

THAT BLESSED HOPE

Charles H. Welch

THE BEREAN PUBLISHING TRUST

THAT BLESSED HOPE

by

Charles H. Welch

Author of

Dispensational Truth
The Apostle of the Reconciliation
The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner
Parable, Miracle and Sign
The Form of Sound Words
Just and the Justifier
In Heavenly Places
etc., etc., etc.

First Published 1935
Reset and Reprinted 1990
Reprinted 1995

© THE BEREAN PUBLISHING TRUST
52A Wilson Street, LONDON EC2A 2ER

ISBN 0 85156 136 5

THAT BLESSED HOPE

Being the application of the principle of 'right division' to the question: 'What is the hope of His calling?'

To all who 'look for the Saviour'.

Our object in this booklet is to answer the question: What is the 'blessed hope' of the Church?

Is it to be found in 1 Thessalonians 4, or in Matthew 24, or in some other part of Scripture? It is impossible to answer these questions until we have decided the preliminary question as to which church is in view. Hope cannot stand alone and unrelated. We must hope for SOMETHING or SOMEONE, and, if it is to be fulfilled, the hope must have a scriptural basis. Whatever our calling, whether that of the Body, the Bride, or the earthly Kingdom, we can all say that 'we look for the Saviour', but when we come to examine the calling of those represented by the pronoun 'we' it becomes necessary to 'try the things that differ'.

If Israel became *Lo-ammi* ('Not My People', Hos. 1:9) at Acts 28, and if a new church then came into being under the new terms of the dispensation of the Mystery or Secret (Eph. 3:1-13), it is reasonable to expect a difference in the hope to be entertained by this new company. It is not, however, the apparent reasonableness of an argument but 'What saith the Scripture?' that demands the believer's assent. We therefore ask the reader's earnest attention to the following evidence from the Word.

Hope, Promise and Calling.

Where we read of 'hope' in the New Testament we often find in the context a reference either to a 'promise' or to a 'calling'. For example, Paul before Agrippa says :

' 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' (Acts 26:6,7).

Here there is no possibility of making a mistake. Not only is the hope that is in view the fulfilment of a promise, but it is the fulfilment of a specific promise 'made of God unto our fathers'. Further, there is no ambiguity as to those who entertain this hope; the words 'our twelve tribes' are too explicit to permit of spiritualizing. Other examples will occur to the reader, and will come before us in the prosecution of our present study. For the moment it is sufficient that the principle should be clear, that HOPE LOOKS TO THE FULFILMENT OF A PROMISE. It is therefore necessary to discover what promise has been made to any particular company before we can speak with understanding of their hope. Another prerequisite is a knowledge of the 'calling' concerned.

' That ye may know what is THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING' (Eph. 1:18).
' Even as ye are called in ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING' (Eph. 4:4).

The realization of our hope in the future will be in agreement with our calling now by faith.

' Now faith is the substance of things HOPED for' (Heb. 11:1).

Recent discoveries among the papyri of Egypt have brought to light the fact that the word 'substance' was used in New Testament times to signify the 'Title Deeds' of a property. Every believer holds the title-deeds now, by faith; the earnest and first-fruits of the inheritance that will be entered when his hope is realized. As every believer does not necessarily belong to the same calling, and most believers grant a distinction between the earthly Kingdom and the Church, while some realize the further distinction between Bride and Body, it follows that the character of the calling must be settled before the hope can be defined.

Three spheres of blessing.

There are at least three distinct spheres of blessing indicated in the New Testament :

- (1) **The Earth.** - 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth' (Matt. 5:5).

- (2) **The Heavenly City.** - 'The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... and church of the firstborn, which (whose names) are written in heaven' (Heb. 12:22,23).
- (3) **Far above all.** - 'He ... ascended up far above all heavens' (Eph. 4:10).
'And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:6).

These three spheres of blessing correspond to three distinct callings :

- (1) **The Earthly Kingdom.** - 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done *in earth*' (Matt. 6:10).
- (2) **The Bride.** - 'The bride, the Lamb's wife ... the holy Jerusalem, *descending out of heaven* from God' (Rev. 21:9,10).
- (3) **The Joint-Body.** - 'His body ... the church: whereof I (Paul) am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you ... the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations' (Col. 1:24-26; Eph. 3:3-6).

These three spheres of blessing, each with its special calling, have associated with them three groups of people in the New Testament. The first sphere of blessing is exclusive to ISRAEL according to the flesh; the second to faithful believers from among both 'JEW AND GREEK', while in the third sphere the calling is addressed to 'YOU GENTILES'.

