

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL – Chapter 14

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM – With an Examination of DISPENSATIONALISM and the “Scofield Bible”

by [Philip Mauro](#): 1928

BUT some will ask: How about all those promises to and concerning the people of Israel, especially the promises of the re-possession by them of the land God gave to their fathers?

The answer can be given in a few words:

(1) That most of those promises (if not all) were spoken before the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, and many of them, including all such as were to have a literal accomplishment, were fulfilled in that event;

(2) That the promises concerning the possession of the land of Canaan were conditional upon faithfulness and obedience on the part of the people of Israel, who were repeatedly warned that if their hearts turned away from the Lord they should be plucked from the land (Deut. 4:26; 8:19,20; 30:17,18; Josh. 23:13;16).

(3) Such of the promises of that sort as were unconditional are the heritage of the true Israel, the spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7,29); and they have their fulfilment in the true land of promise, which the fathers of Israel had in view; for they were desiring—not the land of Canaan, or any other earthly territory, but—“a better country, that is an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16).

What then is the true “Hope of Israel?” To this question the Scriptures give as clear an answer as we could ask; and in

order to find it we need not look beyond the passage where that expression is found, and the immediate context. For Paul, when taken as a prisoner to Rome at the insistence of the leaders of the Jews at Jerusalem, called the chief of the Jews at Rome together, and addressed them saying:

“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 28:20).

Was Paul then bound with chains and sent to Rome for trial because he proclaimed and taught an earthly kingdom for the Jews? Turning back to chapter 26 where he was answering for himself before Herod Agrippa, we find that, as Paul interpreted the Scriptures, the hope of the promise of God made to the fathers, “unto which promise all the twelve tribes” (true Israelites) “HOPE TO COME” was realized in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 26:6-8). And in proof thereof he related how he had seen the risen Christ outside the gates of Damascus, and had been charged by Him to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” In brief, he preached as the hope of Israel the Kingdom of God opened by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to believing and repentant sinners, both JEWS AND GENTILES.

And furthermore, when those leaders of the Jews there at Rome desired to hear what his doctrine was (“what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against”), a day was appointed, and “there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening.” (Acts 28:21-23).

There is no uncertainty therefore regarding what Paul preached

as the hope of Israel.

Evidently then, the Jews of old and the dispensationalists of today were (and are) in error in giving to the Old Testament prophecies a literalistic interpretation.

For the language of the prophets is figurative and symbolical. In like manner when Jesus showed Nicodemus the true character of the Kingdom of God, asserting with the strongest emphasis that a man must needs be born again in order to enter it, He made use of terms which obviously were figures of speech taken from the familiar elements of nature, water and wind (i.e. breath, or spirit). His language, however, was utterly incomprehensible to that learned Rabbi, "the teacher of Israel," who accordingly manifested his astonishment thereat by exclaiming, "How can these things be?" (John 3:1-9); whereas, being the teacher of Israel, he should have known those things (v. 10).

It must be remembered that, to him, and according to the settled doctrine of all Jewish teachers of that day, the highest possible thing in the way of parentage was to be born "of the stock of Israel" (Phil. 3: 3); and we must also remember that (to him) the essential condition for admission into the Kingdom of God was to be a natural descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Hence he was quite unable to conceive how the prophecies and promises of God concerning that Kingdom could be fulfilled otherwise than by the national restoration of the Jews, and their exaltation to the place of dominance over the whole Gentile world.

So likewise today there are teachers who insist upon a naturalistic, or materialistic (they call it a literal) interpretation of the prophecies concerning the Kingdom, Israel, Jerusalem, etc. They too "cannot see" how this prophecy, or that, can be fulfilled except "literally"—that is, by regathering of the scattered Jewish people, their re-constitution into a nation as of old, and their re-investiture

with the proprietorship of the land of Canaan. Thus they make their incapacity to “see” the spiritual realities that correspond to the material types and figures used by the prophets, a rule for the interpretation of the prophecies.

It is not necessary, of course, to an understanding of the general voice of prophecy and of the general purport of the prophetic message, that one should know the meaning of every symbol and figure used by the prophets. All that is needed is that due heed be given to certain plain statements of the New Testament, and to the way the prophecies of the Old Testament are interpreted and applied therein.

