



The Hope of the Kingdom

“In studying the things of the kingdom of God, the foundation laid in the beginning must not be forgotten; for at that epoch its preparation was commenced. The system of the world is an adaption to man in his fallen state; and out of the things thus arranged, it is that Christ’s imperial dominion is being evolved. By the law of procreation has been provided a population which, by the confusion of tongues, has been distributed into nations... Thus nations have been formed which are destined to flourish in the blessedness of the Future Age.”

—*Elpis Israel*, p. 222.

IN expounding the subject of “the general elements” of the “kingdom” as embodied in the promises made by Yahweh to Abraham (p. 219), Brother Thomas reminds readers that it is imperative that they should not forget that “the foundation” for the understanding of the subject was “laid in the beginning” (p. 222).

God’s purpose was that man should be created “in the image” (*form or shape*) of God, and “after His likeness” (*mental capacity* to understand divine precepts and moral laws). In creating man with these attributes, not possessed by any other creatures, Yahweh’s intention was that man, potentially the crowning work of His consummate creative labours, should, as God’s representative, “have dominion” over all things upon earth and therefore rule in such a manner as to *reflect the character and virtue of his Creator*.

However, this purpose was not to be fulfilled at that time. Sin entered into the world, bringing death in its

train. Man became alienated from his Creator through “wicked works” (Col. 1:21). The oneness and harmony between God and man no longer existed. A gulf divided them, the result of man’s folly. The “very good” state of the creation, pronounced by the Eternal Spirit at the conclusion of His work was a definitive term, now no longer applicable.

In quoting from Psalm 8, which itself is based upon Gen. 1:26, Paul shows unequivocally that the divine purpose as set forth in Gen. 1:26 has not been fulfilled. “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see *not yet all things put under him*” (Heb. 2:8).

“Workings of an Invisible Machinery”

With the divine purpose “adapted to man in his fallen state,” it is through “the things thus arranged” that “Christ’s imperial dominion is being

evolved." This is an apt way of stating that from the time the idyllic situation in Eden was marred with the introduction of sin and its consequences, Yahweh has worked ceaselessly to bring to fruition a means whereby He could provide for the salvation of the human race (see Psa. 65:5; Isa. 40:25-28; Jn. 5:16-17; 9:4; 12:16).

Ultimately, at a time dictated by Yahweh's sublime wisdom, the nations will be drawn together in peace and harmony in God's kingdom, to receive "the blessedness of the future age." But until then, generation after generation has passed through "fiery ordeal" as the evil inherent in human nature has brought suffering and bloodshed to all peoples. Men and women everywhere have suffered at the hands of their fellows. Men moved by greed, lust for power, wealth, honour, and the satisfaction of their own gratification, have no thought for those who may be caused to suffer misery in the process of pursuing ruthless aims and ambitions. "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted" (Psa. 12:8).

Contrastingly, whilst history has unfolded in this unchanging way, with men intent upon destroying each other and the wonders and beauties of God's creation, He has worked unceasingly to restore that which man has destroyed; including, above all else, the restoration of the race to Himself, that finally He may see the fulfilment of Gen. 1:26, and the time when "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh" (Num. 14:21).

"For the most part men see nothing in it but strife for territory, and glory, for the advantage of their rulers; but the scriptures reveal the working of an invisible machinery, whose activity is perceived by the believer; in the incidents which occasion the conflicts among them," says Brother Thomas,

"Christ's brethren should be able to come to grips with the reasons for suffering, knowing especially that, for themselves, trials result in a deeper conviction of faith and a closer relationship with God, if trials are humbly accepted in the spirit of the Truth"

on p. 222. Whilst men and women remain ignorant of the existence of the Hand of Providence, unaware that a divine plan and purpose is unfolding that will eventually bring to fruition all that God has promised, they see no ultimate gain in the chaotic affairs and conflicts which blight humanity.

