and in resurrection to be their "*Prince*", their "*David*", who in this chapter is a type of Christ, who is "*the blessed and only potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*" (1 Timothy 6 : 15).

Peter declared the fulfilment of this part of Ezekiel's prophecy when he confronted the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem with the statement that God had exalted Jesus, whom they had slain, to be "*a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*" (Acts 5 : 31).

Ezekiel 34 has always been regarded by Christian believers as a prophecy of Christ and the spiritual blessings He would graciously bestow.

## **Chapter 36**

The prophecy of verses 21 to 38 is also a foretelling of the present Gospel Era, for the blessings of the New Covenant are distinctly foretold.

The first step in the fulfilment of this prophecy was the return from Babylon (verse 24); then the preaching of the Lord Jesus (verse 25, see also John 15 : 3 and Hebrews 10 : 22); then the gift of the Holy Spirit (verses 26 and 27 - see also John 20 : 22).

Believers in the Lord Jesus are the True Israel, and their land is the true Zion, the *"heavenly places"* of Ephesians 1 : 3 and 2 : 6.

In Chapter 36 God promises that He will gather His people out of all countries, will bring them into their own land, will sprinkle clean water upon them, will cleanse them from all their filthiness, will put a new heart and a new spirit within them, and will put His spirit in them (verses 24 to 27).

These are promises of Gospel blessings with which God has blessed His people in heavenly places: the True Zion, *"their own land."*

God gives them a new heart and a new spirit; with the blood of Christ He cleanses them from all sin, and He puts His own Holy Spirit in them.

The land for which the faithful fathers looked was *"a better country, even an heavenly."* (Hebrews 11 : 16; 12 : 22).

## CHAPTER 12

### THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

This chapter is devoted to a consideration of this remarkable vision.

In Ezekiel 37 the same prophecy of salvation to the true Israel, the sheep who know their shepherd's voice, is given in the form of an allegorical vision. The spirit of Jehovah transports the prophet from Jerusalem and sets him down in a low-lying place, a "valley" which was full of bones. The Lord said to the prophet, "*Son of man, can these bones live?*" (verse 3). This question helps us to grasp the significance of the vision. God is reminding us that He is the God of Abraham, who quickens the dead. (Romans 4 : 17)

The valley represents the dominion of sin and death (Romans 6), and the dry bones represent the natural, fleshly state of all the Israel of God, for we were all "*dead in trespasses and sins*" before He "*quickened us together with Christ*" (Ephesians 2 : 1, 5). Death in trespasses and sins was the former condition of the whole "*Commonwealth of Israel*" (Ephesians 2 : 12).

By this prophecy God makes known that He will employ, in the mighty work of regeneration and re-creation, the same agencies He used in the present creation : **The Word** ("*prophecy to these bones*") and **The Spirit** ("*breath*") for the salvation of all the "*Israel of God*", that "*Holy Nation*" which is brought into being by the Word of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1 : 12).

Ezekiel 37 foretells the Gospel Era beginning with John the Baptist who prophesied to the dry bones of Israel. Verse 4 speaks of **The Word**, and verse 9 **The Spirit**. In verse 11 the bones are said to be "*the whole house of Israel.*" The New Testament shows us that the true Israel is meant, a people quickened together with Christ, baptised into His death, and made partakers of His resurrection (John 5 : 25; Ephesians 1 : 1 - 4; 2 : 5, 6).

Historically, *"when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son,"* for which the Jews were looking, but *"to redeem them that were under the Law"* (Galatians 4 : 4), namely the Jews; and God's Son spoke the **Word of Life** to them (prophesied unto the bones), the result being that there was a great stir among the Jews, a *"shaking"* of the bones, and a company or group of believers was formed as the bones came together *"bone to his bone."*

But as yet there was no live body (verses 7 and 8). However, at Pentecost there came the mighty **breath of God**. God then breathed on those who had been dead in sins, and they lived and *"stood up upon their feet"* (verse 10). The great work which was begun that day has been going on ever since, until the company of believing ones has become *"an exceeding great army."* (verse 10).

The Jewish teachers interpreted this vision as a prophecy of the revival of natural Israel, for they were carnal in their thoughts and understanding. God's thoughts were not their thoughts, neither were His ways their ways (Isaiah 55 : 8). They were also narrowly selfish and exclusive regarding their expectations of divine blessing. Moreover, they were entirely ignorant of the *"mystery"* of the new Israel, the *"Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16; Ephesians 2 : 12, 13; 3 : 1 - 6), namely, *"that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."*

The apostle Paul expounds the fact of the *"Israel of God"* in the illustration of the olive tree in Romans 9 :4 and 11 : 17 - 32. The olive tree represents the favours of God which on certain conditions *"pertained"* to Israel, not by virtue of the Law Covenant, but by virtue of the fact that the Messiah would be of that nation and would offer deliverance and blessing to that nation first, before all nations (Acts 3 : 26; 13 : 23); *"to the Jew first"* (Romans 1 : 16; Acts 13 : 26, 46; Galatians 4 : 5; Hebrews 9 : 15).

The **root** of the olive tree is **Jesus Christ** (Romans 15 : 8 - 12); the **trunk** sustained by the root is **the favour of God** expressed in the promises, which are *"in Him, yea, and in Him, Amen"* (2 Corinthians 1 : 20); the **branches** are **individual believers** who have faith in the promises and who are sustained by the root, the Lord Jesus.

In Romans 11 : 1 - 5 the case is so stated as to express the thought that whereas fleshly Israel as a nation were cast off from God's favours, yet the people of God, called the *"Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16) were not cast off.

The Apostle mentions himself and others who were not cast off as evidence, and states that there is a *"remnant according to the election of grace"* (Romans 11 : 5), meaning that a comparatively small number of Jews believed in Jesus Christ and entered into the favour of the Gospel Age promises.

The remainder, the majority of the nation of Israel, did not believe in Jesus Christ and so were cast off from God's favours (cut from the olive tree), and no longer considered by Him to be of Israel. The Apostle writes, *"for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel"* (Romans 9 : 6 - 8), and *"he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly."* (Romans 2 : 28, 29).

In this way the symbolic tree was deprived of most of its branches. But it remained God's purpose to have His Israel, and to fulfil this purpose God has chosen to gather other branches (Gentile believers) to replace those cut off. And so we read : *"God ... did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name"* (Acts 15 : 14). The Gentiles are referred to as branches of *"a wild olive tree"* (Romans 11 : 17, 24) grafted into a *"good olive tree"* (Romans 11 : 24).

In describing this process the Apostle impresses on all Gentile believers a lesson in humility. If any Gentile believers might be so *"highminded"* as to consider themselves superior to the branches broken off, Paul reminds them that the branches were broken off because of unbelief; and the newly grafted branches could retain their position only by the continued exercise of faith (Romans 11 : 18 - 23; Hebrews 3 : 19; 4 : 1 - 3; 1 Peter 1 : 5).