For example, chapters 8-10 of Hebrews were evidently written in order to make known—and primarily to that saved “remnant” of Israel which had found deliverance through accepting Jesus as their Messiah—that everything pertaining to the old covenant (people, land, city, sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, etc.) was but “a shadow of good things to come” (Heb. 10:1). This is quite enough to show that those who insist upon what they call a ‘literal’ fulfilment of the promised blessings that were to come to “Israel” through Christ, have completely missed the mark. As says Joseph Butler (Butler’s Analogy) commenting on Hebrews 8:4,5:

“The priesthood of Christ, and the tabernacle shown to Moses in the mount, were the originals. Of the former of these, the Levitical priesthood was but a type; and of the latter, the tabernacle made by Moses was a copy.”

And so with everything else: The new covenant has the eternal realities (“the originals”) whereof the old covenant had but the temporary types or shadows. This being true (and the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the truth of it quite plain); and it being true also that Christ, by His death and resurrection has abolished that entire system of shadows, and has brought to light the spiritual and eternal realities typified thereby (Heb. 10:9), it follows that God’s purposes are connected

thenceforth with a regenerated people – “born of water and the Spirit”—“a holy nation,” who belong to a “heavenly country”; and with “a spiritual house,” and a “Jerusalem which is above” (1 Pet. 1:3; 2: 5, 6, 9; Heb. 12: 22; Gal. 4:26, &c.). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob understood this (Heb. 11:9).
THE NATURAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

But it may be asked: Are there not prophecies which were to be fulfilled here on earth, and in connection with the earthly people of Israel, their land and their city? Such indeed there are; and hence arises the question: How can it be known with certainty whether a given prophecy relates to the heavenly “Israel” or the earthly? and whether its fulfilment is to be found in the spiritual realm or in the natural?

Most certainly there is need in many cases for the exercise of discernment, and for the seeking of light from the context and from other parts of Scripture. But the difficulty in such cases is not nearly so great as might be supposed. For, in the light of certain passages in the New Testament, it is clearly to be seen that the prophecies as a whole fall into two great divisions, whereof the first have their fulfilment in the sphere of the natural and the other in the sphere of the spiritual.

Thus it clearly appears from 1 Peter I:9-12, that the prophecies in general had to do with these two distinct subjects, namely (1) “the sufferings of Christ,” and (2) “the glories (plural) that should follow.” And the passage also shows that the prophecies concerning “the sufferings” were to be first fulfilled, and then those concerning “the glories”; this being in agreement with the very explicit statement of 1 Corinthians 15:46, “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.”

Now it is evident upon reflection that the prophecies concerning Christ’s “sufferings” must needs be fulfilled in

the realm of the natural. For, as says the apostle, "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh" (1 Pet. 4:1). Whereas His "glories" are in the realm of the spiritual and eternal. We have His own statement. to this effect when, after His resurrection, He reproved two of His disciples for being foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. And He said:

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lu. 24:25-27).

Thus it is made clear that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit mark the dividing line where the fulfilment of prophecy, generally speaking (for there are some exceptions to which I will refer presently, which however do not affect the rule) passes from the natural into the spiritual realm.

Now it is specially to be observed that the era of our Lord's coming in the flesh was the time of the winding up of the affairs of the Jewish nation. That nation had its predicted part to perform in connection with "the sufferings of Christ." For it had been distinctly foretold that within the "determined" period of 490 years from the ending of the Babylonian captivity, "Messiah the Prince" should come, at which time they would "finish the transgression" (Dan. 9:24, 25). That this meant the completing of their national sin by the rejection and murder of their Messiah, is evident from Christ's own words, addressed to their leaders when they were plotting His death, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" who had persecuted and slain the prophets— "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth" etc. (Mat. 23: 31-36).