- (1) **Israel according to the flesh.** — 'My kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen' (Rom. 9:3-5).
- (2) **Abraham's seed (includes believing Gentiles).** — 'Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ... they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham ... are *blessed with faithful Abraham* ... For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek ... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:3,7,9,27-29).

If, at the end of verse 28, we 'shut the book', we may 'prove' that the blessed unity indicated by the words 'neither Jew nor Greek' refers to the 'Church which is His Body'. If, however, we keep the book open, we see that such is not the sequel, but that this new company are 'Abraham's seed', and the hope before them 'the promise' made to Abraham. The reader may readily assent to this, but we would urge him to remember that 1 Thessalonians and Galatians were both written before Acts 28, and therefore before the revelation of the Mystery. The hope then of 1 Thessalonians 4 belongs to the same calling as that of Galatians and cannot constitute the hope of the Mystery.

- (3) **The One New Man.** - 'Where there is neither Greek nor Jew ... but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. 3:11).
'To make (*create*) in Himself of twain (the twain) *one new man*, so making peace' (Eph. 2:15).
'That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs' (Eph. 3:6).

The limits of this pamphlet will not permit of extensive proofs of the suggestions made in the foregoing paragraphs, or of a detailed exposition of the passages concerned; but we believe that the matter is sufficiently clear for us to go forward with our enquiry. Seeing then that there are three spheres of blessing, with their three associated callings, we should expect to find three phases of the Coming of the Lord. These three phases are presented in the following Scriptures :

- (1) **Kingdom on earth.** - HOPE. Matthew 24 and 25.
- (2) **Abraham's seed.** - HOPE OF ISRAEL . 1 Thessalonians 4.
- (3) **Far above all.** - HOPE. Colossians 3:4.

Let us look at each phase of the Second Advent as presented by these three passages.

THE HOPE OF THE FIRST SPHERE

The Sign of the coming of the Son of Man.

The earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was limited to the people of Israel, and had special regard to the promise made to David concerning Israel's King. It also had in view the promise made to Abraham concerning the

blessing of all the families of the earth, but did not, at that time, extend to them, being concentrated rather upon Israel from whom, as the appointed channel, the blessing should flow to all nations. We shall now bring scriptural proof of these statements, and then proceed to show that Matthew 24 and 25 speak of the hope of ISRAEL, and that this phase of the second advent has nothing to do with the hope of the Church which is His Body.

(1) Proof that the earthly ministry was limited in the first instance to Israel.

`Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the CIRCUMCISION for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the FATHERS' (Rom. 15:8).

`Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of ISRAEL' (Matt. 10:5,6).

`I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of ISRAEL' (Matt. 15:24).

(2) Proof that the promise made to David concerning a King was in view.

`Where is He that is born KING of the Jews? ... in Bethlehem' (Matt. 2:2-5).

`Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy KING cometh unto thee' (Matt. 21:5).

`What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of DAVID' (Matt. 22:42).

`David ... being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, HE WOULD RAISE UP CHRIST TO SIT ON HIS THRONE; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ' (Acts 2:29-31).

(3) Proof that the promise to Abraham concerning Israel as the chosen channel of blessing to the Gentiles was in view.

`Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. UNTO YOU FIRST God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless YOU, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities' (Acts 3:25,26).

The consideration of these Scriptures in their setting provides sufficient proof for the statements made concerning the character of the Saviour's earthly ministry.

We are now in a position to consider Matthew 24 and 25, which is a prophecy of the second coming of Christ, and concerns the hope of Israel as distinct from the hope of the Body of Christ as revealed in the prison epistles of Paul.

The threefold prophecy of the coming of the Lord as revealed in Matthew 24 was given in answer to the threefold question of the disciples (verse 3) :

`When shall these things be?'

`What shall be the sign of Thy coming?'

`And of the end of the world (age)?'.

The evidence which follows, sufficiently shows that in this passage the hope of Israel and not the hope of `the Church which is His Body' is the subject.

Three proofs that Matthew 24 speaks of the Hope of Israel.

First, the word translated `end' is *sunteleia*, a word at that time well known to every Jew, for it was the name of the third great feast, namely `the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year' (Exod. 23:16). This is evidence that Israel's hope is in view.