Paul makes it clear that Gentile believers do not constitute a separate community from Jewish believers. Both have been incorporated into a new Israel, the *"Israel, of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16). Believing Gentiles are thus numbered with the sealed ones of the twelve tribes, the *"seal"* being the Holy Spirit (Revelation 7 : 1 - 4; Ephesians 1 : 13).

The Apostle concludes his argument by saying "*and so all Israel shall be saved.*"

The word translated "so" is the Greek word **houtos** (Strong's Concordance number 3779). The word means **in this way** or **in this manner**, and signifies that "*all Israel*" is to be saved by the selection of Gentiles to take the places of unbelieving Jews; not the old "*Israel after the flesh*" (1 Corinthians 10 : 18), but the new Israel, the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6 : 16).

In the light of the New Testament explanations, the prophecy of the valley of dry bones has its primary fulfilment in the Gospel being preached to the nation of Israel and the granting by the Lord of the Holy Spirit to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.

In further support of this understanding it is submitted that all prophecies of mercy to the Jewish people quoted in the New Testament are declared to have their fulfilment in this present Gospel Age, the era of the Holy Spirit. Peter declared that :

*"all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days."* (Acts 3 : 24)

In the New Testament all promises of future blessing for the Jews are applied to the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6 : 16); and it is declared that :

*"He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter"*  
(Romans 2 : 28, 29)

And that "*we (that is, Christians) are the circumcision.*" (Philippians 3 : 3).

But what of promises concerning the land of Israel? We know that the land was promised by God to Abraham and his seed.

*"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13 : 15).*

What is meant by the "seed"? Paul tells us that the "seed" of Abraham is Jesus Christ and all who believe in Jesus Christ.

*"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."*

*"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to they seed, which is Christ."*

*"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3 : 7, 16, 29)*

The land of Israel has been given by God to Abraham and faithful believers of past ages such as are exemplified in Hebrews 11.

The new Israel, the *"Israel of God"*, the Church of Jesus Christ, is promised a heavenly inheritance. The Lord Jesus said, *"I go to prepare a place for you ..... that where I am, there ye may be also."* (John 14 : 2, 3).

Peter wrote to believers of their *"living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."* (1 Peter 1 : 4). John declared *"but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is"* (1 John 3 : 2). Paul tells us that *"as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"* (1 Corinthians 15 : 49). Paul also tells us that the Lord God *"hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2 : 6).

The land promised to the true Israel, the *"Israel of God"*, from which they will never be removed, is heaven itself and the heavenly places.

However, the great blessings and promises of the Kingdom of God will eventually be offered to all the human race, living and dead. The dead will be raised to life again to be offered the opportunity of life everlasting. All the children of

fleshly Israel will be among the resurrected ones. What part they will play in that promised Kingdom is not now to be discussed in this chapter.

Suffice it to say, as did Paul, that God is "*the righteous judge*" (2 Timothy 4 : 8); and suffice it also to say, as Eli said to the boy, Samuel, "*It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good*" (1 Samuel 3 : 18).

## CHAPTER 13

### THE TEMPLE OF EZEKIEL

Chapters 40 to 46 inclusive of Ezekiel contain the account of a vision given to Ezekiel in which he was shown the pattern of a temple and its various appointments, the arrangements, gates, courts and chambers; their dimensions and other details being stated in minute detail.

The space given to the description of this temple indicates that it is a matter of considerable importance to the Lord God. It is, therefore, well worth our while to seek an understanding of the vision, and to inquire as to the purpose for which it was given.

The vision presents difficulties of interpretation, but whatever the vision as a whole may or may not mean, it offers no support for the doctrine of a future earthly pre-eminence for "Israel after the flesh."

There are good and sufficient reasons for thinking that Ezekiel's temple provided information and directions for the re-building of the temple at Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, as well as providing patterns or types of things heavenly and spiritual, exactly as the old tabernacle and Solomon's temple had done.

In Ezekiel 43 : 9 - 11 it is recorded that all these promises given through Ezekiel were conditional.

*"Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings; far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.*

*Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.*

*And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them."*

We know that the Children of Israel did not fulfil the conditions laid down in this passage any more than they fulfilled those of the old Law Covenant.

Hence these later promises in Ezekiel as well as all the other promises have been forfeited. The promises find their fulfilment, their "Yea" and "Amen" in Christ, being all *"unto the glory of God by us"*, the true Israel (2 Corinthians 1 : 20). That is to say that God will have glory through the fulfilment of His promises in and through His New Covenant people.

Some Bible Students hold that the vision of Ezekiel's temple relates to the millennium, and that in that dispensation Israel will be restored as a nation on earth and will re-occupy the land of Palestine. They also hold that Ezekiel's temple will be erected on Mount Moriah, and the system of worship described in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 46 inclusive will be instituted and carried on.

The Scriptures forbid the restoration of the old temple with all its sacrifices, shadows and types, for it was by God's own hand that the old system of worship was abolished and obliterated. The abolition and obliteration of the old system was for reasons so closely connected with the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus that to re-establish that old system would be most dishonouring to that redemptive work and its results.

Furthermore, the sacrifices of animals was a strictly temporary appointment, belonging to a system which *"made nothing perfect"* (Hebrews 7 : 19). The entire system of the old law - temple, priesthood, altar, sacrifices, ceremonies and rituals - was but a *"shadow of good things to come"*: (Hebrews 10 : 1), *"a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience"* (Hebrews 9 : 9). The old things were to stand only *"until the time of reformation"* (Hebrews 9 : 10).

God had *"no pleasure"* (Hebrews 10 : 6) in the old system in all its aspects. The old law and all that was comprehended by it was completely and forever abolished by the Lord Jesus, the *"one sacrifice for sins forever"* (Hebrews 10 : 12). The Lord Jesus offered this sacrifice *"once for all"*, that is, once for all people for all time. (Hebrews 7 : 27; 10 : 10).

It is an historical fact that Jerusalem and the old temple built by Herod were destroyed by the Roman armies in 70 A.D. This date, however, does not mark the time at which the old Jewish system was overthrown. The old system was overthrown by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on Calvary, some forty years before Herod's temple was destroyed.

The merits and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice endure for ever. There is, therefore, no room in God's universe for any other sacrifices or systems of atonement for sin.

The Old Covenant and everything pertaining to it - sanctuary, altar, priesthood, feasts, sabbaths, and especially animal sacrifices - have been completely and forever done away.

*"Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"*  
(Hebrews 10 :8- 12)

*"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."*  
(Hebrews 10 :18- 22)

## The Vision Itself

In the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, that is, while Solomon's temple was yet standing, Ezekiel had a remarkable vision in which he saw the glory of the Lord departing from the house.

*"And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me." (Ezekiel 8 : 1)*

*"Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim." (Ezekiel 10 : 18)*

The vision of the new temple was nineteen years later. Ezekiel records that his vision occurred *"in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten."*

*"In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither.*

*In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south." (Ezekiel 40 : 1, 2)*

The most conspicuous features of the temple shown in this vision are the various appointments for the slaughter of animals, for the offering of animals on the altar and sprinkling their blood. We find in Ezekiel 40 : 38 - 43 a description of eight tables for slaying the burnt offerings and other sacrifices, and upon which *"they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice."*

Therefore, in the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and all the Scriptures pertaining to the sacrifice of Christ, it is impossible to place Ezekiel's temple in any dispensation subsequent to Calvary.