Then followed immediately His betrayal and crucifixion, and

the rejection by them of the gospel preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Their national sin culminated in the stoning of Stephen, which marked the termination of the "measured-off" period of seventy weeks of years. For the death of Christ took place, as foretold "in the midst of" the seventieth week (Dan. 9: 27). From that time there remained, of all the prophecies relating to the natural Israel, only those foretelling the judgments of God that were to befall them, and specifically the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and their extermination as a nation, and the world-wide scattering of the survivors thereof. This was distinctly foretold by Moses (Deut. 28:49-64); and to the same effect is the prophecy of Christ, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations" (Luke 21:24). For the last word of prophecy concerning that people as a nation was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies.

There is a remarkable prophecy of this from the lips of Christ in Matthew 22:7 (a prophecy that is quite generally overlooked, though immensely important). There, in a prophetic parable, our Lord foretold how the Jews would treat those sent to them with the gospel, and then said:

"But when the King heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."

That parable was spoken to the chief priests, Pharisees, and elders of the people (Mat. 21:23,45; 22: 1); and in the course of that same discourse Christ said to them plainly, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (21:43). That new "nation" came into being on the day of Pentecost; and it follows from all this (and from other scriptures that might be adduced) that all promises of blessing yet to be fulfilled belong to that "holy nation," that "peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9). For

though there were yet a million promises of national blessing to be fulfilled, and though they all were in terms for the "Jews," every one of them would belong to the true "Israel of God."

From the foregoing it will be seen that there need be no difficulty in determining whether the fulfilment of a given prophecy is to be sought on the physical side of things (the "natural") or on the spiritual side; notwithstanding there may be much difficulty in construing the details of the prophecy.

SALVATION IN ZION FOR ISRAEL

It is easy, for example, upon the principles of interpreting prophecy stated above, to understand a prediction such as the following:

"I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory."

This is the word of God through His prophet Isaiah (Isa. 46:13).

Three questions may properly be asked concerning this brief but vastly comprehensive promise: (1) What is this "salvation"? (2) Where is "Zion"? (3) Who are "Israel?" (I)

WHAT IS SALVATION?

The word salvation is very comprehensive. It embraces far more than we are able to conceive of; for it includes all the blessings, joys and delights that God has prepared for His people, both here and hereafter. All the promises and purposes of God, whatsoever they be, are accomplished in and through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20); and it is most significant that the first reference in the New Testament to salvation is found in connection with the record of the Saviour's birth, and the Name He was to bear in His humanity: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Mat. 1: 21).

This (the forgiveness of sins) is therefore the first blessing

of God's great Salvation. It has the place of prominence among the "better promises" of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6,10-12), whereof Jesus is "the Mediator"; and it was prominently in view at His birth.

It is also recorded that, before His birth, Zacharias, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied concerning Him, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people; and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David." And Zacharias goes on to declare that this was the fulfilment of what God had spoken by the mouth of His prophets from the very beginning, namely, "that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (Luke 1: 68-71).

This, be it noted, was a prophecy; for the record declares of Zacharias that, in so speaking, "he prophesied." (v. 67). That is to say, being "filled with the Holy Ghost" he spoke of God's salvation for His people as if the death and resurrection of Christ had already taken place, and as if redemption were already an accomplished fact. His words were: "God hath visited and redeemed His people; and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us." For it is the customary manner of the prophets of God to speak of events yet in the future as having already taken place. For the prophets in their visions see events entirely detached from the sequence of other events to which they stand related in the course of time. It is exceedingly important to bear this in mind when studying prophecy.

To the same effect is Simeon's prophecy in the next chapter, who spoke to God of the infant Jesus as "Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:28-32).

And to this agree the words of Paul, who, speaking in a Jewish synagogue (after the death and resurrection of Christ)

referred to David and said: "Of this man's seed hath God, according to His promise, raised up into Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:22,23).

And further, on the same occasion he said: "And we declare unto you glad tidings (the gospel), 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" (22,32,33).

The foregoing passages, and there are many like them, give an idea of what is meant in the prophetic scriptures by "salvation"; for they show that gospel salvation is what was intended. Further they make it clear that the time of the promised salvation for Israel is now, and not in some future era. And for further confirmation, I quote the words of Peter and the other apostles, spoken to the high priest and temple authorities at Jerusalem: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5: 30,31). (II) Where is "ZION"?

