

OUR HOPE IN CHRIST.

Paul had by the teaching of the Holy Spirit a clear conception that the "hope of Israel" as set before them in "Moses, the prophets and psalms, was *'resurrection from the dead,'*" and that this hope was fulfilled, its realization made sure, in the resurrection of Christ. (See Acts 23:6; 26:6-8; 26:22-23; 28:20.)

So the light to Israel was *the hope of resurrection*. That hope is not yet realized. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Joshua still sleep. Their children scattered over the world are still in the dead spiritual condition as a people, typified by *their* bones. Light, therefore, has not yet dawned upon Israel. Whatever views may be held as to the light offered to Israel upon Pentecost, or by Stephen – and which they rejected – a reading of the prophecies (Isa. 42:6; 49:6, and 60:3), with the context, would be convincing that the light there spoken of as to come to Israel (and which Paul evidently refers to) has *not dawned*. Now the question would naturally be, what delays it? I think the answer of the scripture is, *'the waiting for the completion of the resurrection of Christ.'* If we transfer to another dispensation the full fulfillment of the prophecies that "Christ is to be a light to lighten the Gentiles," and regard that the work of God now is the gathering of the body that is to share with its living head in resurrection life and power, and that the resurrection of Christ is not complete until the whole body is raised, the Scriptures are in harmony.

The Christ of God is Jesus and the redeemed Church (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 5:23,30,31; Eph. 1:20-23; 2:21,22.) With this view Acts 15 is in perfect harmony. God is now visiting the Gentiles to gather THE BODY. After the resurrection, Christ will be revealed in GLORY AND LIGHT to Israel, and they shall fall before him as did Thomas, who is a type of Israel – and the veil taken from their hearts, they shall go out as the people through whom God will lighten the Gentiles. It is instructive to compare in this connection Acts 13:46, and Isa. 60:3.

Does Paul speak of himself as an Israelite, commanded by this passage to go to the Gentiles, or of Christ as prophesied of as the light of the Gentiles? Perhaps both are included.

Man was created by God to bear rule and have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26.) In his sin he lost all. In the promised SEED he is to regain all. Compare Gen. 1:26 with Ps. 8 and Heb. 2:5-10, and Rom. 8:19-24, for connecting links as to Christ our hope, as set forth in the promise of the "SEED." A very interesting study will be found in taking up the Bible as a history of *Satan's war against the seed of the woman*. He brought the first born Cain under the curse and condemnation of God for murder, by his pride. He killed Abel the second born. He corrupted the sons of Seth the third, and brought the race to destruction in the flood, God interposing by grace to save Noah. After Abraham is called out the war is against his family. One after another comes forth in prominence as if the promises would be fulfilled in them, but all fail, until the Son of God incarnate came and stood every test. He wrought righteousness, was without sin; and overcame the power of the devil. His title as the Son of man is intended always to carry us back to Gen. 3 in adoring gratitude to God for His faithfulness to His word and His grace to the sons of Adam (Gal. 4:4-6). By Christ and in his church is the victory gained.

To Abraham, as the man of faith, how applicable is the definition of faith God gives us in Heb. 11:1, "who against hope believed in hope" (Rom. 4:18). He died at the age of 175. Promised a land he had never seen, he was 75 years old before his feet touched its soil. His first experience in it was a famine – and in leaving it, promised a seed by Sarah, he came near losing her in Egypt. Faith with him, as with all God's called ones, was continually tried. But for God's grace and providence Abraham would many a time have made shipwreck. "Against hope he believed in hope." All of the promises centre in the promise of a seed. He is to possess the land through his seed. Two or three times he tries to help God out of seeming difficulties in the literal fulfillment of his word, as do many of his children now. He fell into

the line of argument that Sarah was not really to have a child – it was figurative and not literal – and so he tried to raise a figurative child – but, as do all who try to plan and interpret for God, he made a poor figure in his attempt, and his figurative child was cast out. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." "Sarah shall have a son," was the literal word of God. His hope was in a literal Isaac, and all his efforts for Ishmael hindered instead of helped the thing he hoped for. Yet "against hope he believed in hope," and at the age of one hundred, received Isaac as one born from the dead, Rom. 4:19,20; Heb. 11:12; and rejoiced in the fulfillment of God's promises – *in faith*; literally, he had seen but a scant realization of them. He never possessed the land, he lived and died in a tent, and owned no part of Canaan except the place of his burial. God [R752 : page 3] promised him a seed as numerous as the stars, and like the sand of the seashore, in Isaac. When he died, Isaac had been married, and although years elapsed, Rebekah had no children, yet *after the birth of Isaac* we have no intimation that the faith of Abraham ever wavered. The gift of Isaac was the seal to him of everything promised, and looking upon Isaac, he rejoiced in all that was to come. And so the word presents the church as not yet having entered into the realization of her inheritance, but having Christ, knowing that with him God will freely give her all things, Rom. 8:32.

