

The Two Hopes

That which, above all else, marks the difference between the Church and Israel, and indeed we may say between the Church and the entire population of the millennial earth, is, that the Church is blessed *in* the Lord Jesus Christ and with Him: Israel and the millennial nations will be blessed *by* Him and will be *under His reign*.

The Church is Christ's body — His bride, and participates thus in His exaltation to be head over all things both in heaven and on earth. As the body partakes with the head of all the vital energies by which the whole is actuated, so does the Church even now partake with the Lord Jesus of His risen life, and receive from Him the anointing of the Holy Spirit: and as the bride participates in all that is possessed by her husband, so is the Church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, to participate in His inheritance of all things. Her oneness with Him is the great distinction of the Church.

There are many things in which those who compose the Church differ not from saints of other dispensations, whether past or future. True believers between the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Lord Jesus into the air at the Rapture, constitute "the church"; and these, in common with the Old Testament saints and millennial saints, are chosen of God the Father, redeemed by the Blood of the Saviour, quickened and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and they are all preserved by almighty grace. In these things the Church differs not from other saints.

That which distinguishes the Church is her oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. "At that day ye shall know (here, upon earth) that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Of none but the Church could these words be spoken. Of no others could it be said, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 14:22).

Israel and the nations in millennial times will constitute "the world," who, by seeing the Church in the same glory as the Lord Jesus, are to know that she is the object of the same love — loved of the Father as the Lord Jesus Himself is loved. Israel and the nations will be happy, Israel pre-eminently so, under the reign of the King and His glorified saints: but no distinction can be more marked, no contrast more striking, than that which exists between the Bride of the Lamb and the nations over which she, with her Lord and Bridegroom, is to reign.

Israel's distinctive calling is to earthly blessings. Had they been obedient, wealth, power, fame, and prosperity, would have been the tokens of God's approval of their ways. By their disobedience, their idolatry, and especially their rejection of the Saviour, they have come under the inflictions of God's wrath, and that wrath has been manifested against them in all the heavy temporal judgments which have overtaken them. We refer now to God's dealings with them nationally, in His providential government of the earth. As individuals they are, of course, in common with all men, amenable to "eternal judgment"; and, if not saved "by grace" "through faith," that judgment will result in eternal ruin.

But it is with God's dispensational dealings that we are now occupied; the Scripture leaves no room for doubt that, in this world, the wrath of God against Israel has been, is, and will yet be, manifested by the infliction of temporal calamities.

Prophecy, on the other hand, proves that God's approbation of Israel, when nationally restored and saved, will be manifested in abundance of temporal prosperity and blessing. Israel's is an

earthly calling: and with Israel, consequently, adversity on earth is a token of God's displeasure—prosperity a sign of His favor and His smile.

The Church having no present inheritance, except as one with the Lord Jesus in heaven, present earthly trials and sufferings are not her token of divine disapproval. Nay, they are as much her proper portion with Christ on earth, as the glory given by the Father to the Lord Jesus, and given by Him to the Church, is her portion with Him in heaven. Hence the sufferings of the Church are her glory. "Who now rejoiceth in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind in the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). "For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the *fellowship of his sufferings*, being made conformable to his death" (Phil. 3:10). "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also" (Rom. 5:3). The Lord Jesus esteemed it His highest glory that the Father should be glorified in Him in His endurance of the Cross (John 14:31), and the Church, being by the Spirit like-minded with the Lord Jesus, esteems as her highest glory that she should be "counted worthy to suffer for His name."

Israel's calling and that of the Church being so different, it follows of necessity that their hopes also differ. The Lord Jesus is the hope both of the one and the other; but He is the hope of the Church as the One who will descend into the air, and receive her to Himself, and to the full consummation of her blessedness with Himself in heaven: He is "the hope of Israel," as the One who will further descend to the earth, delivering them from the yoke of the Gentiles, executing judgment on all who have opposed them, and setting up on the earth His glorious kingdom, of which Jerusalem is to be the center, and in which Israel, forgiven and purified, is to enjoy the most conspicuous, distinguished place.

Such are the hopes held out to Israel by the Word of God — hopes which, in their fulfillment, are inseparable from the execution of utter, destroying judgment on all who exalt themselves against God and oppress His people. "The day of vengeance" on God's adversaries is to be the day of Israel's deliverance, and the immediate prelude to Israel's exaltation and full blessing unto Messiah's reign. It is impossible, therefore, for an Israelite, *as such*, to desire or invoke Jehovah's interposition, or Messiah's coming, for the fulfillment of Israel's national hopes, without invoking or desiring judgment on the wicked.

The hopes of the Church, on the contrary, are quite unconnected with the thought of judgment on the wicked. She is aware indeed that judgment on the ungodly will ensue on her own removal from the earth: still, that for which she waits is not a state of earthly blessedness which judgment on the wicked is to introduce, but her own translation from amid the scene of evil to meet her Lord in the air, and to be "for ever with the Lord." This is the hope which the Church, or the saint, can both cherish and express without a thought of the wicked, or of the judgments to be executed upon them. These judgments succeed, and probably at some distance of time, the descent of the Lord Jesus into the air; they are not the necessary preliminaries of that event, and that even itself is the Church's blessed hope.

— W. Trotter