Secondly, we find that this coming of the Lord is to be preceded by `wars and rumour of wars'. Because of the fact that there have been, and yet will be, many wars and rumours of wars since the setting aside of Israel, these words, as they stand, cannot be construed as evidence that Israel's hope is in view. If, however, we turn to the Old

Testament origin of the reference: 'For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom' (Matt. 24:7), we shall see that it comes from Isaiah's prophetic 'Burden of Egypt' (Isa. 19:1,2), the passage ending with the words 'Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance' (Isa. 19:25). This reference therefore, when seen in the light of its Old Testament setting, gives further evidence for the fact that Israel is in view in Matthew 24.

Thirdly, this coming of the Lord takes place after the prophetic statements of Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 have been fulfilled.

'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place ... then shall be great tribulation ... IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION of those days ... shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven ... and they shall see the Son of man COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN' (Matt. 24:15-30).

As the detailed exposition of this chapter is not our purpose, and as these three items provide proof beyond dispute that the second coming of Christ, as here made known, cannot be the hope of the Church revealed in the prison epistles, we feel that no unbiased reader will desire further delay in prosecuting our enquiry.

THE SECOND SPHERE

The Acts and Epistles of the period.

We must now turn our attention to the evidence of Scripture as to the character of the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Some commentators on this book appear to forget that it is the record of the 'Acts' of the Apostles, and had no existence until those 'Acts' were accomplished. If the founding of the Church at Corinth chronicled in Acts 18 be an act of the Apostle Paul, both Crispus (verse 8) and Sosthenes (verse 17) being mentioned by name, then the epistle written by the same Apostle to the same Church, again mentioning Crispus and Sosthenes by name, must be included as the Divine complement of the record of Acts 18. The aspect of the Hope in view in the Acts and in the epistles written during that period to the churches founded by the apostles must of necessity be the same. Any attempt to make the ministry of Paul during the Acts differ from the epistles of the same period is false, and must be rejected. There can be no doubt that the hope entertained by the churches during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles was a phase of the Hope of Israel. This will, we trust, be made clear to the reader by the quotations and comments given hereafter.

(1) 'When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6).

This question arose after the forty days' instruction given by the risen Christ to His disciples, during which time He not only opened the Scriptures, but 'their understanding' also (Luke 24:45).

(2) 'Repent ... and *He shall send Jesus Christ*, Which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began ... Ye are the children of the prophets ... Unto you first ... ' (Acts 3:19-26 *see R.V.*).

These words of Peter, spoken after Pentecost, cannot be separated from the hope of Israel without violence to the inspired words. It may be that some readers will interpose the thought: 'These are from the testimony of Peter; what we want is the testimony of Paul'. We therefore give two more extracts from the Acts, quoting this time from the ministry of Paul.

(3) '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' (Acts 26:6,7).

(4) 'Paul called the chief of the Jews together ... because that for the *hope* of Israel I am bound with this chain' (Acts 28:17,20).

Not until the Jewish people were set aside in Acts 28:25-29 does Paul become 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'. Until it was a settled fact that Israel would not repent and that the promise of Acts 3:19-26 would be

postponed, the hope of Israel persisted, and all the churches that had been brought into being up to that time were of necessity associated with that hope.

The Heavenly Calling of the New Jerusalem.

We have already drawn attention to the intimate association that exists between 'hope', 'promise', and 'calling'. We must pause for a moment here to remind the reader that Abraham stands at the head of two companies: an earthly people, the great nation of Israel; and a heavenly people, associated with the heavenly phase of God's promise to Abraham, and made up of the believing remnant of Israel and believing Gentiles who were accounted faithful by God. This heavenly side of the Abrahamic promise is referred to by the apostle in Hebrews and Galatians :

‘ He looked for a city ... they seek a country ... 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*' (Heb. 11:10,14,16).

‘ If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise ... *Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother*' (Gal. 3:29; 4:26 R.V.).

This heavenly calling of the Abrahamic promise constitutes the Bride of the Lamb, as distinct from the restored Wife, which refers to Israel as a nation. We leave the reader to verify these statements for himself by referring to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea, where Israel's restoration is spoken of under the figure of the restored Wife; and to the Book of the Revelation where the heavenly city is described as the Bride. During the time of the Acts of the Apostles, the churches founded by Paul were 'Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:29). The Apostle speaks of espousing them 'to one husband, that I may present you as a *chaste virgin to Christ*' (2 Cor. 11:2).

This heavenly phase was in the nature of a prize or reward for those who were willing to suffer, endure, and go on to maturity (perfection). This theme is expounded in the epistle to the Hebrews.

The Testimony of Romans.

