

Things which accompany Salvation Israel and the Church

Today we continue our series on 'Things which accompany salvation' with a further three broadcasts on the following subjects: Israel and the Church, Worship and Service, and the Rapture and the Appearing. In these broadcasts we have been returning to the chapter titles of the book, *Salvation*, in which the late Frank Binford Hole writes of the blessings which accompany salvation, as well as giving an outline of some important biblical truths. I recommend this book to any Christian who has a desire to know more about what God has accomplished, through the death of Christ, for the blessing of mankind.

Our subject today is "Israel and the Church." I believe it is essential to understand the distinction between Israel and the Church if we are to rightly divide the word of truth. It has been said that while the Bible is all for us, it is not all about us, and it is good to remember this, especially as we read the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostle Paul writing to the Christians at Rome said that these things, written before (that is, the Old Testament) were for their instruction. And so, while we can find Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures, we need to bear in mind that they were written for Israel, God's earthly people, and not directly for the Church, God's heavenly people.

The New Testament is quite distinct from the Old Testament and was written for the people of God in our times, the Church. It is true that with the light of the New Testament, things in the Old Testament can be seen in a clearer way, but nevertheless they remain distinct. Perhaps you have heard it said, "The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained." That is true and in this present day, when the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the wonderful blessing of being able to compare and contrast the Old and New Testament teachings, and to see the difference between the blessing of Israel and that of the Church. I believe that many Christians fail to recognise that the Old and New Testaments are distinct. In John's Gospel we read, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (see John ch. 1 v. 17). Perhaps this summarises in a few words the distinction between Old and New Testaments, the distinction between law and grace, and the subsequent distinction between Israel and the Church. The Christians in Galatia were mixing up Christian truth and Jewish traditions so the apostle Paul wrote to encourage them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free and not to put themselves under the bondage of the law.

In the Old Testament we read of God's dealings with Israel, how He chose them for blessing and of His great love and care towards them. Let me read to you words Moses spoke to the nation of Israel,

"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."

And again,

“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations”, (see Deuteronomy ch. 32 vv. 8-10, ch. 7 vv. 6-9).

Even to the casual reader, there can be no doubt that the people of God in the Old Testament were the nation of Israel. The fathers (or patriarchs) of the nation were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whose name God changed to Israel). They had Moses and Aaron, the law and the sacrifices, the tabernacle and the temple. God gave them judges, prophets and kings and through these holy men, the Scriptures. But sadly Israel's history was one of disobedience and unbelief, and because of this they never really experienced the blessing God had purposed for them. The nation split in the years following the reign of King Solomon into 2 kingdoms, Israel and Judah, with Damascus and Jerusalem as their respective capitals. Later the 10 northern tribes were dispersed amongst the nations and the 2 tribes (Judah and Benjamin) were taken into captivity in Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar. This period was the beginning of the times of the Gentiles and the Old Testament closes with the prophecies of the post exilic prophets beginning with Ezekiel and Daniel who look on to a future day of blessing for Israel.

Perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves that following the prophecy of Malachi, there was no communication from God to Israel (or more correctly to Judah), for 400 years. Then following the wonderful announcement to Mary that she would bear a son called Jesus, the heavens rang with a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” The Messiah was born, in Bethlehem, just as the Scriptures had foretold. The child, Jesus, was raised in Nazareth (again as the Scriptures had foretold), but when He presented Himself to the nation as the Christ, the sent of God, they rejected Him. Sadly we know the Gospel record of the life of the One who was despised and rejected of men, the man of sorrows and the One who was acquainted with grief. The leaders of the nation of Israel should have known better but their eyes were blinded. In Acts ch. 7, Stephen gives a potted history of God's ancient people, and concludes by charging them of being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit, persecuting the prophets, and betraying and murdering the Righteous One (the Lord Jesus Christ).

So far we have considered Israel and their past history. We have not mentioned the Church. The reason for that, of course, is that the Church has no history in the Old Testament. The words of the Lord Jesus Himself would prove this when He said, “Upon **this** rock I **will** build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it” (see Matthew ch. 16 v. 18). Now, just to be clear, the rock that the Lord Jesus spoke about was Peter's confession that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The rock was not Peter! Peter's name means stone, and although he was a great man in many ways, his life was marked by failures. Note that the Lord's words were in the future tense, the Church would be built by the Lord Jesus, and upon the confession of Himself as the Son of the living God. After the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit came down to earth at Pentecost as we read in Acts ch. 2, and here begins the Church period. So while the Church had no history up until this point (except, of course, in the purpose of God), we find that the New Testament tells us God's mind in relation to this completely distinct company.

When I was younger I heard this very helpful illustration of God's railway. In past years, the locomotive was Israel, moving along the main line under the watchful eye of God. God loved and

blessed them and gave them promises, both conditional and unconditional. But when Israel refused His Son, He as it were, put them into the siding, in order that He might bring the express engine called, the Church, onto the main line. To this day God is fulfilling His purpose through the Church, and Israel remains in the siding, but the day is coming when God will take the Church away to be the heavenly complement of Christ for all eternity. Then God will bring Israel out from the siding and back onto the main line and fulfil His promises to them.

