

# BIBLE EXPLORATIONS

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...to know the love of Christ  
which passeth knowledge  
that ye might be filled with  
all the fulness of God Eph 3:19

## The Salvation God #5

The Old Testament Scriptures prophesy of a Redeemer and a Saviour for Israel. In the New Testament, the Gospels speak of the man Jesus, Who fulfilled that promise. He was both the Son of God and the son of man. He came **“in the likeness of sinful flesh.”** (Rom 8:3) He was faithful to the service for which He was called. He was subject to human frailties as we are in that He hungered, thirsted and grew tired. Yet, the Gospels reveal that He conquered death and was resurrected.

The epistles written during the Acts testify to this fact that Jesus was indeed the promised One and that He was resurrected. They confirm His resurrection and speak of a future day when He will reign over Israel and the nations. The letters of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, address subjects that differ from the other writers during that period. He writes about the grace of God in the context of and comparison to the law. He reveals many mysteries (secrets) that were hidden in the Old Testament Scriptures. Peter admits that some of the things that Paul wrote at this time was hard to understand. (2Pet 3:16). During the period covered in the Acts, the resurrected Lord speaks through His chosen Apostles from the right hand of God concerning the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

It is not until Paul receives the revelation of “the mystery” that we learn of the ascended Lord in His “fulness”. This truth is revealed in his last seven epistles written after Acts. In his last seven letters he writes of pure grace, grace that is not in the context of the law. As the prisoner of Christ Jesus for us Gentiles, he reveals **“the dispensation (stewardship) of the grace of God which was given me to you-ward.”**

(Eph 3:2) In these letters we learn things concerning Christ that were kept secret before the foundation or “overthrow” of the world (*kosmos*), long before sin had entered into the universe. We learn things that were not written in the Old Testament Scriptures, things that are untraceable. We learn things that pertain to God’s whole family in heaven and on earth including principalities, powers, dominions and mights (dominions of spiritual and angelic beings).

We have noted the relationship between the word salvation and Saviour and that it’s fundamental meaning is “deliverance”. We generally think of salvation as meaning deliverance from sin. In Eph 1:12-14, Paul speaks of a salvation over and above “deliverance from sin”. He writes to those who had **“first trusted (gr. *proelpizo* = before hoped) in Christ”**. He further states that it is Christ, **“in Whom ye also \*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”** (\* The word trusted is not in the original text.) These believers had first trusted in Christ at an earlier date, during the Acts period. Paul says that **“also, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation:...”** The salvation mentioned here was afterward, that is, at a later date. It is not the salvation that they “first trusted”. That salvation spoke of the deliverance from sin. This salvation is an **“obtained inheritance”** (vs 11) and is part of the **“dispensation of the fulness of times”** (vs 10). It includes the “heading up” of all things in Christ,

**“both which are in heaven, (above the heavens) and which are on earth”**.

If this is a different salvation than the one he speaks of when they first trusted in Christ, when did they hear this new gospel of salvation? Could it have been during the two year period recorded in Acts 28:30,31? **“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”** These few words at the close of the book of Acts may appear to be of little importance. But they are a significant key to understanding the transition from the words of Acts 28:28 to the proclamation of the truth of the mystery revealed in the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. Furthermore, we understand the freedom Paul had as a prisoner at this time. His Roman citizenship protected him and provided a free passage to Rome. This is unlike his words as a prisoner described in 2Tim 2:9, **“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer (*kakourgos* = malefactor, criminal) even unto bonds;...”** His Roman citizenship was of no value there at Rome, several years later. This was after the great fire at Rome by the hand of Nero when there was great persecution against Christians.

When Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner at the end of Acts, the Lord allowed him complete freedom to proclaim this newly revealed truth concerning the “salvation God”. This is the two-year period that Luke records. Furthermore, in Eph 1:13, he calls this salvation **“your salvation”**. This is the gospel of salvation sent to the Gentiles spoken of in Acts 28:28.

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The primary readers of the Ephesian epistle were Gentiles. “**Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;**” (Eph 2:11) and, “**For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,**” (Eph 3:1)

We have made reference to Acts 28:28 several times. To refer to this verse as a boundary can easily be confusing even to those who know the truth of the mystery. It is generally taken to represent an ending and a beginning to something. That is, Israel’s program ended and the church which is His body, begins.

To state that Israel’s program ended at this point is not entirely accurate. The final judgment for Israel occurred several years later in AD 69 when Jerusalem fell to the hands of the Roman army. This was in fulfillment of the words of the Lord in Matt 24:1,2. This date also completed the 40-year period of probation and testing upon the nation. From the time of the Lord’s resurrection and ascension in AD 29 to the destruction of the temple in AD 69 is 40 years. The 40 years of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness was a shadow of this time. They had been released from the bondage of Egypt and were offered a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet, because of unbelief, they were never able to enjoy this promised land. Several years before the completion of the 40 years of probation, they were told that their carcasses would fall in the wilderness. (See Num 14:29-35; 26:22; 32:13) Acts 28:28 is similar. Because of unbelief, they did not receive the promised “**times of refreshing**” (Acts 3:19) and before the 40 years were completed, judgment was pronounced in Acts 28:24-29. The Christian Jews who lived during the Acts period were warned of this very thing in Heb 3:7-4:11.

