

The Hope of Israel

There is one miracle from the book of Daniel that we often miss. We notice the fiery furnace, the lion's den, the writing on the wall, and the king eating grass like an ox, because these are obvious to us. We notice the visions of four animals and a great statue, and seventy weeks because these are awesome in their scope and accuracy. But there is a miracle that the book of Daniel speaks of, and is with us today to prove him right: the preservation of Israel.

Consider the Jew. He is the miracle of the age. He has come down the centuries since Daniel's time without a king, without an army, without a country since 135 and until 1948. He has been hounded and persecuted by Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Roman Catholics, Turks, Nazis, Stalinists and Moslems. And yet he is with us today. He has been scattered to every corner of the world, and yet he is still identifiably Jewish. When you consider the book of Daniel, ask yourself, how many Baylonians do you know? How many Medo-Persians do you know? Here are a people-group who can trace their ancestry 4000 years back, and despite all vicious and wicked attempts to the contrary, they are still with us. That is one of the powerful messages of Daniel – the hope for Israel. The hope of Israel is not their tenacity or ingenuity, it is the faithfulness of the God who made a promise to His friend Abraham, that they would be a nation before him forever.

Daniel knew those promises, and Daniel had seen God fulfil those in his own life, and reiterate them through the visions he received. Daniel had been forcibly removed from his country at around age 15. It was when the kingdom of Judah (which was all that was left of Israel) seemed to hit rock bottom. After years of warnings from the prophets, Judah was conquered by Babylon, its sovereignty removed, and its best and brightest taken from the land and taken to Babylon, there to be reprogrammed, Babylonialised and made into puppets for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel ended up spending seventy years in Babylon, and Persia, and never again returned to his homeland. Yet all through those seventy years, Daniel had a firm and unyielding hope in the God of Israel. He believed that God had made promises to be faithful to unfaithful Israel, and it was that faith that kept him faithful all those years in Babylon.

When encouraged to defile himself with unclean food, young Daniel trusted in the God of Israel, and kept the laws of Israel. God showed himself faithful and preserved Daniel and his friends. When Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which no wise man could interpret, and he began destroying the wise men, Daniel placed all his trust in the God of Israel, and God delivered Daniel, giving him the interpretation. When Daniel's three friends, Azariah, Mishael and Hananiah were told to bow to an idolatrous image, they trusted in the one and only God, the God of Israel, and he delivered them through a fiery furnace. In the face of the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, and the arrogance of Belshazzar, Daniel told both kings what the God of Israel had declared about them. His devotion to the God of Israel was so deep that when some Persian politicians made a law punishable by death that no one could be prayed to except the king, Daniel publicly defied that law and kept trusting in the God of Israel. God delivered him from the lions' den.

The first six chapters showed us how faithful God was to Daniel. But the last six chapters are the visions which God gave Daniel to show how faithful He would be to Israel. Israel was now in captivity, but each vision showed how God would not abandon his people. Chapter 7 showed that four Gentile world powers would rule the world, and Israel would be persecuted until Messiah returns to rule and restore the kingdom. Chapter 8 showed how devastating persecution would come to Israel through an evil man named Antiochus, foreshadowing the final man of sin. But in both cases, God cuts these evildoers off and is faithful to Israel.

In chapter 9, after praying and fasting, Daniel receives a message about Israel's restoration to the land, the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, the coming and death of Messiah, and a final man of sin who would bring false peace, and then set himself up to be worshipped. But God would be faithful and pour out the desolation on that man.

In chapter 11, a lengthy vision showed how kingdoms to the north and south would fight, and Israel would be caught in the middle, but God would be faithful to Israel.

And then the last part of chapter 11 telescoped into the future and showed how Israel would be caught in the middle of some future wars, with that Roman prince, who would betray the Jewish people, set himself up as an object of worship, defile a rebuilt Jewish Temple. As 12:1 said, this would be a time of tribulation for Israel like never before.

How long does this Tribulation go on for?

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. ⁶ And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfilment of these wonders be?" ⁷ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

Time, times and half a time = 3 ½ years.

¹¹ "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

During this time, the wicked get worse, and the righteous are purified.

¹⁰ "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

Three and a half years of terrible persecution under the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, the Roman prince. This man will rob them of their land, trample underfoot Jerusalem, and try to extinguish the Jewish race.

Now, how does this vision end? Given what Daniel has seen regarding God's faithfulness to him, and given God's promises to be eternally faithful to Israel, what is the final word of the book of Daniel? Does Daniel, who is nearly ninety years old, go to his grave with the haunting fear that Israel will be extinguished? No, gladly for Daniel and for us, the book finishes with a thrilling vision of hope and a glorious future for Israel and the redeemed.