The whole passage in Ezekiel 40 to 46 makes it clear that the sacrifices mentioned are for the purposes of sin offerings, trespass offerings, peace offering, for cleansing the house, making reconciliation both for the princes of Israel and for the people.

All the five offerings of the Levitical system are mentioned by name :

- Ezekiel 40:39 Burnt offering, Sin offering, Trespass offering.
- 42:13 Meat offering, Sin offering, Trespass offering.
- 43:27 Burnt offerings, Peace offerings.
- 45:17 Burnt offerings, Meat offerings, Drink offerings, Sin offering, Peace offerings, To make reconciliation for the house of Israel.
- 46:20 Trespass offering, Sin offering, Meat offering

Provision is made for sprinkling the blood of the sin offering upon the corners of the altar, and upon the posts of the house and court in order to cleanse them. (Ezekiel 43 : 20; 45 : 18, 19).

In a word the sacrifices mentioned are the Levitical sacrifices, and the sacrifices in Ezekiel are expressly declared to be for the identical purposes as the Levitical sacrifices. Hence Ezekiel's temple as an actual, physical structure must be located in the Jewish dispensation, the era of the Law Covenant.

### **The Purpose of the Vision**

Ezekiel prophesied during the captivity in Babylon (606 to 536 B.C.), that captivity being of seventy years duration as predicted by Jeremiah. At the end of the captivity the Israelites were to return and re-build the city and the temple. This new temple was to serve as the sanctuary of God until Christ should come.

God gave Moses an exact pattern of the tabernacle to be built for the worship of God, and gave Moses the strictest injunctions to make every detail in exact accordance with that pattern. (Exodus 25 : 40; 31 : 11, 18).

Likewise God revealed to David the pattern of the temple to be built at Jerusalem with all its appointments, vessels of service and other details. David said :

*"All this the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern"* (1 Chronicles 28:19).

But it was David's son, Solomon, who was chosen by the Lord to build the first temple.

Now in Ezekiel's day a house or temple was about to be built for the name of the Lord in Jerusalem. As was the case with Moses and David, there was a revelation from God of the complete pattern and appointments of a temple, with instructions to Ezekiel to show the pattern and the instructions to the house of Israel.

Furthermore, we find that even as Moses was admonished to make all things like unto the pattern shown to him *"in the mount"* (Exodus 25 : 40), so Ezekiel was taken to *"a very high mountain"* where this new pattern was shown to him, and he was directed to set his heart upon all that should be shown to him, and to declare all he saw to the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 40 : 3, 4; 44 : 5).

Regarding the ministers of the sanctuary, it is strictly commanded that the priests are to be Levites of the sons of Zadok (Ezekiel 44 : 15). This shows indisputably that the whole system shown to Ezekiel was for an era when the priesthood of Aaron was in existence and acceptable to the Lord.

## **The Prince**

Special instructions are given in this vision regarding *"the prince"*. What is meant by *"the prince"*? Chapters 44, 45 and 46 contain directions concerning *"the prince"*. He is introduced in a dramatic way in Ezekiel 44 : 1 - 3 by Ezekiel finding the east gate shut. The east gate was the main entrance. (Ezekiel 46 : 1, 2).

God was always the true ruler of Israel, and He had entered the temple by the east gate. Therefore we may reasonably conclude that the eastern entry should be reserved

for the ruler, who under God, should govern Israel after their return from Babylon. The ruler's duty would be to preserve and encourage the worship of the true God in the prescribed manner.

After directions concerning the reservation of a certain portion of the land for the sanctuary, and portions for the priests and Levites (Ezekiel 45 : 1 - 6), a portion of land is designated to be set apart for "*the prince*". (Ezekiel 45 : 7, 8, 9).

The word "prince" as used in the Old Testament has not the same meaning as we use it today to apply to the son or sons of a reigning monarch.

In Ezekiel and in other places in the Old Testament it means a king or a ruler. The head of each of the twelve tribes was called a prince. The head or prince of each of the twelve tribes was ruler over the tribe. (Numbers 1 : 4 - 16; 1 Chronicles 17 : 16 - 22). These princes or rulers were subordinate to Moses and the Judges whom God raised up, and also to the high priest, who was the acknowledged ruler when there was no judge.

Under the kings, from Saul onward, the rulership was divided between the king and the high priest, the latter having powers with which the king was not permitted to interfere.

After the return from the Babylonian captivity, Sheshbazzar, the prince (that is, the ruler) of the tribe of Judah, was recognised as head of the other princes or rulers of the other eleven tribes, Cyrus the Persian king giving into his hand the treasures of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon, and which Cyrus now restored to their rightful owners. (Ezra 1 : 8; 5 : 14).

But Sheshbazzar as head of the principal tribe, Judah, though recognised as chief of the tribal princes, was not the highest prince.

The highest prince or governor over all Israel after their return from Babylon was Zerubbabel, whose genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3 : 10 - 19 and Matthew 1 : 12 shows him to be a direct descendant of King Solomon. In Haggai 1 : 1, 14 and 2 : 2, 21 Zerubbabel is called the "*governor*" of Judah. As governor in civil matters he co-operated with the high priest Jeshua (Joshua). (Ezra 3 : 2).

It was only after the return from Babylon that Israel became subject to a prince, firstly Zerubbabel, then others such as the Asmonaeen princes at a later date.

### **The Nation No Longer Divided**

Finally, the vision given to Ezekiel contains instructions for the re-allotment of the land, corresponding to the instructions given to Moses and Joshua at the first occupation. These instructions embrace all the twelve tribes of Israel. In Babylon, the land of Israel's captivity, Israel (the ten-tribe kingdom) and Judah (the two-tribe kingdom) were mingled together, and from that time onward the distinction between the ten tribes and the two no longer existed.

Ezekiel was sent to *"the children of Israel"*, *"the house of Israel"*, and, as stated in several passages to *"all the house of Israel"* (Ezekiel 11 : 15; 20 : 40). Similarly, Daniel confessed for *"all Israel"*, and prayed for his *"people Israel"* (Daniel 9 : 11, 20). Those who returned from Babylon with Ezra were *"all Israel"* (Ezra 2 : 70; 8 : 25; 9 : 1).

This unity continued through to New Testament times when Peter made his proclamation at Pentecost to *"all the house of Israel"* (Acts 2 : 36). Paul spoke to Herod Agrippa of *"our twelve tribes"* (Acts 26 : 7), and James wrote to *"the twelve tribes scattered abroad"* (James 1 : 1).

This knowledge should dispose of speculations concerning *"the lost ten tribes"*, and particularly of the delusion of British Israelism.

### **Was The Pattern Shown To Ezekiel Followed?**

There is no evidence remaining today of the plan of the temple built in the days of Ezra. Herod the Great had so transformed the former temple in the days of Christ as to destroy all trace of the original design and building. The question stated above, however, which we cannot answer, does not affect the question of the purpose for which the pattern was revealed to Ezekiel.