To state that Acts 28:28 is the beginning of the truth of the mystery is not quite accurate either. We do not read at that very moment, Paul received the revelation of the mystery. It would be

## **The Salvation God #5 ...cont'd**

approximately three years before he would write letters to the Ephesians and Colossians which reveal Christ’s fullness as Head of the church which is His body. The exact moment is not indicated.

What we can say about Acts 28:28 is that the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to record the words that Paul spoke at that moment to the Jewish elders who met with him there in Rome. There were many words that could have been recorded that Paul spoke that day. He spoke from morning until evening out of the Law of Moses and out of the prophets (vs23). Instead, the Holy Spirit calls our attention to three key points to mark off this passage: (1) It was deliberate that the Holy Spirit chose to use the adjective for the word salvation instead of the noun. (2) It was no coincidence that Isa 6:9,10 was spoken and recorded for the third time in the New Testament to pronounce judgment on the unbelieving nation. (The number three represents completion.) (3) It was the work of the Holy Spirit to guide Luke to record the seventh and eighth occurrence of the word “kingdom” in Acts 28:23 and 28:31. (A study of these eight occurrences will aid in understanding.)

When Paul arrived in Rome, he called the Jewish elders together. “**And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.**” (Acts 28:23) Seven times Luke recorded the phrase “kingdom” or “kingdom of God” in Acts in reference to the nation of Israel according to prophecy. In this occurrence, He speaks of the man “Jesus”. (The number seven indicates perfection.) In the eighth occurrence (the number eight is associated with resurrection, a new beginning), we read, “**And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all**

**confidence, no man forbidding him.**” (Acts 28:30, 31). In this verse, the Holy Spirit chooses the title the “Lord Jesus Christ”. The Holy Spirit is no longer concerned about convincing Israel that the man Jesus was the promised Messiah. Now, after the pronouncement of judgment on Israel in verse 26-29 and the proclamation that the Salvation God is sent to the Gentiles, the emphasis is on the resurrected Anointed Jesus. This eighth occurrence of the word “kingdom” marks off the beginning of something new.

Luke briefly alludes to this two-year period with only these few words. No great detail is given as to what occurred during this time. What we do know is that Paul was a prisoner in his own hired house. As a Roman citizen, he had a level of freedom in prison that a Jew who was not a Roman citizen would not have been afforded. He was allowed to speak the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ to all of those who came to him and no one forbid him. By the time he wrote Ephesians and Colossians, the gospel of the mystery was already known. He spoke of this truth as something they had heard about and he was confirming with his own hand. “**If (since, indeed) ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words...**” (Eph 3:2,3) “**For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:**” (Col 1:5,6)

This “salvation”, now sent to the Gentiles, is the basis of how the word Saviour is to be understood in the twelve occurrences found in Paul’s last seven epistles. In our next article, we will consider the usage of the word Saviour in this context.

*B. Bagby*

## **The Wife, the Bride of the Lamb, and the Body of Christ**

*Features Common in Their Hopes:  
Resurrection or the change to immortality*

Having seen that the Lord is the hope of (1) The Wife, (2) The Bride, and (3) Body of Christ, and that He has given promises to them concerning their hopes, we now turn to another feature common to these three companies. It is that all have entrance into their hopes by resurrection or change to immortality.

### **Wife of Jehovah**

Israel, Wife of Jehovah, rejected her Salvation/God and He was sent to the nations. (Acts 28:28) Israel became then "lo ammi" or "not My people" in God's view. She became the Wife that Jehovah "put away" or divorced. (Jer.3:8) However, her hope is secure and when she repents and returns to Him, she will be restored in a glorious manner. Foreseeing Israel's divorce, the Lord spoke of her future restoration saying that she would no longer be called Forsaken, but that, "...as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isa.62:5) He said, "thou shalt call Me Ishi (My Husband) ...I will betroth thee unto Me for ever." (Hos.2:16,19)

In Ezekiel 37, we see that this restoration of Israel will come at the resurrection of the nation. While the Lord likened

## **The Hopes Of God's People #5**

the nation in her divorced state to lifeless dry bones, He also foretold of His raising her to life again. He said to the prophet Ezekiel, "**Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:... Then He said unto me (Ezekiel), 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.' Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; 'Behold, O My People, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My People, and brought you up out of your graves, ...And shall put My spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it,' saith the LORD.**" (Ezek.37:4-14)

Israel's resurrection is symbolized in the words of Hosea 6:1,2. We read, "**Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will**

**He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.**" Some teachers see the two days here as two thousand years, having read that a day is as a 1000 years in the eyes of the Lord. Some believe that the nation in the Land today is the resurrected nation that the Lord spoke about. However, we recall that when He gives them life, He will put His spirit in them and all will know Him. This is not the case with those in the Land today, rather, He is known by only a remnant. Therefore, we suggest that the nation in the Land today is the root of the spiritual nation that He will revive.