The Purpose and Value of Trial

Peter was sensitive to this situation. In comforting the brethren in the face of dreadful suffering, he pointed out that, whilst they should remain "sober" and "vigilant" at times of great trial, they ought to be aware that "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren *that are in the world.*" Christ's brethren should be able to come to grips with the reasons for suffering, knowing especially that, for themselves, trials result in a deeper conviction of faith and a closer relationship with God, if trials are humbly accepted in the spirit of the Truth. The fellow-Jews of whom Peter wrote, who were "*in the world*" and therefore unacquainted with "the word of righteousness" (Heb. 5:13), could see no value in having to bear suffering. In their ignorance, many no doubt cursed God for their circumstances, rather than seeking Him "in spirit and in truth."

"In this [the hope of the Truth] you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth

than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed... For even hereunto were ye called: because *Christ also suffered* for us, leaving us *an example*, that ye should *follow his steps*" (1Pet. 5:8-9; 1:6-7; 2:21; AV, NIV). "We must," said Paul, "through *much pressure (thlipsis)* enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Believers should know and understand this, rejoicing in the knowledge that God is providing the means whereby their faith is being developed and strengthened, that they might be drawn closer to their God. They are aware of "an invisible machinery" which continues constantly, labouring unremittingly until "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh."

"Though the strife is terrible, he (the believer) feels no dismay, but rejoices with firm and unwavering confidence in the certainty of the triumph of the Truth and its adherents, because God has assured him in His Word that the king He has provided shall crush the sin-power, and make the nations lick the dust like a serpent" (p. 222).

The limitless power of the One Eternal Spirit is "exciting and controlling" the activities of the nations; "they are being moulded like clay in the hands of the potter, for the dominion of the saints in the future age" (p. 223).

"The First Principle of Religion"

Who would not continually rejoice in such a glorious expectation?

Only those who have lost sight of the great hope; those who have become spiritually indifferent and apathetic; those who have a limited vision of the hope because the affairs of this present life are so much more at the forefront in their considerations; those whose understanding has dimmed due to lack of use of the senses, in communing

with the Father and His Word.

With every sign indicating that the Lord's coming is near at hand, this is no time to lose heart or to be overcome with the pressures of life. Believers must exercise faith, courage and determination in the cause of the Truth, with an urgency to suit the times. Time for reassessing aims and objectives in life is rapidly running out.

"According to your faith be it unto you," quotes Brother Thomas, adding, "This is the first principle of religion delivered by the Great Teacher himself. It is just and right it should be so. No one can blame God for not bestowing upon them what they do not believe in; and, consequently do not want or seek after."

How essential it is, then, to heed the Great Teacher. The most pious and sincere religionists are following a pathway to eternal oblivion, if they choose to exercise faith in a kingdom which God has not promised, and with which He is in no sense identified. Brother Thomas clearly describes the future destiny of all who believe in a kind of kingdom which is only illusory: "They believe in a non-entity; and, believing in what is nothing, they will get nothing but confusion of face" (p. 223). Paul made this abundantly clear: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you *than that which we have preached* unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Time and again the scriptures testify that sincerity is no substitute for sound knowledge.

"This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

Hearken and Stand Fast

Those who have embraced the Truth upon the basis of sound knowledge followed by baptism, may be

inclined to feel that they have already heeded this instruction, and therefore it has no application to those who are already “in” Christ. If this were so, it would be assumed that once First Principles have been learned and obeyed through immersion, the believer has only to await the coming of the Lord to receive his expected reward.

Such reasoning would be nothing less than self-deception on a dangerous scale.

What saith the Word upon this vital issue? “*Hearken* unto me [divine wisdom], O ye children: for blessed are they that *keep* my ways. *Hear* instruction, and be wise, and *refuse it not*. Blessed is the man that *heareth* me, *watching daily* at my gates... If ye *continue* in the faith, grounded and settled, and be *not moved away* from the hope of the gospel... Therefore, brethren, *stand fast*, and *hold the traditions* which ye have been taught... We ought to pay *the more earnest heed* to the things which we have *heard*, for fear we should *drift away from them*...” (Pro. 8:32-34; Col. 1:23; 2Thes. 2:15; Heb. 2:1, AV and Wey. mg.).

These passages should emphasize the extent of responsibility incumbent upon every individual who embraces the Hope of Israel. The ear should always remain open to the voice of divine instruction; commitment to the cause of Christ should never diminish; faithfulness and dedication must be kept actively alive.