The book of Daniel finishes with a picture of the future filled with glorious hope: Israel saved, and restored.

This hope for Israel is the hope for all the world, because God told Abraham that it is through them that all nations are blessed. The hope for Israel is a hope that we as believers rejoice in, because it shows God's faithfulness, God's kept promises, God's power. The key lessons of Daniel, that God is sovereign over all things, and yet faithful to deliver His people comes to an absolute climax with Israel. Is God sovereign enough to keep this rebellious people through the centuries? Is He faithful enough to restore them, as He promised.

What we see in these last verses of Daniel in outline form is the hope of Israel. This hope has four important events: the return of the king, the resurrection of the righteous, the reign of the righteous and the restoration of creation and the nation.

I. The Return of the King

What puts an end to the 3 ½ year reign of Antichrist? We saw that in chapter 2 and chapter 7 of Daniel. It is when the stone cut out without hands hits the image. It is when the Son of Man comes on the clouds, that the beast is slain and the blasphemous little horn silenced. The time of Great Tribulation and the rule of the Roman prince, the Antichrist comes to an end with the return of Messiah.

The hope of Israel is the return of Messiah. The name that Israel has rejected; the stone which they have stumbled over, turns out to be the one who returns to destroy their worst enemy. He is the one who delivers them from total extinction.

Zechariah 12:8-10 ⁸ "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them. ⁹ "It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ " And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Revelation 19 describes the returning king on a white horse, who comes on the clouds and defeats Israel's enemies. This is the first part of Israel's hope. But what happens when Messiah returns to the earth? This is the second part of Israel's hope, and it's the resurrection of the righteous.

II. The Resurrection of the Righteous

Daniel 12:2-3 ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

Those who sleep in the dust – that's a reference to people who have died. They will awake. This is a physical resurrection, not a national one or a spiritual one. Daniel is amongst them:

¹³ "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days

We know from other Scriptures that when Christ returns, there will be the resurrection of the righteous.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The hope of Israel was always resurrection. It was not an invisible, spiritual hope, but a hope to be restored in this body to enjoy a restored world. The book of Revelation says that the resurrection to life and the resurrection to shame and contempt will be separated by a period of time.

Revelation 20:1-6 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and

bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. ⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The righteous are raised, but the others are not raised until the end of the kingdom. Look again at verse 6, because it leads us to the third part of Israel's hope.

III. The Reign of Righteousness

Remember back in chapter 7, we read that when Messiah returns, who reigns with Him.

Daniel 7:18 ¹⁸ *'But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'*

Daniel 7:27 ²⁷ *Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'*

The hope of Israel, is that when Christ returns, He rules the world through Israel. Redeemed Israel rules, as do the grafted on Gentiles of the church age.

Matthew 19:28 ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

2 Timothy 2:11-12 ¹ *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. ¹² If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.*

Revelation 2:26-27 *"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations -- ²⁷ 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessel (see also Revelation 5:9-10)*

Daniel tells us that those who are raised up at this time have a place of honour, a place of privilege and authority. They are leaders, rulers, lights during this time.

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

But the best part of this time is that Christ Himself reigns

Isaiah 11:4-5 ⁴ *But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.*

Isaiah 32:1 *Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, And princes will rule with justice.*

Try to picture a world where the whole culture comes under the lordship of Christ. The arts, music, poetry, literature, philosophy comes under him. All the sciences, from medicine, to agriculture, to astronomy come under and serve Christ. The economy, technology, transport, travel, conservation of nature, all under Christ.

One of the reasons why I believe strongly in an earthly kingdom is because an earthly kingdom under Christ is needed to vindicate the justice and wisdom of God. Kevin Bauder: "Justice must be seen to triumph in history, and not merely in some ahistorical eternal state. Otherwise, the whole story of human history becomes a failed experiment over which God somehow lost control. Justice must win, and it must be seen to win, on planet earth in space and time." <http://centralseminary.edu/resources/nick-of-time/331-the-terrible-swift-sword>

An earthly kingdom is needed to vindicate the righteousness of God, prove the wisdom of His rule and administration, show the beauty of human life under God's rule. What Jesus hands back to the Father is not a failed experiment, but human culture at its absolute best. The best man could be, will clearly be seen to be when he is in submission to Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 ²⁴ *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.* ²⁵ *For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.*

The hope of Israel is the return of the king, the resurrection of the righteous, the reign of righteousness. But the fourth part of the hope of Israel is

IV. The Restoration of Creation and the Nation

The Bible tells us that before God creates a new heavens and a new earth, He will restore this earth. It will be during this time, the Lord will turn back much of the curse, and bring a harmony and productivity to the created world that has not been seen since Eden.

