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Our Glorious Hope

by Alan D Toms

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This article was written for the magazine of the FIEC (*an organisation that is far removed today from what it was in the days of its founder, Rev E J Poole-Connor - IF*). It is part of a series giving different prophetic points of view. We appreciate that some of our readers may well have read what Mr Toms has written but we thought that there would be many others who would be glad to see it.

I am glad to be a member of the FIEC and appreciate that there are differences of opinion on the subject of our Lord's return, but maintain that such differences should not hinder fellowship.

It is an interesting fact that the prophetic views which I embrace were held by our founder the Rev E J Poole-Connor. On many occasions we shared a platform together and dealt with this subject. The Bible speaks quite clearly of the Lord Jesus Christ returning a second time to the earth. "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts 1:11, KJV. Both Old and New Testaments tell of this tremendous event and of a number of happenings that will lead up to it, thereby providing us with signs of His coming when it is very near. The Jewish people, dispossessed of their land and scattered through all the world, must return to their original home and become a recognised nation once more. There is also a time of trouble to come for the new nation of Israel and the world, when Satan attempts a 'last fling' against all that is dear to God bringing plagues and destruction upon the earth and enslaving the souls of men by a last great dictator (Antichrist) who will seek world dominion - and especially the overthrow of all who fear God.

Believers are promised special strength for those days (known as the 'Great Tribulation' and also as 'The Time of Jacob's Trouble', for Israel will suffer too). In fact, I believe it is when Israel's suffering is at its height and Jerusalem is at the point of final destruction that the Lord will appear to deliver her and bring peace to the earth.

This is not the 'end of the world' but the time when the Lord Jesus takes His place as King of the Jews and all nations for one thousand years. This is known as the Millennium. After this age the Judgment of the Great White Throne will take place and then the world as we know it will be destroyed.

The fulfilment of Revelation 21:1-4 will then take place. There will be a new heaven and new earth. All Christians agree on the basic teaching that the Lord Jesus must return but there is a difference of opinion about the details. Premillennialists believe that He will come in visible glory before (pre-) the millennium.

I hold the pre-millennial view of the Lord's return when He comes to establish His Kingdom upon the earth. Some pre-millennialists believe in an any-moment Secret Rapture before the Tribulation but I hold to His coming after the time of Jacob's trouble - ONE second coming. The Lord's wording in Matthew 24:29 "After the tribulation of those days ..." should be sufficient. However, there are many other passages of Scripture confirming this, e.g. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 "... that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed ..." Many people seem to think that the Millennium is only mentioned once in the Bible. Even if this was so, once should be sufficient for God's people to believe it. It is true that the period of 1000 years only occurs in one passage, Revelation 20, but it is stated six times in that chapter.

However, the testimony of the whole of Scripture is clear that a New Order will be set up, not by the efforts of men, but by the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.



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Acts 1:6 clearly indicates that the disciples expected an earthly kingdom. "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They could only have understood this from the Old Testament as they had no Revelation 20 at that time. Similarly, there are Jews today who do not accept the New Testament (including Revelation 20) and yet they believe in the Messiah bringing in an earthly kingdom.

In referring to the Millennium it is impossible to mention all the Scriptures on this subject as these are numerous. When paraphrasing Psalm 72 into New Testament language Isaac Watts, who clearly saw the Golden Age, took the promises literally and spoke of 'shore to shore'. This Psalm specifically says, that "all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him". This has yet to be fulfilled.

Many Psalms refer to Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, etc. I believe that God says what He means. These words of Holy Scripture should be left as they are. If Christians have the right to change the meaning of these words, how can they criticise Mormons and others when they do the same?

The Prophets confirm the Psalms. Isaiah speaks in Chapter 11 of a time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (v 9). That is at a time when wild creatures 'shall not hurt'. When is this?