The One True Hope

In showing his readers “a more excellent way,” Brother Thomas “invites their attention” to “the promise made of God unto the Fathers — the Hope of Israel” (p. 223).

It will be his purpose to show that the term “Kingdom of God” is synonymous with “the hope of Israel” and

“the promise made of God unto the fathers.” When the reader comes to a clear understanding of the significance of these terms, he will no longer entangle himself with dreams of eternal bliss beyond the skies, but see that the divine purpose is to purify a race of mortal beings upon the earth, clothing them with His own nature so that they will become as deathless as is He. Through this process of change they will become manifestations on earth of the perfection of His being and character.

“It will be admitted by all,” says Brother Thomas, that Paul “preached the gospel of the kingdom in the name of Jesus.” Of his own circumstances and position, Paul declared: “For the gospel I am called in question, and am judged, and bound with this chain” (Acts 23:6; 24:21; 28:20). The reader should carefully note the way in which Brother Thomas draws these three passages of scripture together, in one effective statement. Paul’s three declarations are quite harmonious, each passage being supportive of the others.

Before Ananias and the council, he said: “On account of the *hope* and resurrection of dead persons I am called in question” (Acts 23:6). Brought into the presence of Agrippa, he said: “I stand and am judged for *the hope of the promise* made of God unto our fathers... For *which hope’s sake*, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews” (Acts 26:6-7).

It is noteworthy to consider that the

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word emphasized so strongly by Brother Thomas — “*hope*” — is from the Greek, *elpis*. It has a far broader meaning than the simple English word, and signifies: favourable and confident expectation; that for which one flees for refuge; anticipation of good to come; an expectation that is well-grounded, gladly and firmly held” (Vine, Thayer, Bullinger). Indeed, it is a most remarkable and expressive word; and it is little wonder that Brother Thomas placed such importance on its usage particularly by the apostles; so much so that he chose this word to express his own conviction, in the title he has given to this book: *Elpis Israel*.

The Hope of All True Believers

Paul’s “*hope*,” or *elpis*, has been clearly expressed in the passages referred to above. From his words to king Agrippa, Brother Thomas concludes that three things are made quite plain:

- “1. That God had made a certain promise to the fathers of Israel;
2. That this promise became *the hope of the nation*, and was therefore a national question;
3. That this promise had been the hope of the twelve tribes in all their generations; was the ground of their worship; and that they hoped to attain it by rising from the dead” (p. 224).

To these three points, Brother Thomas adds further evidence. Upon his eventual arrival at Rome, Paul assembled the chief of the Jews of that city, announcing to them: “*on account of THE HOPE OF ISRAEL* am I bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20). Brother Thomas states: “This is conclusive.

The hope of the promise made to the fathers was, and, indeed, is to this day, the Hope of Israel.”

He then poses the question: “But what was the hope of Israel about? The answer to this question is easy.” This is not a form of bravado. He means what he says. Upon the basis of a logical and reasonable consideration of the Word of God “the answer” is “easy.” He demonstrates what he means: “I cannot do better than to state what he [Paul] did, in the words of Luke, who says that “he expounded and testified to them *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). Brother Thomas asks: “Now who can be so dim of vision as not to perceive that the subject matter of the hope of Israel is the kingdom of God?” (p. 225). Quite so. When scripture is compared with scripture upon the basis of honest reasoning, and when the Bible is permitted to be its own interpreter, truth will become apparent.

A grave danger facing the Brotherhood in these present difficult and trying times, is that these fundamental truths will no longer be as prominent in our understanding of the scriptures, nor in our speech “one to another,” nor in our way of life.

The vision and *hope* of the kingdom must always be at the forefront of the minds of true saints, so that they continue to anticipate, with enthusiastic fervour, the coming of their Lord and the joyous reward he will bring to all who remain faithful to his name and cause.

— **John Ullman.**

This is the time of probation. If we did not recognise this, the difficulties would be quenching; but recognising it, faith and works are unquenchable. May we shortly rejoice with all true fellow-labourers in the rest that remaineth — a rest blithesome and glorious. — *R. Roberts.*