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CHAP.III: HOW OT PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL ARE INTERPRETED BY PAUL

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We shall be the better prepared for an examination of the OT prophecies concerning the hope of Israel if we first **observe how those prophecies were interpreted by the NT writers**, especially Paul. When Festus remanded **Paul** for trial before King Agrippa on the charges lodged against him by the Jews, the king gave the apostle leave to speak for himself: *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).* This is very definite. *It proves that Paul, in preaching the gospel of Christ crucified and risen from the dead, was proclaiming to the people of the fulfillment of God's promise to that people;* a promise that had been made, not only to them through Moses and the prophets, but also directly to their fathers - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And this is in exact agreement with **the testimony of Peter**, who, *writing to converted Jews of the dispersion and speaking of the prophets of Israel*, said: *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 (1 Pt.1:10-12).*

Paul's statement further proves that *this gospel-salvation was and had been the hope of every true Israelite* - all our twelve tribes. Therefore *the true hope of was not, and is not, an earthly kingdom which some future generation of Jews, men of flesh and blood, are to inherit.* Furthermore, the true Israel of God, as Paul himself had previously explained in his epistle to the Romans, is composed of believing Israelites according to the flesh, with believing Gentiles added to them, forming **one body**, as represented by the olive tree of **Rom.11**. The above statement also makes clear what Paul meant by saying: *hath not obtained that which he seeks; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (Rom.11:7).* *For the true hope and expectation of all - our twelve tribes - lay in the resurrection, where the promise of the sure mercies of David was to be fulfilled (Acts 13:34).* It matters not that, as individuals, they were nearly all blinded to it and were looking for a kingdom of earthly grandeur, suited to their carnal ideas; for *the truth of their own Scriptures was that the kingdom of God, promised by their prophets, was a spiritual kingdom, to be realized in the resurrection of the dead and to be entered only by those who are born again of the word and Spirit of God.*

The Lord Jesus Himself had given the same teaching concerning the Kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God - the two expressions being used by Him *interchangeably*). Thus He taught His disciples, saying ... *except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt.18:3);* and He goes on to show that *to enter into that kingdom is to enter into life (v.8-11).* And this he followed up by declaring how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom (**Mt.19:16-26**), calling it in one verse (**23**) *the kingdom of heaven*, and in the next, *the kingdom of God*. And He concluded the lesson by saying **to those who had forsaken all and followed Him** ... *that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*

(v.28). From this it appears that **the all Israel of Scripture here designated as the twelve tribes of Israel, is a spiritual nation**; and that it shall come into its inheritance in the day of glory, when the kingdom of God shall be manifested, and when Christ, who is now upon His Father's throne in heaven, shall occupy the throne of His glory.

Returning to Paul's defense before King Agrippa, his concluding words: Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying - not a new thing, a mystery never before revealed, but - none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come - **not that Christ would restore earthly dominion to national Israel**, as now is widely taught among Christians, but - that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people [Israel] and to the Gentiles (**Acts 26:22-23**). Here is clear proof that the gospel proclaims nothing that was not foretold by the prophets; for, as from Paul's teaching elsewhere, **the mystery of the gospel was that believing Gentiles were to become fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, being made fellow heirs [with saved Jews] and of the same body, and partakers [with saved Jews] of His promise in Christ**; and that all this was to be accomplished by [means of] the Gospel (**Eph.2:11-22; 3:6, 9**). And the last quoted passage also proves that the predicted manifestation of light to the people of Israel and to the Gentiles was to come after the sufferings of the promised Messiah and his resurrection from the dead. **Here we have the statement of an inspired apostle as to what was the order of revelation as it stood when Christ appeared to the Jewish people; - not the setting up of the Davidic kingdom, as stated by the leading exponent of modern dispensationalism, but - the sufferings of Christ and His resurrection from the dead, followed by the showing of Gospel light to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. In other words, that the next thing in the order of divine revelation was precisely what came to pass. By this, Paul's statement as to what was the next thing in the order of revelation as it then stood flatly contradicts that of the Scofield Reference Bible, quo-ted above.**

Likewise the apostle Peter, in a passage already quoted (**1 Pt.1:9-12**), makes known what was the next thing in the order of divine revelation as it then stood; namely, the salvation concerning which the prophets of Israel had inquired and searched diligently, searching what the Spirit of Christ, who was in them did signify when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories [plural] that should follow. Paul, when he arrived in Rome, sent for the leading Jews of that city and declared to them that it was for the hope of Israel he had been brought thither in chains (**Acts 28:20**). The succeeding verses make evident that **the hope of Israel was the Kingdom of God** as Paul had preached it everywhere (**Acts 17:3, 7; 19:8; 20:25**), and as he had expounded and defined it in **Rom.14:17**. For the account in **Acts 28** continues: And when they had appointed him a day there came many to him to 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 (**v.23**). Inasmuch as **those Jews were thoroughly indoctrinated with the then current Jewish teaching**, it needed much exposition and persuasion and the enlightenment of the Spirit of God, to make evident to them that what Moses and the prophets had foretold was a spiritual kingdom, which was to be established through the sufferings and death of

the expected Messiah of Israel. But it is extraordinary that, after the truth in this regard has been clearly set forth in the NT Scriptures, and has been apprehended by successive generations of Christians for nineteen centuries, there should have arisen in these days a system of doctrine which takes for one of its foundation stones **the very same error** touching the true hope of Israel which turned Paul's fellow Israelites against him. To those at Rome who believed not the things spoken by Paul, he used great plainness of speech, saying to them:

Well spoke the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, **Hearing ye hear and 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 (25-27).**

By this it appears that **the hope of Israel, the Kingdom of God, and the salvation of God** are three different names for one and the same thing. And it shows that **a supernatural and punitive blindness concerning the kingdom foretold by the prophets had been laid upon the unbelieving part of the natural Israel**, even as the same prophets had predicted; which blindness, as we learn from **Rom. 11:25**, is **to continue until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in**. But **the very same error** which Paul here denounced and suffered persecution and imprisonment for **has found advocates among orthodox Christians of the twentieth century**. The Scriptures reviewed make it plain that the hope of Israel was to be realized in the resurrection. Christ was to suffer, to die, and to rise again; He the first, and afterward they that are His (**1 Cor. 15:23**). There is no other hope for and never was. If the promise of God to had been earthly dominion, or if that had been even a part of the promise, it is impossible that Paul should not have declared it on the occasions to which we have referred, and should not have spoken of it in his Epistles - especially Nor could he possibly, in that case, have used the language we have quoted above.

There are indeed certain prophetic passages in the OT which, apart from the light afforded by the New, might be taken as relating to after the flesh, and as foretelling the restoration, at some future day, of their national greatness; for there is in those passages no distinct reference to the resurrection. But that goes for nothing. For the natural intelligence could not possibly have discerned that **Ps. 16 and Isa. 55:3** were to be fulfilled in the resurrection. The Holy Spirit, however, by the apostle Peter, has given us to know that David, in the **16th Psalm**, was foretelling that God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne (**Acts 2:30-31**); and by the apostle Paul the same Spirit has made known that the broad promise of the sure mercies of David was to be fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ from the dead (**Acts 13:32-34**). **The erroneous doctrine of the teachers of which we have been discussing, was based upon an unspiritual interpretation of their own Scriptures; for they knew not the voices of the prophets which were read every Sabbath day (Acts 13:27).** That doctrine was fatal to everyone who received and clung to it; and also to the nation as a whole. Therefore, **its revival among orthodox Christians in these days is a proper cause for serious misgivings.**