

## T. Austin-Sparks:

"The Hope of Israel". That phrase employed by the Apostle Paul was used to sum up the whole substance and issues of his life-ministry (Acts 28:20). You will observe that in the defense made by Paul before Agrippa he narrated the story of his life as a Jew, and now in his Roman prison he meets the Jews in Rome and tells them that he is there as a prisoner for "the hope of Israel".

What was the hope of Israel? While there were many things included in that hope, the inclusiveness was a Person, and that Person was called (in Hebrew) the Messiah. It would require a whole volume to cover all the ground of the Messiah and the Messianic hope in the Old Testament. Some of it will come out as we proceed, but that Person dominates the Old Testament from Genesis 3 onward. He is implicit in personal and symbolic types; He is "the Prophet" which was to come; He is the Prophet which the Lord told Moses He would raise up 'like unto him' (or, "as He had raised him - Moses - up"); He was "the root of David", 'David's Son', the "Branch", the "Servant of Jehovah", etc. All the many and various titles and designations, functions and offices, intentions and promises were embodied in that One person - the coming Redeemer, King, and Salvation, whose name was "Messiah" - and He was "The Hope of Israel".

How very significant and impressive it is, therefore, that that name, with all its content, is so fully taken over into the New Testament. This is - for many Christians - somewhat veiled or obscured by the change of language. So often in our own English language we commonly use two words which mean the same thing, but do not realize that they belong to two different languages. For instance, we often hear people trying to give emphasis to a thought or feeling by saying: 'Let it be living and vital!' 'Living' is English. 'Vital' is Latin or French. The meaning is identical in each language. So it is with this word "Messiah". That is Hebrew (Mashiach) and means "the Lord's Anointed". The exact New Testament equivalent or synonym is "Christ".

It is very impressive that this word or name occurs over five hundred and twenty times in the New Testament, and it would be quite correct, and significant, if we did as one version has done, and every time we come on "Christ" just say "Messiah". An extra, and tremendously significant factor is that this Hebrew-Greek name is used so very largely in writings to Gentile Christians!

What then arises? The Messiah - "Hope of Israel" - is the Christ of Christianity, and Jesus of Nazareth is He. What a content! All that was rightly in the Coming One of Israel's hope is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but with this difference: Israel's "Hope" is earthly, temporal, material. The Church's attainment unto it all is heavenly, spiritual, eternal. Israel's expectation was every temporal, earthly blessing. The Church's heritage (now) is "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies".

We are bound to come on this again later. There is the further feature to be observed. Israel lived for the day of Messiah's appearing when all their earthly expectations would be realized. For the Church He has come and accomplished all that is necessary for that realization, but she lives for the day of His appearing when what He did will be the entire order of heaven and earth. So Peter who, as we have said, had, after a big battle, made the great spiritual transition, writing to converted Jews said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah), who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Messiah) from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven....." (I Peter 1:3,4).

Every word of that statement should be weighed as a contrast to Israel's hope and inheritance.

"Living hope". "Resurrection" (Old Israel is not now in resurrection).  
 "Inheritance". "Incorruptible." "Undefiled." "Unfading." "In heaven."

This is indeed a great transition from one Israel to another! One inheritance defiled, corrupted, and faded away. (See I Thessalonians 2:14b-16.) The other Israel - the Church - (Galatians 6:16 and Hebrews) with the incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, heavenly inheritance.

What ought to follow now is a long consideration of what was in Israel's "Hope" which had been transferred, in a spiritual way at present to the Church, but this is not a series of volumes, and we are only indicating major foundation facts. Much more will surely come out as we go along. But let us just quote the words of one writer in this connection:

"Jesus of Nazareth needed no outward enthronement or local seat of government on earth to constitute Him of David's kingdom, as He needed no physical anointing to consecrate him Priest forevermore, or material altar or

temple for due presentation of His acceptable service. Being the Son of the living God, and, as Son, the Heir of all things, He possessed, from the first, the powers of the Kingdom; and proved that He possessed them in every authoritative word he uttered every work of deliverance He performed, every judgment He pronounced, every act of mercy and forgiveness He dispensed, and the resistless control he wielded over the elements of nature, and the realms of the dead. These were the signs of royalty He bore about with Him upon the earth; and wonderful though they were - eclipsing in royal grandeur all the glory of David and Solomon - they were still but the earlier preludes of the peerless majesty which David from afar descried when he saw Him as his Lord, seated in royal state at His Father's right hand, and on which He formally entered when He ascended up on high with the word: 'All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth.'

At the end of the stormy and disturbed four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New there existed a small Jewish remnant of faithful and "devout" men and women in Jerusalem still looking and longing for the coming of Messiah. Of these Simeon was representative, and it is said of him that "the Holy Spirit was upon him". He was "looking for the consolation of Israel", and "it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Messiah)". "He came in the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus..... he received him into his arms, and blessed God, and said..... Mine eyes have seen thy salvation..... the glory of thy people Israel". And he said: "This child is set for the falling and rising up of many is Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against" (Luke 2:25-35). That whole passage needs to be carefully considered in the light of this whole subject of Israel's Messiah being the Church's Christ through the Cross.

But a question presses for an answer. Who was this Messiah-Christ, and when was He anointed?

We know that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good.....", and we know that anointing took place immediately after his baptism at the Jordan. But, before He was Jesus of Nazareth, He was the Son of God, and before times eternal He was "appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). Further, we know that through, by and unto Him "all things have been created" (Colossians 1:16).

There was a great and high angelic being who was called "the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ezekiel 28:14).

Two things emerge from all this. One is that the eternal son was above all other beings, and "so much better than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4), even Lucifer; and the other, that the anointing at Jordan was related to His work of redemption by the Cross (the Spirit always follows the altar, the blood, the Cross), and that by the anointing He was spiritually and officially constituted Prophet, Priest, and King. This is foreshadowed and typified in the Old Testament, and taught as actuality in the New Testament. This is our Christ, the Messiah of the new Israel.