



# 1948 - 2008 ISRAEL AT 60

## PART 4 OF 4: THE HOPE OF ISRAEL - THE TRUE CHRISTIAN HOPE

May 14th 2008 marked 60 years since the state of Israel declared its independence. In this four part series, we are looking at Israel and why they are such a significant nation. As the series now draws to its conclusion, we show how the wonderful things which relate to Israel could relate to you as well.

### - Two important principles

As in each part to the series so far, we once again reiterate the two key principles made initially in part one (see that fact sheet for more information):

- Everything put forward is based on one source - the Bible, which is the Word of God (2 Pet 1:19-21, 2 Tim 3:14-17). This makes it 100% accurate and reliable.
- This consideration of Israel is not a celebration of the nation's achievements, for they are far from perfect.

### - 'The hope of Israel'

The phrase 'hope of Israel' appears just once in the Bible, in words of the apostle Paul:

Acts 28:20 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.

A full study of the context of these words is outside the scope of this series, suffice it to say that Paul was commissioned by Christ to preach the same message to ordinary people that Christ himself had done previously - hence Paul being termed an 'apostle'.

So the hope of Israel that the apostle Paul preached came from his master and leader Jesus Christ. If Jesus was Paul's leader, by definition Paul must have been a follower of Christ, as the scriptures confirm:

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me [Paul], even as I also am of Christ.

### - Paul's work

Those who Paul preached to, and who he told to follow him (and by implication Christ), became termed 'Christians':

Acts 11:26 And when he [a disciple called Barnabas] had found him [Paul], he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

So in short:

- Paul presented the gospel message as 'the hope of Israel'
- Those who heard and responded to his words were termed 'Christians'

This leaves us with the simple conclusion then, that to be a true Christian is to hold to the hope of Israel.

### - The hope of Israel

So what is the hope of Israel? We find the answer in more words of Paul:

Acts 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

- The hope of Israel is a promise made by God to Paul's fathers.

### - The fathers

Who are these fathers? One of Paul's compatriots, the apostle Peter, gives us the answer:

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, who was in turn the father of Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel). These were Paul's fathers, the fathers of all the Jews, to whom this promise was made.

### - The promise

What is this promise? It's the one that has cropped up time and time again throughout this series. Genesis 12, amongst other passages, outlines it for us:

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

This land was the land of Canaan, the former name of the land of Israel, as considered in part one of this series. Abraham was promised that one day he and his seed would inherit the land of Israel for ever, and that all families of the earth would be greatly blessed, a promise that was reiterated to his son and grandson, underlining its importance.

### - Abraham's seed

This seed of Abraham's has more to it than meets the eye, as Paul makes clear in his epistle to the Galatians:

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Here Paul makes clear that the seed of Abraham refers not to multiple descendants, but to one descendant in particular - the Lord Jesus Christ. The land of Israel was promised not only to Abraham for ever, but also to Christ. Clearly though, as we seen several times throughout this series, these promises have not yet been fulfilled; but as God always keeps his promises there must be a future fulfillment to come. This is what underpins the hope of Israel - the hope of this final fulfillment, when Christ, and all those to whom God made these promises, will inherit the land, and all nations of the world will be blessed.

## - The coming blessings

The Bible speaks at great length of the nature and worldwide impact of these coming blessings. For example:

Isaiah 56:6-7 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant: 7. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

## - The hope of Israel - the true Christian hope

There are many, many passages in the scriptures which speak of the wonderful blessings God will bring about on the earth through his son Jesus, in keeping with the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Blessings which will be centred around Israel, but will affect the whole world. This is the wonderful hope of Israel; a hope which the true Christian will not only know, but value too above all else, desiring its fulfillment.

With a true understanding of the hope of Israel, many passages in the scriptures take on a much fuller meaning than they would otherwise. In fact, it soon becomes apparent that everything in the Bible revolves around this hope. The following are just some examples which only just scratch the surface:

Matthew 2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda [Israel], art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Acts 13:23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

### ■ Prophecies of Christ!

Romans 8:24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

### ■ Why is hope not the greatest? Because one day it will be fulfilled, and there will be no more need for it!

Ephesians 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

Titus 3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

On numerous occasions throughout our series we have come across the term 'for ever' eg Abraham was told he would inherit the land for ever. In the last two passages we have references to 'salvation' and 'eternal life'. Amongst the wonderful blessings which form the basis of the hope of Israel is the prospect of living for ever, free from pain, suffering and death. Truly a marvellous hope!

## - But!

We've shown how being a true Christian is to share the hope of Israel. As Paul makes clear, this is a matter of faith:

Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

However, faith is not the only characteristic required by a true Christian - the Bible is very specific that both faith (belief) and baptism are required:

Galatians 3:26-29 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Without following the correct process of belief and baptism, one cannot be considered a true Christian. This therefore means the hope of Israel, and the wonderful blessings that involves, cannot be shared. Whilst the whole world will benefit from the fulfillment of God's promises, eternal life and everything that goes with it is only open to the true Christian.

## - Summary

As we summarise the things we have been considering, the message is clear:

- Scripture joins the hope of Israel with being a Christian
- The hope of Israel is the hope of a promise God made to the fathers of the Jews
- This promise involves the giving of the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendant (singular) for ever, along with great blessings
- This descendant is explicitly declared to be Jesus Christ
- To be a true Christian is to share in the hope of Israel, something which requires faith (belief) and baptism into Jesus
- This is absolutely essential to receive salvation and everlasting life

**OUR SERIES HAS SHOWN ISRAEL TO BE OF EXTREME IMPORTANCE AS THEIR FUTURE IS LINKED TO YOURS.**

**YOU ARE THEREFORE URGED TO INVESTIGATE THESE THINGS FURTHER SO THAT YOU TOO MIGHT BECOME A TRUE CHRISTIAN AND SHARE IN THE HOPE OF ISRAEL!**