Isaiah 11:6-9 ⁶ *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.*

Isaiah 65:20-25 ²⁰ *"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them. ²⁴ "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.*

This is what Paul speaks about in Romans 8 when he describes the creation groaning and longing to be restored at the time when the redeemed are resurrected. Since that can't refer to the New Earth, it must refer to this time, when God will redeem and resurrect this world.

But the hope of Israel is not only that the creation will be restored, but the the nation itself will be restored.

Amos 9:11-15 ¹¹ *"On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; ¹² That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the LORD who does this thing. ¹³ "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of*

grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it. ¹⁴ I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. ¹⁵ I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God.

Zechariah 8:3-5 ³ "Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.' ⁴ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit In the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand Because of great age. ⁵ The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.'

Zechariah 8:22-23 ²² Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the LORD.' ²³ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." ' ' "

Zechariah 14:4-21 ¹⁶ And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have* no *rain*; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ²⁰ In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be *engraved* on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

This is what Paul was speaking about in Romans 11. Israel will be spiritually saved, and Israel will be restored as a nation. Nothing less will fulfil God's promises to Abraham to give his descendants the land. Nothing less will fulfil his promise to David to have his descendants rule the land.

Commenting on Ezekiel 37, Charles Spurgeon said, "The meaning of our text, as opened up by the context, is most evidently, if words mean anything, first, that there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality; and then, secondly, there is in the text, and in the context, a most plain declaration, that there shall be a spiritual restoration, a conversion in fact, of the tribes of Israel." ("The Restoration & Conversion of the Jews" *MTP* Vol 10, Year 1864, pgs. 427-430, Ezekiel 37:1-10)

Romans 11:12-15 ¹² Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! ¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Is Daniel to take comfort in that idea that Israel will reject Messiah, and therefore be rejected, set aside and replaced? Would that be a comfort to old Daniel? Or should we believe that God let Daniel think that Israel would be restored, but He actually meant something different? That He actually meant Israel will be replaced, and another people-group will take their place and co-opt the name of Israel? No, God does not deceive his servants. God finishes the book of Daniel with the message of hope. God will be faithful to Israel, even in her unfaithfulness.

More Scriptures than we have time to reference describe the regathering of Israel back to the land.

Now, given that Christ comes back at the peak of the chaos caused by the Antichrist, how long

might it take to bury the dead, regather the Israelites, restore the devastated Earth, and set up the administration of a kingdom that will rule the world through Israel? How long might it take to construct the great Millennial temple described in Ezekiel 40-48? Well, one suggestion is that this is exactly what happens in the extra days mentioned in verses 11 and 12.

Daniel 12:11-12 *there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.* ¹² *"Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days."*

Three and a half is 1260 days. 1290 is an extra 30 days, and 1335 is another 45 days. After the end of the Tribulation period there are seventy-five extra days, and Daniel says the one who waits and comes to that day is blessed. Why? More than likely, because that is when the glorious kingdom is inaugurated. In those seventy-five days after Christ's return and the resurrection of the righteous, the earth is restored, Israel is regathered, administration is set in place, judgements of Israel and the Gentile nations take place, and at that point the world enter millennial bliss. I'm not particularly dogmatic that it should be 1000 years. I think it will be at least that long. It may be a symbol that Christ's kingdom lasts a very long time, before being replaced by the eternal state seen in Revelation 21 and 22.

So in what state do we leave ninety-year-old Daniel? As the curtain closes on him, as he recedes from our vision, what is the last expression we see on his wrinkled face? Anxiety? Worry? Terror? Fear?

Now, dear, beloved Daniel, God will deliver that nation you love so much that you have prayed for and fasted for. As God preserved you and kept you through your trials, so God will keep Israel through four world empires, through the times of Messiah, through the times of the end, and restore them, as He said He would.

That's why Daniel is told to be content and satisfied in what he had heard.

⁴ *"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."*

⁹ *And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."*

¹³ *"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."*

Seal the book – the book is complete. Preserve and protect the content so that others will learn from it. In the end there will be a scurrying about to try to understand. But you, Daniel are not to concern yourself about too much. Your inheritance is secure, and your love for your nation and your hope is not in vain. Go your way, rest in the knowledge that the God in control over the whole universe, will be faithful to your people to the very end.

For us to gaze at Israel, though they are now in unbelief, is to shake our heads in amazement at the power, and goodness of God. And the two lessons of the book come back to us:

God is great enough to control the events of world history from beginning to end.
God is good enough to care for and protect His people.