The epistles written by Paul before his imprisonment were Galatians, Hebrews, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians. We are sure that any well instructed reader who was asked to choose from this set of epistles the one giving the most recent, as well as the most fundamental teaching of the Apostle for this period, would unhesitatingly choose the epistle to the Romans. In this epistle we have the solid rock foundation of justification by faith, where 'no difference' can be tolerated between Jew and Gentile. When, however, we leave the sphere of doctrine (Romans 1 to 8), and enter the sphere of dispensational privileges, we discover that differences between Jewish and Gentile believers still remain. The Gentile, who was justified by faith, was nevertheless reminded that he was at that time in the position of a wild olive, graft into the true olive tree, from which some of the branches had been broken off through unbelief. The grafting of the Gentile into Israel's olive tree was intended (speaking after the manner of men) to provoke Israel to jealousy. When, in the days to come, these broken branches shall be restored, 'all Israel shall be saved' (Rom. 11:11, 25-27).

These statements from Romans 11 are sufficient to prevent us from assuming that, because there is evidently DOCTRINAL or BASIC equality in the Acts period, there is also DISPENSATIONAL equality. This is not so, for Romans declares that the Jew is still 'first', and the middle wall still stands, making membership of the One Body as revealed in Ephesians impossible.

In Romans 15 we have a definite statement concerning the hope entertained by the church at Rome. Before quoting the passage, Romans 15:12 and 13, we would advise the reader that the word 'trust' in verse 12 is *elpizo*, and the word 'hope' in verse 13 *elpis*. There is also the emphatic article 'the' before the word 'hope' in verse 13. Bearing these points in mind we can now examine the hope entertained by the church at Rome, as ministered to by Paul before his imprisonment :

There shall be a Root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust (hope). *Now the God of (that) hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*' (Rom. 15:12,13).

Here we are on firm ground. Paul himself teaches the church in the Acts to look for the millennial kingdom and for the Saviour as the 'Root of Jesse' Who shall 'reign over the Gentiles'. How can this hope be severed from 'the hope of Israel'? How can it be associated with the 'Mystery' which knows nothing of Abraham, or Israel, but goes back before the 'foundation of the world', and reaches up to heavenly places? In case the reader should be uncertain of Paul's reference to the millennial kingdom, we quote from Isaiah 11 :

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse ... He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked ... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb ... And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the People; to It shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious' (Isa. 11:1,4,6,10).

The reader should consult the note on Isaiah 11:4, given in *The Companion Bible*, where the reading, 'He shall smite the oppressor' (*ariz*) is preferred to the Authorized Version 'He shall smite the earth' (*erez*). This reading establishes a link with 2 Thessalonians 2:8 :

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming'.

Before referring to 1 Thessalonians 4, which presents the hope of the Pentecostal Church at this time very clearly, we must say something about the strange avoidance of the second epistle that so many manifest when dealing with this subject.

The Importance of a Second Epistle.

If a business man were to treat his correspondence in the way that some believers treat the epistles of Paul, the results would be disastrous. A second letter, purporting to rectify a misunderstanding arising out of a previous letter, would, if anything, be more important and more decisive than the first; yet there are those whose system of interpretation demands that they shall claim 1 Thessalonians 4 as the revelation of their hope, who nevertheless either neglect the testimony of 2 Thessalonians or explain it away as of some future mystical company unknown to the apostle. Let us first verify that these two epistles form a definite pair, written by the same writer, at the same period, to the same people, about the same subject.

Identity of Address.

FIRST EPISTLE — 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. 1:1).

SECOND EPISTLE — 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thess. 1:1).

Identity of Theme.

FIRST EPISTLE — 'Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father' (1 Thess. 1:3).

SECOND EPISTLE — 'We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; so that we ... glory ... for (in) your patience' (2 Thess. 1:3,4).

FIRST EPISTLE — 'The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints' (1 Thess. 3:13). (*A reference to Deut. 33:2; Psa. 68:17, and Zech. 14:5 will show that the 'saints' here are the 'holy angels' and not the church*).

SECOND EPISTLE — 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire' (2 Thess. 1:7,8).

The Special Purpose of Second Thessalonians.

The Thessalonian Church had been disturbed by the circulation of a letter purporting to have come from the Apostle, and by certain messages given by those who claimed to have 'the spirit'. These messages distorted the Apostle's teaching concerning the coming of the Lord, as taught in the church while he was with them and mentioned in the fourth chapter of his letter :

' We beseech you, brethren ... that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ (or the Lord) is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first' (2 Thess. 2:1-3).