Isaiah also uttered a surpassingly beautiful prophecy concerning the days of Christ, which begins, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35:1), and which contains the express promise, "He will come and save you" (v. 4). Our Lord Himself fixed the time of the fulfilment of this particular prophecy by using its words in His message of assurance to His downcast forerunner (Mat. 11: 1-5). In that passage the prophet foretells a "way of holiness," which was to be so plainly revealed that "the wayfaring men, though fools, should not err" in regard thereto; and in that connection says: "The redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return (to Him), and come to Zion" (vv. 8-10).

The New Testament scriptures make clear in what sense the ransomed of the Lord return to Him and “come to Zion.” For the Holy Spirit speaks to those who look to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of their faith, and whom God owns as His children, saying: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire” – Mount Sinai—“But, ye are come unto Mount Zion...and unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:1-24).

For in short, Zion is where the Lord Jesus is; and God’s salvation is there, because He is there; and therefore those who came to Him come to Zion. Thus we have the accomplishment of what David longed for when he said, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion” (Ps. 14:7, 53:6).

The apostle Peter likewise clearly locates for us the Zion of prophecy; for he says that those who come to Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, become living stones in that “spiritual house” which God is now building on Jesus Christ; and that this is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah which begins; “Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone” etc. (1 Pet. 2: 4’7, quoting Isa. 28:16).

Paul also makes it plain that the “Zion” whereof Isaiah prophesied is a heavenly locality. For he too quotes the words, “Behold, I lay in Zion,” as being fulfilled in this present era (Rom. 9:33).(III) WHO ARE “ISRAEL”?

In the light of the foregoing Scriptures it is plainly to be seen that the God of Jacob, in providing His great salvation at infinite cost, in placing it in Zion, and in calling “all Israel” (Acts 2: 36) to come “to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22), has grandly fulfilled, and in a manner and measure far beyond anything the mind of man could have conceived, all His gracious promises concerning Israel.

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel” (Rom. 10:16). They

have not all responded to God's call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. True enough. And that is precisely what was foretold by Isaiah, whose words to that effect are quoted by Paul in Romans 9: 27; namely, that only a small remnant of the natural descendants of Jacob would obtain the salvation of God. Hence the apostle says, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the remnant hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:7). Here is a plain declaration that what had been promised to Israel had been obtained in Paul's day by the remnant, that is, the believing part of the people; whereas the mass of the nation had missed it because of the blindness of their hearts. Moreover, the context makes it clear beyond a doubt that what the apostle is speaking of is gospel salvation (10:1-3, 9-13). Therefore, what God had specially promised to Israel and what believing Jews (Paul among them) were receiving in those days was gospel salvation. But lest there should seem to be a discrepancy between the promise and the fulfilment, in that a small part only of the nation was being saved, Paul is at pains to explain that not all the natural descendants of Jacob were embraced in the "Israel" of prophecy; for that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9: 6). As he had already declared in an earlier chapter: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly...but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (2:28,29). And furthermore, as stated in Chapter 4:11-16, the children of Abraham, as God reckons them, are those who have the faith of Abraham, whether by their natural birth they were Jews or Gentiles. And this truth is unfolded in detail in Galatians, Chapters 3 and 4; where, addressing Gentile believers, the apostle says: "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29) that is, heirs of salvation in its comprehensive sense.

ISRAEL HATH NOT OBTAINED: THE ELECTION HATH OBTAINED

The verse cited above (Rom. 11:7) dispels all uncertainty as to how God fulfils His promises concerning Israel; so let us dwell a little further upon that verse:

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

What Israel was seeking for was, of course, the fulfilment of God's wondrous promises of blessing and glory for His people; all of which had been summed up in the current phrase, "The Kingdom of God." Here then is the two-fold statement: (1) that Israel had not (up to that time) obtained the Kingdom, which statement, if it stood alone, would leave the possibility of their obtaining it in the future; and (2) that the election had obtained it, which leaves nothing of the unfulfilled promises of God for "Israel after the flesh." The "election," that is, as Paul carefully explains in the context, the believing "remnant" of Israel (the "as many as received Him" of John 1:12) with believing Gentiles "grafted in," as represented by the "good olive tree" (v. 24), are the true Israel; and God had them in view all along as the inheritors of His Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 15:50; Eph. 5:5). THE RIGHTEOUS NATION INHERITS THE PROMISES