It is difficult to turn away from Isaac [R752 : page 4] in the manifold views of Christ we have presented through him. "He was the first to arise from the dead," in the figure of his birth, and his arising from the altar on Mount Moriah. In him the people, (Israel) were called, by the birth of Jacob – but not until God had first provided him a bride to share the riches and glory bestowed upon him by the Father. So in Christ, Israel are to be blessed, but, not until the Bride takes her place with the heavenly Bridegroom, Rom. 11:25,26. No part of the blessed Scripture is more calculated to feed the souls of Christ's redeemed and chosen people, and to set more plainly before them Christ *our* hope than Gen. 24, where we have Abraham sending the servant after a bride for Isaac. It is not a public event – the people of the land not seemingly interested, not occupied with its import. The servant goes with the

message guided by God to the one whom God has chosen to be the Bride. Caravans of merchantmen, passing from Damascus to Egypt, soldiers of the king of Shinar, on missions of conquest, may have seen Eliezer as he journeyed to Mesopotamia, and may have known his errand, but they had no interest in it and knew nothing of God's purposes. So now the Holy Ghost has come from the Father with a message for the chosen Bride, an invitation from an absent Bridegroom to share his Father's love, his inheritance – *His throne*. Noiseless as the tread of the camels' feet over the sands of the desert he pursues his way, and in every age and in every clime there are waiting Rebekahs, who have circumcised ears, believing hearts, and willing minds, to hear the story of God's dear Son – His dying love, His living power, the distant home, the coming glory, and to gladly say as did Rebekah, "I will go." The world around takes no note of his errand – of his success, occupied with its schemes of wealth and ambition, and of a glory to be built up in Ishmael instead of Isaac. So Ishmael lives, and becomes a great nation, with *twelve princes*, they care not who shall become the bride of Isaac.

What interest to-day has the world at large in Christ, God's dear Son, in the revelation made of Him in the Scriptures as the heavenly Bridegroom. What light have they on the *purpose of this dispensation* as the calling out of a people *for his name*? What sympathy have they in God's revealed plan and purposes, as centering everything in heaven and on earth in the glory of His Son? No more than the world had in Isaac's day in the call of Rebekah. Yet the message shall come with power, and the report be believed by those whom God shall choose. John 14:17; 6:45.

Rebekah left her home to go to one she had never seen, to go to one of whom she had heard, Rom. 10:16,17. She had a long journey over the desert under the care of Eliezer. The one hope that led her forth was Isaac. If doubt suggested the fear that Isaac might reject her, she knew with that rejection everything was lost, every hope perished – for all hope for everything centered in Isaac. As Isaac's chosen bride,

all that Isaac had she was to share – she could have no fear for anything while confident in Isaac. So, believing the report concerning Christ, have we brethren, turned away from the world, and accepting the call of God, do we now journey on to meet our Lord? Rebekah had Abraham's words repeated to her by the servant, concerning Isaac, as the foundation of her faith. She had the constant care and companionship of the servant upon her journey, as the earnest of what awaited her when she should meet Isaac, but the purpose for which she was called was not fulfilled until she met Isaac. She did not occupy the position of Isaac's bride until conducted by Isaac himself to that position. So in Eph. 5:27; 1 John 3:2. How *much* we now have – how *little* we now have – must be the thought of every child of God.

After the calling of the bride in this wonderful chapter, we have Israel as an earthly people introduced in the birth and election of Jacob. They inherit the promise made to Abraham and Isaac. Through them God is to reveal Himself a light to the Gentiles. But every promise to them centers as to us in Christ. In contrast to the acceptance of Rebekah in humble faith of the call of God, fulfilling Rom. 9:30, we have Israel from the outset quarreling with grace, and blind as to God's purpose, as in Rom. 9:31,32. In Jacob the early Israel is established, the twelve tribes formed, and covenant with God recognized.

To *this Israel* God reveals Himself, gives them His law, gives them teachers and prophets. They should have been the teachers of the world, the witnesses for Christ. They failed and were set aside, and over and over again this setting aside of the one who had the right of the firstborn is acted out in the books of Moses. Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Leah and Rachel, Ephraim and Manasseh, are examples. In their setting aside we are told plainly God has not changed His purposes. They are still His people, it is *still His purpose* to use them as a light to the Gentiles, Rom. 9:15,26-29.

All of this is shadowed forth in the relations of – first, the sons of Jacob; second, the world to Joseph. Not until the eleven brothers united

in bowing the knee before him, were their eyes opened to know him, and they delivered from their trouble. And through Joseph as the head of the earthly Israel was Egypt fed. Joseph was the joy and hope of three different classes. **1.** Of the king upon the throne who had given him all power. **2.** Of his Gentile bride Zipporah, who in grace he had married. **3.** Of the children of Israel, his kinsmen according to the flesh. So he shadows forth Christ in His relations to his Father, to the Church, and to Israel. Jacob before Pharaoh shows us the position of Israel among the nations when joined to Christ. "He blessed Pharaoh," Heb. 7:7.

Thus "Christ as our hope" is set before us in the word through Moses. Jesus said, "Moses wrote of me," and truly the one theme of the writings of Moses, as we are taught of God, will be found to be Christ. May God give us grace to make Christ the *center* of study, of worship, of service, that all our springs may be found in *Him*.

– *D.W. Whittle.*

=====