Before the hope of the church at Thessalonica could be realized, certain important prophecies awaited fulfilment. As we have seen, the hope during the period of the Acts (and therefore that of 1 Thessalonians 4) was essentially the hope of Israel. When 1 Thessalonians 4 was written, Israel were still God's people. The Temple still stood, and the possibility (speaking humanly) of Israel's repentance had still to be reckoned with. If the hope of Israel was about to be fulfilled, then Daniel 9 to 12 must be fulfilled also, together with many other prophecies of the time of the end. This we have seen to have been the testimony of the Lord Himself in Matthew 24, and so far Israel had not been set aside (*i.e.* when the epistles to the Thessalonians were written).

The following predicted events must precede the coming of the Lord as revealed in 1 and 2 Thessalonians :

- (1) The apostasy must come first ('falling away', Gk. *Apostasia*).
- (2) The Man of Sin must be revealed in the Temple (the word 'Temple' is the same as in Matthew 23:16).
- (3) The coming of this Wicked One will be preceded by a *Satanic travesty of Pentecostal gifts*. (*The same words are used as of Pentecost, with the addition of the word 'lying'*).
- (4) This Wicked One shall be 'consumed' and 'destroyed' with the brightness of the Lord's coming (see Isaiah 11:4, revised reading).

All this the Apostle had told the Thessalonian Church when he was with them, before he wrote 1 Thessalonians 4 (*see* 2 Thess. 2:5).

The Thessalonians had already been taught by the Apostle himself concerning the events of prophecy, and would doubtless have read 1 Thessalonians 4 in harmony with his teaching had they not been deceived by false interpretations. The reference to the Archangel would have taken them back to Daniel 10 to 12. The epistle of Jude uses exactly the same word as is used here, and tells us that the Archangel's name is Michael (Jude 9). Immediately following the great prophecy of the seventy weeks, with its climax in the 'abomination of desolation', we have the revelation of Daniel 10. There the veil is partially withdrawn, and a glimpse is given of the Satanic forces behind the 'powers that be'. Michael is said to be 'your Prince', and in Daniel 12 we read :

' And at that time shall Michael stand up, *the great prince which standeth for the children of Thy people*: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation ... and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake' (Dan. 12:1,2).

Here we have Michael identified with the people of Israel, and when he stands up the great tribulation and the resurrection take place. This FOLLOWS THE EVENTS OF DANIEL 11, which are briefly summarized in 2 Thessalonians 2. Compare, for example, the following passages :

- ' He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods' (Dan. 11:36).
- ' Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped' (2 Thess. 2:4).

1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation 13.

If the reader would read consecutively Daniel 9,10,11 and 12, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2, and Revelation 13; the testimony of the truth itself would be so strong as to need no human advocate. Our space is

limited, and therefore we earnestly ask all who value the teaching of the Scriptures regarding 'that blessed hope' to read and compare these portions most carefully and prayerfully. When this is done, let the question be answered: 'What have all these Scriptures to do with the Church of the dispensation of the Mystery, a Church called into being consequent upon Israel's removal and the suspension of Israel's hope?' The answer can only be that, while the close association of the hope of the Thessalonians with the hope of Israel was consistent with the character of the dispensation then in force, the attempt to link the 'one hope of our calling' with prophetic times is a dispensational anachronism and a failure to distinguish things that differ.

'Till He Come'.

The coming of the Lord referred to in 1 Corinthians 11:26 must be the same hope as was entertained by the Thessalonians, and by the church at Rome (Rom. 15:12,13, *see* page 10). The Apostle himself summarizes this hope in Acts 28:20 as the 'hope of Israel'. The Corinthian epistle deals with a variety of subjects, and is addressed to different sections of the church. Some called themselves by the name of Paul, others by the name of Cephas. Some were troubled with regard to the question of marriage, and others with regard to moral questions. The section in which the words 'Till He come' occur is addressed to those whose 'fathers' were 'baptized unto Moses' (1 Cor. 10:1,2), whereas the section that immediately follows is addressed to Gentiles (1 Cor. 12:2).

Concerning the question of marriage, the Apostle writes :

'I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress ... the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not ... and they that buy, as though they possessed not' (1 Cor. 7:26-30).