We read of a day in the future when the rest of Israel's dead will be raised. (Rev.20:5). It is the day when those of Israel who have received "life", but who still remain in the grave, are made alive and stand before the great white throne of God. If there are any of Israel living at that point who have received eternal life, they must be changed to immortality, for Scripture teaches that no mortal can stand in God's presence.

Not until all Israel stands before God, those raised and those changed, will the nation be fully restored as Wife of Jehovah. It is then that the nation will finally realize her hope.

*J. Heltzinger*

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## **The Hopes Of God's People #6**

### **The Wife, The Bride of the Lamb, and The Body of Christ**

*Features Common in Their Hopes:  
Resurrection or change to immortality*

#### **The Bride of the Lamb**

In the previous article we saw that the nation of Israel will be restored as Wife of Jehovah, and will realize her hope, when all of Israel with "life" are raised or changed to immortality. Now we turn to the Bride of the Lamb, that company made up of faithful over-comers of Israel and Gentiles in the years of Acts. We find that they will realize their hope at Christ's return to earth, when their dead are raised and living members are changed.

It was possible during the years of Acts that Christ would return and fulfill

the Bride's hope. Peter preached to Jews that if Israel would repent, then Christ would return to earth (Acts 3:19). Paul wrote of waiting for Christ's coming (1 Thes. 2:19). James told the twelve tribes scattered abroad to be patient, "...unto the coming of the Lord". (Jms. 5:7) John wrote that things which will precede Christ's return, "...must shortly be done" (Rev. 22:6), and Christ Himself said, "...behold I come quickly" (soon) (Rev.22:8-12). Though it was possible for the hope of the Bride to be fulfilled at that time, only a remnant acknowledged the risen Christ. Only the company called the Bride believed on Him.

The apostle Paul assured this remnant that they would realize their hope at Christ's return. He reminded them that

they must be changed because flesh and blood can not enter the kingdom of God. He told them that they would realize their hope either by resurrection or change to immortality. We read his words in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, "**Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...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.**" Notice here that Paul said "we", including himself among those who would be changed, for at that time his hope was that of the Bride. The fulfillment of their hope appeared to be eminent.

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## Hopes #6 ...cont'd

Paul also wrote to some who were anxious about the future of members who had died. He reassured them that dead members would be raised and join them in meeting Christ as He returned to earth. We read, "... **we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent 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 shall 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**" (1 Thess. 4:15-18)

The hope of the Bride company was not fulfilled in the years of Acts, but God's promises to them are sure, and they will yet be fulfilled when He takes up His purpose for earth again. At Christ's return, the elected remnant of Israel will be rewarded. They will receive that which was meant for the whole nation, but the nation did not obtain it. We read in Romans 11:7, "...**Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.**"

In vision John saw that future day, when the over-comers of Israel's tribu-

lation will be raised to reign with Christ on earth, and the Bride company will see their hope begin to be fulfilled. He wrote, "**And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.**" (Rev. 20:4)

While this beginning of reward is glorious, it is not yet the fulness of the Bride's hope, for she will also occupy the city that God has prepared for her. She will dwell in the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven to the new earth.

The splendor of this city is described

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somewhat in Revelation 21:10-23, but Paul's words to the Bride company tell the whole story. We read, "**Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.**" (1 Cor. 2:9)

This company, which loved Him and endured faithful through many trials, will receive her sweet reward when Christ returns and they are raised or changed to immortality.

*J. Heltzinger*

### 2002 Phoenix Bible Conference: April 5-7

Alan Schofield, guest speaker from London, England presented a four part series on the words of Christ to His disciples, "**Whom say ye that I AM?**" He showed that Christ is the heir to Israel's throne and the Redeemer of man, seen in His seedlines in Matt 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. He covered Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation with examples of the enemy's attempts to spoil God's purposes in Christ, from His birth to His death, showing that Christ is the only perfect mediator between God and man. He concluded in Ephesians and Colossians with the fulness of Christ.

Bill Millet covered a three-part outline in IITimothy chapter 1 on: (1) The Legacy/The Faith (IITim 1:3-5); (2) The Commission/The Stand (IITim 2:1-3:15,22-25; and (3) The Race/The Rules (IITim 2:3-7). Forrest Cottrell spoke on "Edification" from Eph. 4:11-21.

Barney Bagby gave the closing message on "Five glories of Christ". He ended showing the fifth glory seen in the mystery and found in Paul's prison epistles.

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*J. Fielding*

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