We should note that the return of the people of Israel out of Babylon was purely voluntary. Those who returned to Jerusalem were only those *"whose spirit God had raised to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem"* (Ezra 1 : 5). They were not taken out of Babylon as out of Egypt in a body and by the miracle-working power of God.

We know that the people of Israel brought with them the Holy vessels, and we also know that they had access to, and could have followed, the pattern shown to Ezekiel in *"a very high mountain"* (Ezekiel 40:2). We know this because God commanded Ezekiel to show the pattern to Israel, and gave him this charge :

*"Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.*

*And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof, and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them."*

(Ezekiel 43 : 10, 11)

The blessings promised to Israel through Ezekiel were like those promised through Moses, namely, conditional upon their faithfulness and obedience. Since they were not obedient, the blessings were forfeited. We are, therefore, left in uncertainty as to what resulted from the revelation to Ezekiel.

But there is no uncertainty about the **purpose** for which the vision was given. The vision, like nearly all the visions and prophecies given by God, has a **spiritual fulfilment in Christ**. This seems apparent from chapter 47 of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 47 contains the vision of life-giving waters which the prophet saw issuing from the temple; a shallow stream at first, but increasing to a mighty river : *"waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over "* (Ezekiel 47 : 5). This is consistent with the prophecy of *"living waters"* in Zechariah 14 : 8, and its fulfilment is in **the living waters of the Gospel**, which began on the day of Pentecost to flow out from the temple at Jerusalem.

Our Lord uses the expression "*rivers of living water*" in John 7 : 38, and the inspired writer gives us the meaning in the next verse : "*but this spake He of the spirit, which they that believe in Him should receive.*" This explanation should guide us in understanding the spiritual purpose and significance of the vision given to Ezekiel.

## **Pentecost And The Descent Of The Spirit**

Pentecost is the second great festival of the Hebrews. The other two festivals are Passover and Tabernacles or Ingathering. Pentecost is called in Scripture "*the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours*" (Exodus 23 : 16), "*the feast of weeks*" (Exodus 34 : 22; Deuteronomy 16 : 10), and "*the day of first-fruits*" (Numbers 28 : 26; Leviticus 23 : 17).

The name "Pentecost" is derived from the fact that the festival occurs exactly fifty days after the sixteenth day of the month of Nisan, the second day of the feast of the Passover (Latin : Pentecoste, Greek : Pentekoste - fiftieth).

The events of the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 are of the greatest significance.

For a clear understanding of the significance and meaning of Ezekiel's vision (and that of Zechariah also), it is vital to ascertain where, in the city of Jerusalem, the disciples were when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

In obedience to the Lord Jesus' command to the disciples to "*Tarry . . . in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24 : 49), the disciples gathered in an "*upper room*" (Acts 1 : 13).

Some Christians think that this "*upper room*" was where the disciples were gathered when the Spirit came upon them. But the record does not support this assumption. All that is said concerning this "*upper room*" is that the Apostles, after witnessing the Lord Jesus' ascension from the Mount of Olives, returned to Jerusalem and went to an "*upper room*" where Peter, James, John and the others of the eleven Apostles were lodging (Acts 1 : 13). There is no mention or suggestion that the "*upper room*" was also the meeting place of the one hundred and twenty disciples of Christ who were in Jerusalem at that time (Acts 1 : 15).

On the morning of the great feast day of the Harvest or First-fruits, there was but one place in the city of Jerusalem where devout Jews, of whatever sect, would have congregated; and there was but one place where the events of Acts 2 could possibly have occurred. That place was the temple.

The evidence of Scripture is that it was in the temple that the Holy Spirit came "*suddenly*" (Acts 2 : 2) upon the company of Christ's apostles and disciples, and that from the temple the proclamation of the Gospel began to go forth to all the world. It was the outflow of the Gospel, "*all the words of this life*" (Acts 5 : 20), that was prefigured by Ezekiel's vision of "*living waters*" issuing from the temple.

Surely it is fitting that this should be so. It is in accordance with God's plan of the ages and with the connection between the Old Covenant and the New, that the first manifestation of the Holy Spirit poured out "*upon all flesh*" (Acts 2 : 17, 18) should have been in the temple. The beginning of the new spiritual temple most appropriately began at the site of the old physical temple, for as Paul tells us, the Gospel was preached "*to the Jew first*" (Romans 1 : 16).

It also seems appropriate that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" would begin at the temple (Luke 24 : 47).

Let us assemble the evidence of Scripture for the claim that the old Jewish temple was the place where the Gospel message of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus was first proclaimed after Jesus' resurrection.

Luke records the Lord Jesus' commandment to His apostles to tarry "*in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24 : 49). The verse does not tell us where in Jerusalem they should be when "*power from on high*" would come upon them. But the further record in verses 52 and 53 of Luke 24 tells us what the apostles did in obedience to the Lord Jesus' command :

*"They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."*

This passage in Luke 24 tells us that the temple was the place where they assembled for worship and prayer, and that they were there "*continually*". It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the "*one place*" of Acts 2 : 1, where the apostles and disciples were assembled, was the temple.

We should also bear in mind that the temple, with its vast corridors and porches, was the regular meeting and gathering place of all the various parties and sects of the Jews, however antagonistic the one to the other.

The temple was just the place, because of its hallowed associations and its many convenient meeting places, where the apostles and disciples would naturally congregate. Authorities and Bible dictionaries inform us that the vast temple area was capable of containing a concourse of more than 200,000 people.

The colonnades in Solomon's porch formed many gathering places for the various sects, schools and congregations of the people. Acts 3 :11 records that it was Solomon's porch where Peter addressed the people after the healing of the man "*lame from his mother's womb*" (Acts 3 : 2).

When Luke in the book of Acts takes up again the thread of the narrative he finished at the close of his Gospel, he says, speaking of the apostles, that

*"these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren:"* (Acts 1:14).

Luke in Acts does not say where the apostles continued in worship and prayer, but he had already said in his Gospel that it was the temple (Luke 24 : 53).

## **The Day Of Pentecost**

The occurrence of the Great Feast Day is another reason why the apostles and disciples would be assembled in the temple. The morning sacrifice and incense with the accompanying prayers began at sunrise, and at the conclusion of these services the apostles and disciples would be "*sitting*" (Acts 2 : 2) in their customary place in the temple, most likely on the benches provided in Solomon's porch.

The words "*they were all with one accord in one place*" (Acts 2 : 1) indicate that the apostles and disciples were in their customary gathering place in the temple on this Great Feast Day. "*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind*" (Acts 2 : 2). The promise of the "*power from on high*" was fulfilled.

The three English words "*was fully come*" in Acts 2 : 1 are a translation of one Greek word which means literally "*was being accomplished*". The idea seems to be that the observances of the day of Pentecost were being accomplished, that is, the appointed services and ceremonies were proceeding as usual.

During an intermission in those services and ceremonies the apostles and disciples were "*sitting*" together and were not dispersed or scattered amongst the great crowds of worshippers. They were all in the same place somewhere within the large area of the temple, probably Solomon's porch, as they were as recorded in Acts 3 : 11.

The miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit took place some little time before nine o'clock in the morning (Acts 2 : 15), long enough for it to be "*noised abroad*" (Acts 2 : 6) and for a large crowd to congregate. There would be ample time for such a gathering between the morning services (beginning at sunrise) and nine o'clock.

The record in Acts 2 indicates that the events and exhortations all took place in the same locality. The apostles and disciples spoke in tongues, and the astonished multitude assembled and listened to the first Gospel message preached "*with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven*" (1 Peter 1 : 12) in the temple.

It is written in Acts 2 : 41 that in "*the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*" The temple was the only building in Jerusalem open to the public that would be large enough to accommodate such a great crowd of people. Moreover it is recorded in Acts 2 : 46 that the early Christians continued "*daily with one accord in the temple,*" indicating that this was indeed their meeting place. It should also be especially noted that all pious Jews would not be anywhere other than at the temple on the Great Feast Day of Pentecost.

The physical house of God served as the starting point for the spiritual house of God. From the temple the Church of Jesus Christ came forth, and for a time - some three and one half years - the true "*Israel of God*" was identified with natural Israel, "*Israel after the flesh.*" The spiritual seed of Abraham was identified with his natural seed. This is in keeping with the revealed plan of God.

Ezekiel 47 :

1. *Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, **waters issued out** from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.*

2. *Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.*

3. *And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; **the waters were to the ancles.***

4. *Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; **the waters were to the knees.** Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; **the waters were to the loins.***

5. *Afterwards he measured a thousand; **and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.***

6. *And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.*

7. *Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.*

8. *Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, **and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.***

9. *And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.*

## **The Source Of The Living Waters**

In Ezekiel 47 : 1 - 9 the prophet describes his vision of the healing and life-giving waters issuing forth out of the temple. The waters which Ezekiel saw were to go down into the **desert (which suggests barren Israel)**, and into the **sea (which suggests the nations)**, whose waters should be healed. The description continues :

*"And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live : and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither : for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezekiel 47 : 9)*

It is easy to see in this passage the familiar scriptural figures of the Gospel and its life-giving ministry. We note that the temple was to be the source of the living waters. Therefore, we can see in this prophetic vision a spiritual foretelling of the issuing forth of the Gospel for all mankind from God's appointed centre, which broadly was the land of Israel, more precisely Jerusalem, and still more precisely the temple.

In this connection the prophecy of Joel is significant. Peter quoted from the second chapter of Joel as having its fulfilment in the coming of the Holy Spirit and in the miraculous events of Pentecost and the early church. In Joel 3 : 18 is the promise that :

*"all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, ..."*

This is also a prophecy of the Gospel Era, though from Joel 3 : 21 it seems that the complete fulfilment of the prophecy will be in the Kingdom of God : *"For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed ..."*

We also have the very significant record of Acts 5 :17 - 25, which tells us that when the apostles were released from prison by the angel of the Lord, the angel said to them : *"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life"* (Acts 5 : 20).

The words *"of this life"* serve to make clear the meaning of the expression *"living waters"* in the prophecies.

The Scripture tells us that, notwithstanding the strong opposition of the authorities, the disciples ceased not *"daily in the temple, and in every house . . . to teach and preach Jesus Christ"* (Acts 5 : 42). Thus it seems that it was in the purpose of God that the Gospel, *"the words of this life,"* should begin their flow in the temple. Everything pertaining to the old dispensation centered in the temple. Therefore, it was fitting that the new dispensation should start at the temple and flow out from there into the world.

For some time after Pentecost the church continued at Jerusalem, and seems to have been tolerated in accordance with the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5 : 33 - 40), until the stoning of Stephen, after which time the Gospel stream spread throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8 : 1).

A little later we find another church at Antioch, for it is recorded that Barnabas sought Saul at Tarsus and brought him to Antioch, and that for *"a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people"* (Acts 11 : 25, 26).

Here again in the church at Antioch we find the Holy Spirit at work, and after a year of teaching at Antioch, we see the living waters flowing out and producing the results that God intended.

We read in Acts 13 : 1 and 2 concerning *"the church that was at Antioch,"* that *"as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."* And thus from the new spiritual house of God, the church of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the stream of the living water of the Gospel flowed out in a new direction, and extended further than it had yet gone.

Still later the Gospel was taken into Europe and came to Thessalonica, not only in word *"but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; ..."* (1 Thessalonians 1 : 5). The result was *"the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 1 : 1).

This is declared to be an example or pattern for other churches for the express reason, as the apostle says, that :

*"from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad"* (1 Thessalonians 1 : 8).

Finally we are led to discern a great difference between the old temple - God's literal dwelling place in the old dispensation - and the church - God's spiritual dwelling place in the new dispensation.

In the case of the temple, sacrifices were brought to it, blood flowed in it, and incense (symbolising prayer and worship) ascended from it. **But no healing waters flowed from it.** Therefore, what Ezekiel saw, and what was revealed also to Joel and Zechariah, that is, **living waters flowing out from Jerusalem** (Joel 3 : 18; Zechariah 14 : 8) **was something quite new**, and to which the temple and its sacrifices, ceremonies and ritual, presented no analogy.

One of the chief lessons to be learned from the Scriptures is that the spiritual temple of this Gospel Era, the Church of Jesus Christ, should be the source of a freely flowing stream of living water carrying spiritual life and health into all the regions round about (Acts 14 : 6).

As members of His church, it is our task to see that the living water, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of the Kingdom, is caused to flow and continue to flow to all the regions round about (Luke 4 : 14; 7 : 17; Acts 14 : 6).

## CHAPTER 14

### THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S TRUE ISRAEL REVEALED

Many prophecies of the Old Testament are concerned with the coming of the Messiah, the promised and long expected Son of David, for the redemption of His people, "*As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began*" (Luke 1 : 70). Prophecies concerning the Messiah did not generally look beyond the events of the present Gospel Age, the era of the Holy Spirit. In accordance with the predictions of the prophets of Israel, "*When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His son, . . . to redeem them that were under the law,*" (Galatians 4 : 4, 5)

The people of Israel, however, had been taught by their "*blind leaders*" (Matthew 15 : 14) to look for a **physical and political redemption** instead of a **spiritual redemption** from the dominion of sin and death, as foretold by their prophets. Consequently when the Redeemer "*came unto His own, His own received Him not*" (John 1 : 11), but despised, rejected and betrayed Him, and clamoured for His death.

This unparalleled crime brought about an entirely different situation from that which had previously existed in regard to the relationship between God and the nation of Israel.

God was not taken by surprise, as we all well know, for He had foreseen everything, knowing "*the end from the beginning*" (Isaiah 46 : 10). All that happened was in strict accordance with "*the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*" (Acts 2 : 23). For the accomplishment of "*the eternal purpose* (a plan of the ages - Diaglott) *which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Ephesians 3 : 11).