Shall we fall into the error of teaching, as some have taught, that marriage is wrong because of what Paul says in this chapter? If we do, what shall we say of his wonderful words concerning husband and wife in Ephesians 5? Or of his advice that the younger women should not only marry, but marry again if left as widows? (1 Tim. 5:9-14). The right interpretation is clearly that Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 7 was true AT THE TIME, because the Second Coming of Christ was expected to take place during the lifetime of some of his hearers. He speaks as he does, 'because of the present necessity', and because 'the time is short'. When writing to the Thessalonians, he rightly identifies himself with the imminent hope of the Lord's coming by saying: 'We which are alive' (1 Thess. 4).

The 'present necessity' of 1 Corinthians 7 is no longer applicable on account of the failure of Israel and the suspension of their hope. So, in 1 Corinthians 11, the teaching of the chapter was only true while the hope of that calling was still imminent. When the people of Israel passed into their present condition of total blindness, as they did in Acts 28, their hope passed with them not to be revived until the end of the days when the Apocalypse is fulfilled. Meanwhile a new dispensation has come in, a dispensation associated with a 'Mystery' (or Secret) and unconnected with Israel. In the very nature of things a change of dispensation means a change of calling. It introduces a new sphere and a fresh set of promises, and demands a re-statement of its own peculiar hope.

The reader is referred to the chart facing page 1, where the inter-relation of the epistles, the Acts, and the hope, is set forth in diagrammatic form. The references should be verified and nothing taken for granted so that we may approach the third section of our theme with preparedness of mind.

HOPE IN THE THIRD SPHERE

The manifestation in Glory.

Before considering the special characteristics of the hope of the Church of the One Body, it may be of service to set out some of the distinctive features of the dispensation of the Mystery, so that, perceiving the unique character of its calling, we shall be compelled to believe the unique character of its hope.

Special features of the present dispensation.

First of all let us observe two features that marked the previous dispensation, but are now absent :

(1) *The presence and prominence of Israel.*

The testimony of the Gospels (Matt. 10:6; 15:24), the witness of Peter (Acts 3:25,26), and the testimony of Paul (Rom. 1:16; 3:29; 9:1-5; 11:24,25, and 15:8), all combine to show that the nation of Israel was an important factor in the outworking of the purpose of the ages and that, during the period covered by the Gospels and the Acts, no blessing could be enjoyed by a Gentile in independence of Israel. Today Israel* are scattered over the face of the earth, their land and city are still held by strangers, and the prophecies and promises relating to Israel are no longer being fulfilled or enjoyed. It is evident that with the setting aside of this favoured people, a change in dispensation was necessitated.

(2) *The presence and prominence of miraculous gifts.*

Throughout the public ministry of the Lord Jesus, and from Pentecost in Acts 2 until the shipwreck on the Island of Melita in Acts 28, supernatural signs, wonders and public miracles accompanied and confirmed the preached Word. Not only did the Lord Himself and also His apostles work miracles, but during the time of the Acts ordinary members of the churches were in possession of spiritual gifts in such abundance that they had to seek the Apostle's advice as to their regulation in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:26-40). The miracles of Mark 16, Acts 2, and 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 are not the normal experience of the church today. Their absence, together with the setting aside of the people of Israel, constitute two pieces of negative evidence in favour of a new dispensation.

We are not, however, limited to negative evidence. Scripture also provides definite evidence of a positive kind, which we must now consider.

(3) *The prison ministry of the Apostle Paul.*

When Paul spoke to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, he made it quite plain that one ministry was coming to an end and another, closely associated with prison, was about to begin. He reviewed his past services among them and told them, among other things, that they should see his face no more (Acts 20:17-38). Later, before King Agrippa, he revealed the important fact that when he was converted and commissioned by the Lord, in Acts 9, he had been told that at some subsequent time the Lord would appear to him again and give him a second commission (Acts 26:15-18).

(4) *The dispensational boundary of Acts 28.*

Right up to the last chapter of the Acts, Israel and miraculous gifts continued to occupy their pre-eminent place (Acts 28:1-10,17,20). Upon arrival at Rome, Paul, although desirous of visiting the Church (Rom. 1:11-13), sent first for the 'chief of the Jews', telling them that 'for the hope of Israel' he was bound with a chain. After spending a whole day with these men of Israel, seeking unsuccessfully to persuade them 'concerning Jesus' out of the law and the prophets, he pronounced finally their present doom of blindness, adding :

' Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it' (Acts 28:28).

During the two years of imprisonment that followed, the Apostle ministered to all that came to him, teaching those things which 'concern the Lord Jesus Christ' with no reference this time either to the law or to the prophets (Acts 28:30,31).