Israel and the Church are two distinct companies, and we will not be able to understand the ways of God, or be able to interpret the prophecies of Scripture unless we understand this fact. God has not neglected His promises to Israel, nor will He fulfil these in the Church. The promises He made to Israel, His earthly people, will be fulfilled to Israel. If we cannot understand or see how this will come to pass, the answer is to search the Scriptures further to find out. Any who would deny Israel their blessings and instead to have God giving their blessings to the Church, neither understands the Scriptures or a God, who cannot lie. Whether we understand it or not, we can say with absolute confidence that not one promise God made to His earthly people will fail to come to pass. All God's promises are guaranteed by Himself.

Thinking again about our illustration of God's railway, we see that God is presently calling out a special people for Himself. In Acts ch. 2 we read, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." It has been said that there are only three groups of people in the world today; the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church. Formerly there were only two groups, the Jews and the Gentiles (or non-Jews), but now the Church is being formed, with believers added to it every day. And the wonderful thing is that the Bible makes clear that the Church is comprised of both Jew and Gentile. There are no national or racial barriers in the Church. If you have confessed your sins, and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then you are part of that redeemed company on earth, the Church of God.

In the letter Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, he sets out the case for man's guilt very clearly, as in a court room drama. He says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (see Romans ch. 3 v. 23). If you read the earlier chapters you will see that by "all" he means both Jew and Gentile. So in this present day, there is no special blessing for the nation of Israel. To gain God's favour, we must all confess that we are sinners before a Holy God, and accept the work of Christ at the cross as the means of our personal salvation. This is really what the Lord was teaching Nicodemus when He said to him, "Ye must be born again." Yes, the Israelites had a position and a relationship with God in the past, but that has been forfeited for a time (that is the present day), and the Bible says,

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (see Romans ch. 3 vv. 21-22).

The only way whereby man can be right with God today is by accepting the Gospel. Paul preached "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (see Acts ch. 20 v. 21).

We are looking at the subject of Israel and the Church and have considered both past history and present times. As I have already said, I believe many Christians fail to see the distinction between these two companies and as a result are confused as to God's dealings with them, both in the present day, and in the future. As we have already said, the Old Testament is for the most part God's dealings with Israel in the past, and the New Testament is His dealings with the Christian Church in the present. But what about the future?

Returning to our illustration of God's railway, we ask the questions **why**, **how**, and **when** will the Church be taken off the main line that Israel might be brought out of the siding? Well the Bible answers these questions so we don't need to rely on our imaginations.

In answer to the question **why?**,
if we read the last words of the Lord Jesus we will find that as He prepares His disciples for His departure out of the world, He says,

“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (see John ch. 14 vv. 2-3). Also in Ephesians we read, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (see Ephesians ch. 5 vv. 25-27).

Jesus is coming to take us, that is every believer, to be with Himself!

In answer to the question **how?**,
we have a direct revelation from the Lord, through the words of the apostle Paul when he says to the Christians at Thessalonica,

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (that is go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (see 1 Thessalonians ch. 4 vv. 15-17).

Also in Corinthians we read,

“Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (see 1 Corinthians ch. 15 vv. 51-53).

In answer to the question **when?**,
we are not told specifically when the Lord will return. We have His promise before He left the world (which we have already quoted), and in the last chapter of our Bible we read His words from heaven,

“Behold, I come quickly”, “Behold, I come quickly” and “Surely I come quickly” (see Revelation ch. 22 vv. 7, 12, & 20).

In the parable Jesus told about the 10 virgins, 5 who were wise and 5 who were foolish, He warns, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (see Matthew ch. 25 v. 13). I believe that the **when** is not told us specifically so that we might be found watching and waiting for His coming. Paul says that it is “high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (see Romans ch. 13 v. 11). What a blessed hope we have as Christians, to be with and to be made like our Saviour and Lord in heavenly glory!

But what of Israel’s future blessings? Will God forget His promises to His ancient people? Certainly not! After the Church is raptured to glory, God will once again take up Israel. They will be brought out of the siding and back onto the main line. Of course, they remain guilty of rejecting their Messiah, and crucifying Him at Calvary. Blinded to the many prophecies which were fulfilled in His life, and especially at His crucifixion, they remain in unbelief today, and as such they will need to repent. If you read Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapters 9, 10, & 11, you will see the present condition of the nation of Israel, but you will also read, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as

it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (see Romans ch. 11 v. 26).

We briefly mentioned the prophecy of Daniel, and if you read from ch. 9 onwards you will note that the Messiah would be “cut off” after 69 weeks (that is 483 years). Therefore only 1 week (or 7 years) remain to be fulfilled. This final week is spoken of in ch. 12, where 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 even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

Jeremiah refers to this same period as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (see Jeremiah ch. 30 v. 7). The Lord Himself refers to Daniel’s prophecy saying,

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolations, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,... then let them which be in Judaea flee to the mountains:... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (see Matthew ch. 24 vv. 15-21).

But a remnant of Israel will repent, Zechariah prophecies about that coming day saying,

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, ...” (see Zechariah ch. 12 v 10).

And God will respond, in deliverance and blessing. We are almost out of time but let me close by quoting from the prophet Isaiah, speaking of that future day of Israel’s blessing he says,

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” “But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying” (see ch. 11 vv. 1-2 & 6, ch. 35 v. 1, ch. 65 vv. 18-24).

May God bless you all.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on “Things which accompany salvation – Israel and the Church.” Talk no. T1127

King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated

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