There is general agreement among Christian believers that with the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, with His death, resurrection and ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the era began which had been foretold by the prophets, the era when God would have another "*people,*" when He would say to them which were not His people, "*Thou art my people,*" and they should say, "*Thou art my God*" (Hosea 2 : 23).

The apostle Paul quotes this very prophecy of Hosea and expounds it as referring to the people God is now calling to Himself out of all nations by the Gospel, not from out "*of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles* " (Romans 9 : 24 - 26).

This quotation is from the passage in which Paul explains who the true "Israel" is, to whom the promises were made, and in which, after stating clearly that "*they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*" (Romans 9 : 6), he shows that only a few, "*a remnant*" (Romans 9 : 27) of natural Israel are included in "*the Israel of God*" (Galatians 6 : 16), and that the full number of God's true Israel will consist of the "*remnant*" from natural Israel combined with the substantial remainder of the saved ones from among the Gentiles.

This is what Hosea and other prophets had foretold, though God purposely concealed the meaning of their prophecies and His full purposes for the Gentiles in "*mystery*," which mystery was fully explained by Paul in Ephesians 3:1-6.

Therefore, regarding the purposes of God concerning the Jewish people after their rejection of their true Messiah, we must look to what is revealed in the New Testament, for that is where God's Holy Spirit through Paul has revealed "*the fellowship of the mystery*" (Ephesians 3 : 9), that is, the union of Jews ("*a remnant*") and Gentiles to form the true Israel, "*the Israel of God*" (Galatians 6 : 16).

When the Lord Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross, and "*the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*" (Matthew 27 : 51; Mark 15 : 38; Luke 23 : 45), the covenant relationship between God and "*Israel after the flesh*" (1 Corinthians 10 : 18) was ended. The ending of this relationship had been foretold by the prophets, beginning with Moses and Joshua : Deuteronomy 4 : 26; 6 : 14, 15; 8 : 20; Joshua 23 : 15, 16.

The Old Covenant became null and void and "*ready to vanish away*" (Hebrews 8 : 13). It was "*abolished*" (2 Corinthians 3 : 13), and therefore all promises to natural Israel based on that Old Covenant, if there were any still unfulfilled, were no longer in force or applicable.

Moreover God has revealed through Christ's chosen apostles that the name "Israel" belongs properly to His New Covenant people.

Therefore, in considering God's future purposes for the Jews, we must conclude that any prophecies concerning natural Israel, which do not appear to have been fulfilled, apply to the *"Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16), and that their fulfilment is in the **realm of the spiritual** (unless any Scripture in question plainly says otherwise).

What does the New Testament say about the following matters?

1. The reconstitution of the Jewish nation as a nation favoured by God.
2. The re-occupation by that nation of all the land of Canaan as in the days of Joshua.
3. The raising of the Jewish nation to a position of world supremacy and headship over other nations.
4. The re-building of the temple and re-institution of the ceremonies and sacrifices.

**The New Testament is silent on all of these matters.**

Moreover, there are statements in the New Testament that make it impossible that any of the four eventualities mentioned will occur. Some New Testament passages have been quoted in previous chapters, and others will be quoted subsequently.

In *"the manifold wisdom of God"* (Ephesians 3 : 10), and because of His foreknowledge of the rejection of the Messiah by the nation of Israel, He saw fit to conceal for centuries in the form of a *"mystery"* (Ephesians 3 : 1 - 12) and an *"allegory"* (Galatians 4 : 22 - 26), the fact that the **things historical and prophetic** pertaining to *"Israel after the flesh"* (1 Corinthians 10 : 18) were but the temporal foreshadowings of **things eternal and spiritual**, *"a shadow of good things to come"* (Hebrews 10:1). This *"mystery"* :

*"in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy prophets by the Spirit"* (Ephesians 3 : 5).

This "*mystery*" is no longer a mystery, since Paul has so clearly explained it, and consists of a number of elements, of which the most prominent, and the hardest for the Jewish mind to grasp, is the place which believing Gentiles are to have in "*the commonwealth of Israel*" (Ephesians 2 :12), and the share that is graciously given to the Gentiles in "*the covenants of promise*" (Ephesians 2 : 12); and also that Gentiles are included in the eternal purpose of God, destined to be "*joint-heirs*" (Romans 8 : 17) "*and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel*" (Ephesians 3 : 6).

The fact that was hidden for centuries and revealed by the Lord Jesus and His apostles is that the true "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6 : 16), the true "*seed of Abraham,*" who are the heirs of all the promises of God (Galatians 3: 7, 29; 2 Corinthians 1:20), are a body composed of all those - whether by nature Jews or Gentiles - who are "*of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all*" (Romans 4 : 16).

Because of this "*mystery of Christ*" (Ephesians 3 : 4), which Paul was specially commissioned to explain, it is most needful for us, in understanding Old Testament prophecies concerning **Israel, Zion and Jerusalem**, to ascertain whether it **was the earthly and natural people (or locality)** the prophet had in view, or whether it was the **heavenly and spiritual counterpart** of these.

In the light of the New Testament Scriptures, it is generally possible to discern with some degree of certainty what the Lord intended by most Old Testament prophecies. We must set aside :

1. All the Old Testament prophecies and promises concerning Israel that have already been fulfilled.
2. All prophecies and promises that were conditional and have become null and void because of failure by the Jews to perform the conditions on which the prophecies and promises were based.
3. The prophecies and promises that belong to the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6 : 16).

When we have set aside these three groups of prophecies and promises, there remains for natural Israel only one promise of blessing, "*the common salvation*" (Jude 3) which is proclaimed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and which God bestows freely on all - Jews and Gentiles - who fulfil the simple conditions of "*repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 20 : 21). This is true now in this Gospel Age, and will remain true in the Age to Come, the Kingdom Age.

When we consider passages in the New Testament that have to do with the hope of Israel, we should bear in mind that "literal" and "literally" signify that passages of Scripture are to be understood as they are stated and not figuratively or symbolically. "Literal" should not be contrasted with "spiritual" but with "natural".

In other words a passage of Scripture when taken "literally" may refer either to "*that which is natural*" or "*that which is spiritual*" (1 Corinthians 15 : 46). The **literal** interpretation of a prophecy may require it to be understood in the **spiritual** sense.

As regards **Israel, Zion, Jerusalem** and the **Land of Promise**, the spiritual and heavenly thing so designated is the **real** thing, and is frequently what was **literally** intended.

In Scripture the contrast is not between the **literal** and the **spiritual**, but between the **natural** and the **spiritual**, as it is written :

*"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."* (1 Corinthians 15 : 46, 47).

The words quoted above reveal the principle of God's order of procedure in the working out of His great purpose. Accordingly there is first the **natural humanity**, and afterward the **spiritual humanity**; first the **natural birth** and afterward the **spiritual birth**; first the **natural** or earthly Israel, Zion, Temple, Priesthood and Sacrifices, and afterward their **spiritual** and heavenly counterparts.

There is no reversal indicated in Scripture of God's revealed order of procedure, no going back from the spiritual to the natural. Hence there can be no return in God's plan to natural Israel, the earthly temple with its burning altar, its Aaronic priesthood and its animal sacrifices.