The Jewish rabbis understood from Isaiah 26:2, and accordingly they taught, that the promises of God were for "the righteous nation which keepeth truth." But they took for granted that the natural Israel was that "righteous nation"; and it was of the essence of their doctrine that the Mosaic law had been given as the sufficient means for making Israel righteous. But the contrary truth, for which Paul mightily contended and which aroused their furious animosity against him, was that the righteousness that God demanded as the pre-requisite for inheriting His promises was—not the righteousness of the law, but—that of faith; even as it is written, "Abraham believed God, and IT was counted to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3).

And thus it was that "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained unto the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith"

(Rom. 9:30-32). They missed everything; but in so doing they fulfilled the Word of God: "For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 9: 33, quoting Isa. 28:16).WHAT THEN? HATH GOD CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE?

The apostle himself asks this question, and answers it. The answer is an emphatic NO. But does not this answer contradict the apostle's interpretation of the "allegory" of the two wives and two sons of Abraham; namely, that the bondwoman and her son should be "cast out," and that "the son of the bondwoman" (natural Israel) "shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (spiritual Israel)? Not at all.

The simple explanation is that God's "people," are those whom He foreknew, in other words, the believing remnant; and those He has not "cast away." The rest—the unbelieving mass—are not His people, and NEVER WERE. For though they were "of Israel" by natural descent, they were not ISRAEL"; which name properly belonged only to the spiritual seed of Abraham. "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew"; and as to those "whom He did foreknow," Paul had already said (Rom. 8:28-30) that they are "those that love God, who are the called according to His purpose."

From the foregoing it follows that, of all the as yet unfulfilled promises of God, whatsoever and how many soever they be, nothing remains for the natural Israel. All are for the true children of Abraham; even for them that are "of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Rom. 4: ~6).CONCERNING ZIONISM

In bringing to a close this chapter on the Hope of Israel it is appropriate to make a brief reference to the recent political movement known as Zionism, which has for its object the making of Palestine a homeland for the Jews. Concerning that movement a great deal of misinformation has been

disseminated during the past twenty years in the interest of dispensationalism. For dispensationalist writers and speakers have painted wonderful word-pictures portraying the multitudes of Jews said to be flocking to their ancient homeland; the miraculously renewed fertility of the soil; the return of the early and latter rain etc. etc.; and it has been made to appear that the re-constitution of the Jewish State and the rebuilding of the Temple were matters of tomorrow or the day after. All these supposed happenings were presented to eager readers and hearers as a marvellous fulfilment of prophecy taking place before our very eyes, and as giving assurance that the time of the end had come.

But the sober facts are that Zionism has been a pitiful failure almost from the beginning; and that in the period of its greatest success the volume of immigrants constituted but a trickling stream, and they were of the most undesirable sort. The movement reached its peak in 1926; and from that time to the present Zionism has been palpably a dying enterprise. A reliable magazine, Current History (April, 1927) gave from a recent official report on trade conditions, "an estimate of the population of Palestine for April 30, 1926; by which it appears that, after all the efforts of Zionism and the influence of the Balfour Declaration for ten years, and the help of other contributing causes (e.g. Russian persecutions) the total number of Jews in all Palestine was only 139,645; and they were outnumbered by Moslems more than three to one. The entire population was only 752,268; and the article states that "The country is under-populated and under-cultivated"; also that, "The season of 1925 was bad agriculturally owing to drought"; that various conditions "led to a shortage of capital and a depression which continued through 1926"; and that "the balance of trade was distinctly adverse."

Subsequent reports show that conditions have not improved; that the state of the Jews in Palestine is wretched in the

extreme, and that the attitude of the great mass of Jews throughout the world towards the Zionlstic project is that of complete apathy and indifference. [written circa 1926—Ed.]