(5) *The present dispensation a new revelation.*

The omission of 'the law and the prophets' from Acts 28:31, as compared with verse 23, is an important point. Throughout the early ministry of the Apostle he makes continual and repeated appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures. But when one examines the 'Prison Epistles' one is struck by the absence of quotation. The reason for

*Since writing these words, Israel have become a nation in their own land. One movement nearer 'the end' has been taken.

this change is that Paul, as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, received the Mystery `by revelation' (Eph. 3:1-3). This Mystery had been hidden from ages and generations, until the time came for Paul to be made its minister (Col. 1:24-27). *It could not, therefore, be found in the Old Testament Scriptures.*

(6) *Some special features of this new calling.*

(a) This church was chosen `before the foundation of the world' (Eph. 1:4) and `before the world began' (before age-times) (2 Tim. 1:9).

(b) This church finds its sphere of blessing `in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power ... sit (seated) together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 1:3,20,21; 2:6).

(c) This church is not an `evolution', but a new `creation', the peculiar advantage of being a Jew, even though a member of the Church, having disappeared with the middle wall of partition (Eph. 2:14-19).

(d) This church is the Joint-Body of which Christ is the Head, and in which all members are equal (Eph. 1:22,23; 3:6), a relationship never before known.

(7) *The Prison Epistles.*

While the very nature of things demands a new dispensation consequent upon Israel's removal, we are not left to mere inference. There is a definite section of the New Testament with special teaching relating to the church of the present dispensation. This is found in the epistles written by Paul as the `prisoner of the Lord for us Gentiles'. These epistles are five in number, but we generally refer to the `four Prison Epistles', as that to Philemon is practical and personal and makes no contribution to the new teaching.

The four Prison Epistles are :

A	EPHESIANS. — The Dispensation of the Mystery.	Basic Truth.
B	PHILIPPIANS. — The Prize.	Outworking.
A	COLOSSIANS. — The Dispensation of the Mystery.	Basic Truth.
B	2 TIMOTHY. — The Crown.	Outworking.

The reader will find in each of these epistles evidence that they were written from prison and that they form part of the ministry referred to in Acts 28:31.

The above notes on features (1) to (7) are necessarily brief and are not intended to do anything more than provide the merest outline of the subject. Any reader who is not convinced as to the peculiar and unique character of these prison epistles and the dispensation they reveal, should give them a personal study, noting all their claims and their distinctive features. This booklet has not been written to prove to the satisfaction of all that a new dispensation commenced at Acts 28, but has been prepared rather as a help to those who, having realized that a change most certainly did take place in the dispensational dealings of God with men at that time, desire to understand what effect this change had upon the hope of the church.

The new phase of Hope necessitates Prayer.

While prayer should accompany the Word at all times, there is no need to pray for `revelation' concerning one's hope if it be already revealed. Words can scarcely be clearer than those employed in 1 Thessalonians 4, and if this chapter still represented the hope of the Church of the One Body, there would be no need for the Apostle to speak as he does in Ephesians 1. In verse 17 he prays that the saints might receive `the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him ... that ye may know what is the hope of His calling' (Eph. 1:17,18).

It might be well if the reader pondered the marginal reading of Ephesians 1:17 where, instead of `in the knowledge of Him', we read, `for the acknowledging of Him'. This raises a most important point. Many fail to go forward with the truth, not because of inability to understand the meaning of plain terms, but because of failure to `acknowledge Him'. The Apostle pauses in his teaching to tell his hearers that before another step can be taken, acknowledgment of what has already been revealed must be made. To acknowledge the truth of the Mystery is to

put oneself out of favour with denominationalism; and many a child of God who says, 'I do not see it', is really making a confession of failure to acknowledge the revelation of truth connected with the ascended Lord.

This new phase of Hope is associated with a Promise.

We have already seen that hope and promise are necessarily linked together. We discovered that the promises that were the basis of expectation during the Acts were the promises 'made unto the fathers'. Now the fathers had no promises made to them concerning heavenly places 'where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God'. They knew nothing of a church where Gentile believers would be on perfect equality with Jewish believers.

In Ephesians 1:12, where the A.V. reads 'first trusted', the margin reads 'hoped'; and as we cannot speak of 'the blessed trust' or 'the trust of the second coming' it is best to keep to the translation 'hope'. The actual word used is *proelpizo*, to 'fore-hope'. Of this prior hope the Holy Spirit is the seal, and as such is 'the Holy Spirit of promise'.

What promise is in view? There is but one promise in the Prison Epistles. The Gentiles who formed the Church of the One Body were by nature

'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise' (Eph. 2:12),
but, through grace, they became

'fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, whereof I (Paul) was made a minister' (Eph. 3:6-7).