There is no prediction in the New Testament of a national restoration of the Jewish people. But some Christians think that there is a hint of the national restoration of Israel in the following Scriptures:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, in warning His disciples of the then approaching doom of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, said :

*"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* (Luke 21 : 24).

2. The apostle Paul, in dealing with the very question we are now considering, namely, *"Hath God cast away His people?"* (Romans 11 :1 ), says :

*"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."* (Romans 11 : 25)

The argument put forward in support of a national future for the Jews is that the word **"until"** in Luke 21 : 24 and Romans 11 : 25 implies a change of some kind at the expiration of the period indicated, and the implied change supports the doctrine of a national future for the Jews.

But even if a change of some kind is implied by the word "until", it does not follow that the change will be national status for a scattered and sectarian people, or that it will take place in a future era. The word "until" gives no indication of what will take place when the era or times of the Gentiles have ended.

What the word "until" declares, and all it declares, is that throughout *"the times of the Gentiles"* Jerusalem will be trodden down, and that the spiritual blindness of natural Israel will persist

until the last of the Lord's people has been taken out from among the Gentiles, and the church of Jesus Christ is complete.

Let us consider these Scriptures more closely, for they constitute a two-fold testimony to the authenticity of all the Holy Scriptures, a testimony that was to remain, and still remains, in the sight of every generation throughout the entire Christian era.

There are two distinct predictions, one concerning the City of Jerusalem, and the other concerning the Jewish people; predictions of such a kind that had they been the utterances of men, they would long since have failed. They are predictions that have required for their fulfilment throughout the Gospel Age two miracles of divine providence. They are :

1. That Jerusalem should be preserved from destruction and yet should be trodden down of the Gentiles throughout the entire Gospel Age, and
2. That the Jewish race should be preserved and everywhere recognisable, not amalgamated with other races, though scattered throughout the world and mingled with other peoples over centuries of time.

These are stupendous miracles and are unique among Biblical miracles in that they have the character of continuity. Jerusalem, though for centuries bereft of its Jewish inhabitants, has not shared the fate of other ancient cities : Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Sidon.

The world has witnessed also that the Jewish people, in defiance of all natural law and contrary to human experience, has not been absorbed into other races nor exterminated by the fierce persecutions they have suffered, but have maintained their racial identity and have even increased and multiplied during the centuries of their dispersion throughout the world.

Surely these miracles predicted in the New Testament are further evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration. The book that foretold such unlikely happenings concerning a people and their city, a people scattered throughout all the peoples of the earth, separated from one another by vast distances and oceans, must be divinely inspired.

However, regardless of these miraculous predictions, there is not so much as a hint in Luke 21 : 24 and Romans 11 : 25 that the Jewish nation is to become the political head and religious centre of a new order of things in the future.

Careful study of Romans, chapters 9 to 11 inclusive, reveals that the subject of a national restoration is not in contemplation at all. What occupies the apostle's mind is the distressing "*mystery*" (Romans 11 : 25) of Israel's failure to recognise the promised Messiah when He came to them, and to receive the salvation He offered them.

The salvation of God, foretold by the prophets and subsequently proclaimed by the apostles and disciples (1 Peter 1 : 9 - 12), was what Israel had "*not obtained*" (Romans 11 : 7), though they had been seeking it. Natural Israel had been eagerly looking for what their expected Messiah was to bring them and do for them, though all but a very small remnant were wholly mistaken as to the nature of the salvation foretold by the prophets.

## CHAPTER 15

### SUMMARY

#### 1. The Mystery Of God's True Israel Revealed

- (a) When the Lord Jesus came to His own, the people of Israel, they were looking erroneously for a **physical and political redemption**.
- (b) Consequently the people of Israel did not understand that the Lord Jesus was offering them a **spiritual redemption from sin and death**, and they proceeded to despise, reject, and betray Him; and finally clamour for His death.
- (c) God foreknew this, and His plan and purpose provided for the rejection by Him of the nation of Israel after the flesh, and the formation of a new Israel, "**THE ISRAEL OF GOD**", to consist of a **remnant of Jews** and **the remainder of Gentiles**. The Jewish nation as a whole was cast off and no longer in covenant relationship with God.
- (d) The union of Jews (a remnant) and Gentiles to form "**THE ISRAEL OF GOD**" was a mystery and remained a mystery for centuries until Paul explained it.
- (e) The name "**ISRAEL**" properly belongs to God's New Covenant people.
- (f) The New Testament is silent on the reconstitution of the Jewish nation as a nation favoured by God, and is also silent concerning the claims made by some Christians that the Jewish nation is to have supremacy over other nations in the age to come.
- (g) To understand correctly Old Testament prophecies concerning **Israel, Zion, and Jerusalem**, it is needful for us to ascertain whether **the earthly and natural people (or locality)** are meant, or whether **the heavenly and spiritual counterparts** of these are meant.

- (h) Only one promise of blessing now remains for natural Israel, namely, "**THE COMMON SALVATION**" (Jude 3), which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is true now and will remain true in the age to come.

## 2. **Literal, Spiritual And Natural**

- (a) "**Literal**" and "**Literally**" mean that Scriptures are to be understood as they are stated and not figuratively or symbolically. "**Literal**" should not be contrasted with "**Spiritual**" but with "**Natural**".
- (b) Thus the "**Literal**" interpretation of a prophecy may require it to be understood in the "**Spiritual**" sense. Thus many Old Testament prophecies are meant to refer to spiritual realities : Israel means THE ISRAEL OF GOD, Zion and Jerusalem mean THE HEAVENLY ZION and THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, while the land of promise means not the land of Canaan but THE HEAVENLY PLACES.
- (c) There is no variableness neither shadow of turning with God. He does not go back from the spiritual to the natural. There can be no return in God's plan to natural Israel, to the earthly temple with its burning altar, its Aaronic priesthood and its animal sacrifices.

## 3. **Until The Times Of The Gentiles Be Fulfilled**

- (a) The word "**until**" in Luke 21 : 24 and Romans 11 : 25 gives no indication as to when the time will be or what will happen when the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled.
- (b) The word "**until**" does, however, declare two divine predictions :
  - (i) that Jerusalem will remain and not be destroyed as other Biblical cities have been;
  - (ii) that the Jewish race will remain and be everywhere recognisable though scattered throughout the world, and commingled with other peoples over centuries of time, and subjected to fierce and continuing persecution.
- (c) But there is no hint in these predictions of any exaltation of the Jewish nation at any time.

#### 4. The Figure Of The Olive Tree And The Prospect Of The Resurrection

##### (a) The Figure Of The Olive Tree

In Romans 11 : 14 Paul again refers to those of his own flesh and again gives voice to his intense desire that he *"might save some of them."* Paul continues, *"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"* (Romans 11 : 15)

The words *"receiving of them"* following the words *"the casting away of them"* indicate that Paul still had hope that he *"might save some of them,"* that is, the Jews. (Romans 11 : 14).