The last chapters of Isaiah deal almost exclusively with details of Christ's Millennial Reign. In Chapter 60 we read of a time when "violence shall no more be heard in thy land" (v 18). This is not happening there today and Israel is not alone. Read Zechariah 12. 13 and 14. The prophet definitely states that the Lord shall be King over all the earth and the context leaves us in no doubt as to the circumstances during this reign. "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one," Zechariah 14:9, KJV.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His disciples that He had not come to destroy the Old Testament Scriptures but to fulfil them. In fact, amongst the beatitudes He quoted from Psalm 37 and said, "The meek shall inherit the earth". When He taught His disciples to pray (Matthew 6: 10) He emphasized that they should pray for the Kingdom to come and the Will of God to be done on earth similarly as in heaven. Is this prayer answered?

In Matthew 24 Jesus spoke of the events occurring before the sign of the coming of the Son of Man in heaven. This gives a totally different picture from the many millennial prophecies of the Old Testament. Plainly the perilous times of the last days ("This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come," 2 Timothy 3:1, KJV) precede the coming of the Lord whereas the many prophecies of blessing to Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, and in fact the earth, will succeed Christ's personal return.

Isaiah 2 (and Micah 4) speak of a time when the Word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem in a way much greater than at Pentecost. It is specifically stated that it is at a time when God shall judge among nations: at a time when swords would be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. It is also very definitely stated that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This has not happened yet and must therefore be at a time in the future. It will not be in this age so must be in the age to come.

The fact that there are so many promises related to the land and the nation is all an evidence of the grace of God. God has always worked in grace. Right from the time of Adam through to the time of Abraham, i.e. before the Jewish nation was formed, God saved people. There is only one Gospel and only one way of salvation. That is, through the blood of the Lord Jesus.

So those who understand pre-millennial truth rightly, do not assert that there will be a different gospel in the future age. The way in which God's ancient people, Israel, will be blessed is the same way, and by the same means as believers in the present age are brought into blessing. Therefore, Scriptures which are pre-eminently for the people of Israel in the future age may be applied, in measure, to God's people now. My mother was brought to saving faith in the Lord Jesus through the words of Jeremiah 31:3, "Yea, I have loved



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thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." The context clearly shows that this is a message from Jehovah to the nation of Israel. But the truth applies for all who are drawn by God's grace - they have been loved everlastingly. My mother received that word for herself and she was not wrong, but the fulfilment of the Scripture has yet to be in the experience of the Jewish nation. Like the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul confirms the promises contained in the Old Testament. In Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11 we have clear statements concerning Israel. Paul makes it clear to whom he is referring and states categorically that they are "My kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3). Many expositors ignore these chapters or seek to 'spiritualise' them. But God means what He has said and will perform that which He has spoken. He will not turn back. We are told that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (11:29) .

In Hebrews 8:8-11, Jeremiah is quoted. But the apostle does not change the words of the prophet. In fact, the Holy Ghost has specifically stated when speaking of the new covenant, that it is with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" - the same people that were brought out of Egypt - the same people who broke the old covenant.

That God will keep every word He has spoken shows that the true gospel is a powerful gospel. It magnifies God's sovereignty. There is no need to explain away God's Word. Granted there may be spiritual application, as with my mother's experience.

There are parallels in the way God works and blesses in every age. But the promises contained in many Scriptures which speak of great blessing on earth, not only to Israel but to Gentile nations, have yet to be brought to pass. And spiritual application is not fulfilment. Why do people think that it is 'spiritual' not to believe God's precise words?

If God is not going to keep the many promises of blessing on earth — promises to Jerusalem, Israel, etc. — how can we believe that He will keep His promises to the Church? It seems elementary logic that the two stand or fall together.

It is worthy of note that many prophecies concerning Israel in the last days, and interpreted by earlier pre-millennialists literally, have since been fulfilled in this century — e.g. the return of the Jewish people to their ancient land — their returning in general unbelief and under Gentile supervision — the rebirth of Israel as a separate independent state — the reunification of the ten tribes and the two as one people — "wars and rumours of wars" — Israel's increasing strength — and so on.

In seeking to grasp the full meaning of Scripture we need to realise that the message was written from a three-dimensional viewpoint. The writers spoke to the people of their own time (which is past) and they also bore God's Word for all believers (which can be applied to us now) and they looked on to the end (which is future).

Hail to the Lord's Anointed!
Great David's greater Son!
Hail! in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free:
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.

Kings shall fall down before Him
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing;
For He shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar

- James Montgomery