This promise takes us back to the period of Ephesians 1:4, 'before the foundation of the world':

'According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus ... according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*' (*before age-times*) (2 Tim. 1:1,9).

It is this one unique promise that will be realized when the blessed hope before the Church of the One Body is fulfilled. Its realization is described by the apostle in Colossians 3:

'When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory' (Col. 3:4).

It is impossible to defer this 'appearing' until after the Millennium, for the Church is waiting for 'Christ their *life*' and so awaiting 'the promise of life', which is intimately connected with their hope.

The word 'appearing' might be translated 'manifestation' and will be familiar to most readers in the term 'epiphany'.

Parousia and Epiphany.

Believing as we do that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, we must be careful to distinguish between the different words used by God when speaking of the hope of His people. We observe that the word *parousia*, usually translated 'coming', is found in such passages as the following:

'What shall be the sign of Thy COMING, and of the end of the world (age)?' (Matt. 24:3).

'The COMING of the Lord' (1 Thess. 4:15).

'The COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thess. 2:1).

'They that are Christ's, at His COMING' (1 Cor. 15:23).

'The COMING of the Lord draweth nigh' (Jas. 5:8).

'The promise of His COMING' (2 Pet. 3:4).

'Not be ashamed before Him at His COMING'
(1 John 2:28).

This word is used to describe the hope of the Church during the period of the Acts when 'the hope of Israel' was still in view, and we find it used in the Gospel of Matthew, by Peter, James, and John, ministers of the circumcision, and by Paul in those epistles written before the dispensational change of Acts 28. It refers to His personal arrival on the earth to set up His earthly kingdom.

A different word is used in the Prison Epistles. There the word *parousia* is never used of the Lord's coming or of the hope of the Church, but rather the word *epiphany*. In 1 Thessalonians 4 the Lord descends from heaven; in 2 Thessalonians 1 He is to be revealed *from heaven*. This is very different from being manifested *'in glory'*, i.e. where Christ now sits *'on the right hand of God'*. While, therefore, the hope before all other companies of the redeemed is *'the Lord's coming'*, the *'prior-hope'* of the Church of the Mystery is rather *'their going'* to be *'manifested with Him in glory'* which is *'far above all heavens'* (Eph. 4:10).

While the epistle to Titus is not a *'Prison Epistle'*, it belongs to the same group as 1 and 2 Timothy. There, too, we read that we should live

'looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (OR ... and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ)' (Titus 2:13).

The marriage of the King's Son

(see chart over the page).

We may perhaps illustrate these different aspects of the Second Advent, by using the occasion of the marriage of the King's son at Westminster Abbey. The marriage is *one*, whether witnessed in the Abbey itself, from a grand-stand, or from the public foot-way. So, whatever our calling, the hope is one in this respect, that it is Christ Himself. Nevertheless, we cannot conceive of anyone denying that to be permitted to be present in the Abbey itself is something different from sitting in a grand-stand until the King's son, accompanied by *'shout'* and *'trumpet'*, descends from the Abbey to be met by the waiting people. These waiting people outside the Abbey form one great company, although differentiated as to point of view. So the early Church, together with the Kingdom saints, form one great company, although some, going on to perfection like faithful Abraham, belong to *'the heavenly calling'* connected with Jerusalem that is above, while others belong to the Kingdom which is to be *'on earth'*. We can hardly believe that any subject of the King would *'prefer'* the grand-stand or the kerb to the closer association of the Abbey itself; and we can hardly believe that any redeemed child of God would *'prefer'* to wait on earth for the descent of the Lord from heaven if the *'manifestation with Him in glory'* were a possible hope before him. We cannot, however, force these things upon the heart and conscience. We can only respond to the exhortation to be *'ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (reverence)'* (1 Pet. 3:15).

We will not strive with our brethren; we will not call them hard names. We seek grace to be patient and instruct with meekness, *'if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth'* (2 Tim. 2:24,25).

We earnestly invite any readers who have followed this *'reason for the hope within us'* so far, and who would examine more carefully both the foundation upon which it rests and the glorious superstructure of the Mystery itself, to consider the various books and booklets that are published by *The Berean Publishing Trust* as well as the bi-monthly magazine *The Berean Expositor*.

In conclusion, may we refer all our readers, especially those who believe the distinctive teaching of the Mystery, to the words of the apostle in 2 Timothy 4:8 where he speaks with approbation of all those who *'love His appearing'*.