In Romans 11 the Israel of God's eternal purpose is represented by an olive tree, whose branches are holy because the root is holy. The root is Jesus Christ, and the *"fatness"* (verse 17) is surely the **Holy Spirit**, which is more than once typified in Scripture by the oil derived from the olive tree. The branches are the **individual believers**.

The branches that are *"broken off"* (verses 19 and 20) are the unbelieving Jews, while the branches from *"a wild olive tree," "grafted in among them"* are the believing Gentiles, who now partake, together with the remnant of believing Jews, *"of the root and fatness of the olive tree"* (verse 17).

Romans 11 : 20 tells us that it was *"because of unbelief they were broken off,"* but it seems that Paul did not regard their state as hopeless, for he says that *"they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in again."* (verse 23). Paul is here speaking of the salvation of the great mass of the people, represented by the branches broken off from the olive tree.

The words in verse 26 *"and so all Israel shall be saved"* have been frequently misunderstood. The adverb "so" declares how, not when *"all Israel"* shall be saved. The adverb "so" means **in this way** or **in this manner**, meaning the process of grafting branches from *"a wild olive tree"* (verse 17) into the good olive tree, such grafted branches replacing the branches broken off. In this way the whole *"Israel of God"* (Galatians 6 : 16) will be saved.

The word "saved" seems to have a double meaning : God will have His Israel in accordance with His plan and purposes, and all the branches, that is, the individual believers in Jesus, will gain salvation to eternal life.

### **(b) In The Resurrection**

In Paul's defence before Felix, the Roman Governor, Paul declared *"that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust"* (Acts 24 : 15).

The apostle John in a vision *"saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;"* (Revelation 20 : 12).

When Lazarus had died and Jesus had come to Bethany where Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived, Martha said to Jesus, *"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"* (John 11 : 24). Jesus replied, *"I am the resurrection and the life:"* (John 11 : 25). The word "resurrection" is a translation of the Greek word "anastasis", which means literally "a standing up again".

The patriarch Job understood that he would *"stand up again"* when he prophesied :

*"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."* (Job 19 : 25, 26)

Scripture makes clear to us that resurrection for the great majority of the human race will be to life on this earth as human beings. Only those who are called, chosen, and faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ will be *"changed"* from human beings to *"bear the image of the heavenly"* as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 : 48 and 51.

We know only what has been revealed to us of the heavenly realm and spirit beings,

*"but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."* (1 John 3 : 2)

The prophet Jeremiah foretold the cruel slaying, by order of King Herod, of the little children of Bethlehem, and offered comfort to the grieving mothers by assuring them that their little ones would *"come again from the land of the enemy"* and also would *"come again to their own border"* (Jeremiah 31 : 15 to 17).

We know this to be so because Matthew confirms and applies this prophecy of Jeremiah in Matthew 2 : 17 and 18.

The resurrected ones will remember their former lives, for, as the Lord Jesus declared,

*"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

*The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."* (Matthew 12 : 41, 42; Luke 11 : 31, 32)

The Lord Jesus gives us another glimpse of a feature of the resurrection, namely that marriage will be no more. The Sadducees, *"which say that there is no resurrection,"* submitted to the Lord Jesus a hypothetical case of a woman being married to seven brothers in succession, each of whom died, finally leaving the woman a widow seven times. They asked the Lord Jesus,

*"in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her to wife."*

The Lord Jesus replied,

*"Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?"*

*"The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:*

*But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage:*

*Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels: and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."* (Matthew 22 : 23 - 33; Mark 12 : 18 - 27; Luke 20 : 27 - 38)

Amongst the Jewish leaders of Christ's earthly ministry :

*"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

*And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 13 : 28, 29; Matthew 8 : 11, 12).*

Ezekiel 16 :

51. *Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.*

52. *Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.*

53. *When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:*

54. *That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in **that thou art a comfort unto them.***

55. *When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.*

56. *For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,*

57. *Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about.*

58. *Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the Lord.*

59. *For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.*

60. *Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.*

61. *Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.*

62. *and I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord :*

63. ***That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.***

How will the Jewish people in the resurrection be a "comfort" to other peoples such as those of "Sodom." "Samaria" and "Syria"? The comfort will probably consist of earth's resurrected peoples seeing the forgiveness extended by the Lord to natural Israel, who sinned and disobeyed Him so grievously after he had so graciously chosen them and blessed them in ages past.

**(c) Until The Fulness Of The Gentiles Be Come In**  
(Romans 11 : 25)

When will this be? We are not told so therefore cannot know. This time will probably come at the end of this Gospel Age when the last member of the Church of Jesus Christ remains faithful to the end of his or her life.

Paul provides us with a prophecy in 2 Corinthians 3 : 12 to 18 in which he speaks of the spiritual blindness that had fallen on the great mass of the Jewish people.

Referring to the Old Covenant, which was but temporary, and comparing it with the New Covenant which lasts forever, the apostle recalls the occasion when Moses put a veil over his face, thereby showing beforehand that the children of Israel would be unable to see "*the end of that (covenant) which is abolished*" (2 Corinthians 3 : 13).

Paul adds,

*"But their minds were blinded,; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Covenant; which veil is done away (for them who are) in Christ.*

*But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" (2 Corinthians 3 : 14, 15)*

The veil, blinding Jews to the fact that the Mosaic covenant has come to an end, is still in existence to this day, nearly two thousand years later, *"Nevertheless when it (the heart) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."* (2 Corinthians 3 : 16)

The foregoing passage, especially 2 Corinthians 3 : 16, seems to imply, or at least it leaves room for, a coming time when the hearts of natural Israelites will *"turn to the Lord"* on a scale not hitherto witnessed.

It seems to me that this time will come in the Kingdom of God, the *"new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."* (2 Peter 3 : 13)

This turning to the Lord seems also to be in fulfilment of Isaiah 66 : 19, in which it is prophesied that God will send saved Israelites *"unto the nations"* who *"shall declare my glory among the Gentiles;"* and then it is added :

*"And they (the Gentiles) shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters (AV margin : coaches; NIV : wagons) and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord."* (Isaiah 66 : 20)

This is clearly a prophecy of the Kingdom of God, *"My Holy Mountain Jerusalem,"* and signifies that natural Israelites, with the *"vail ... taken away"* will assist in the great kingdom work of blessing all nations (Genesis 22 : 18; Galatians 3 : 8) and all families of the earth (Genesis 12 : 3; 28 : 14).

They will assist as believers in the Lord Jesus on equal terms with their fellow human beings, subject to the ancient worthies, the "*princes in all the earth*" (Psalm 45 : 16), and the "*joint heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8 : 17), the kingdom of priests who are in turn subject to the Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him to Almighty God Himself.

When the great kingdom work is complete, Paul tells us that "*The Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him (God) that put all things under Him (Jesus), that God may be all in all.*" (1 Corinthians 15 : 28)



PRODUCED AND DISTRIBUTED BY

**NEW COVENANT FELLOWSHIP**

ACN 004 108 589

ISBN 0 9587116 0 7

First Printed 1997

Reprinted 2002

Reprinted 2008

[www.newcovenantfellowship.org.au](http://www.newcovenantfellowship.org.au)

[info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au](mailto:info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au)