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### **BIBLICAL SOURCES OF HOPE**

**Summary:** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, in his great mercy, by rising from the dead Jesus Christ, has reborn us to a living hope: to an inheritance that is indestructible and immaculate and unholy, which is preserved for you in heaven". (1 P 1,3.4). For a believer the most important is hope based on trust and faith in God. For what would one without the other? Scripture, undoubtedly a great book of hope, is the most important book for Christians. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of hope as the desire that every person expects. The whole Bible is, in a way, based on hope, which is linked to trusting the word of God and waiting for its final fulfilment. As W. Hryniewicz wrote, hope in Scripture has different faces. On the one hand, it refers to God, and on the other it turns to temporal and material matters. It is also contained in interpersonal relations. Man should hope that God will enable him to reciprocate his boundless love and act according to the commandment of love. The hope of the Old Testament was strongly connected with the person of Yahweh. It is He who chooses people to whom He shows special promises and makes covenant with them. The meaning and source of hope is God Himself. The problem of hope in the

Old Testament focuses on God's covenant with the Elected People. This covenant is a guarantee of the reliability of hope. For an Israeli, hope was trust in God, who has permanently entered human history, so that it is dynamic, not static. The Old Testament emphasises that it is not an easy reality to live in hope. The New Testament, however, calls for eschatological hope. By it we understand the ultimate victory over Satan. A man of hope accepts the words of Christ: "And behold, I am with you all day long, until the end of the world'. (Mt 28,20). The New Testament convinces us that a believer, as G. Sauret writes, is "born to hope" to enter into a relationship with Christ. For Christians, the principle of hope is the person of Jesus and his message. The issue of hope is addressed in both the Old and New Testaments. The characteristically, theistic themes of these approaches are primarily: showing hope in terms of the promises that God gives to His chosen prophets, in order to fulfil them. All these realities are reduced to one, the salvation of oneself and others.

**Key words:** hope, christology, the Bible

## **Introduction**

Scripture is the most important book for Christians. We see in it many promises that will come true for man's future, which include looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. Christians live in the hope that Jesus Christ will come to earth again. The fundamental reference of human hope is God's revealing to man of his name, Yahweh (cf. Ex 3:14).

In Scripture we find many verses about hope which show us what hope is. As we begin to study the Bible from the first pages, we will see that all God's promises come true over time. Those that have not yet come true, we hope that they will come true.

In this article, we want to know the biblical sources of hope. In the first part, we will start with the Old Testament sources and then move on to showing the talk of hope in the Gospels. In the third part we will show how hope is presented in the New Testament Apostolic Letters. At the end, we will formulate our conclusions.

## **1.Hope in the Old Testament**

What is hope? Hope is the desire to fulfil what we expect. For a believer the most important is hope based on trust and faith in God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, in his great mercy, by rising from the dead Jesus Christ, has reborn us to a living hope: an inheritance that is indestructible and immaculate and unholy, which is preserved for you in heaven (1 Peter 1:3.4). To unbelievers Scripture says: "Does papyrus grow without mud, or do rush without water? Still fresh, unfit to be cut down, [and already] it witheres away, quicker than grass. So with the way of the unremembered to Allah; the hope of the unrighteous will be lost, for a short time, their trust as the thread of a cobweb. He who grasps it will not cease, falling down seeking support". (Hi 8:11-15).

The Bible is based on hope, which is connected with trusting the word of God and waiting for its final fulfilment. Hope in Scripture has different faces. On the one hand, it refers to God, and on the other hand, it turns to temporal and material matters. It is also contained in interpersonal relationships. Man should hope that God will enable him to reciprocate his boundless love and act according to the commandment of love.

The hope of the Old Testament was strongly connected with the person of Yahweh. It is He who chooses people to whom He makes

special promises and enters into a covenant with them. The meaning and source of hope is God Himself (cf. Ps 33:20). The object of hope refers to the divine promises which are reserved for the chosen people. Hope in the Old Testament has a direct reference to God (cf. Ps 39:7; Is 51:5), is identical to his name (cf. 52:9) and stems from his promises (cf. Gen 49:18). In many places in the Old Testament, the hope that is described has no precise reference, either in prophetic statements (cf. Jr 29,11; Ez 19,5) or in wisdom (Hi 8,13; Prz 11,7). As E. Sienkiewicz emphasises: "It often ends up in man himself" . In order to realise hope, it must be linked with a sense of justice.

The first chapters of Genesis (Genesis 1:11) describe the appearance of sin in the world, which distances man from God, destroying relations between them. The first man had the task of making himself a subject of the earth (cf. Genesis 1:26 nn). As Z. Pawłowski notes, "it is only Abraham, both in the Jewish and in the Christian tradition, who is treated as the father of believers, as the one in whom the attitude, ch—deraising the Jewish and Christian relationship to God, was first born" . He is a model of faith, trust and above all hope. Abraham shows two dimensions of hope. On the one hand, it is human hope based on its own possibilities, and on the other hand, in opposition to the former, it is based solely on divine power - hope by divine promise . It is easier to lose human hope, but then the divine one appears, which makes hope against human hope. Divine hope stands above human hope.

The basis of hope in the Pentateuch is faith in Yahweh. E. Sienkiewicz emphasises that the point is "that the man of his hope should not only stop at created goods, even if they are the result of God's blessing and the object of God's promise, and thus also at hope whose

only and sufficient reference is God Himself, faithful to His own will and promise" . Therefore, hope is to be seen in God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "through the prophets God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and eternal Covenant, destined for all people, which will be written in the hearts". The prophets of Yahweh persistently call for hope, because its absence leads to the loss of the values that God has promised man. Hence the prophets have shown the need to hope and to turn to Yahweh.

The preparation for a lasting covenant with God is the vocation and work of Moses. His history shows that living by hope means totally entrusting oneself to God in all dimensions of human existence. As A. R. Carmona stresses: "Looking at Moses with hope leads the nation to understand that the realization of the promises belongs to God, who wanted to associate his work with man. His mission is continued by Joshua, who, after taking possession of the land of Kanaan, fulfils all the hopes of Israel. The prophet Isaiah has constantly maintained the nation's hope that Yahweh will not abandon them in difficult times. He prayed and asked for his help (cf. Is 37.14 nn). Ezekiel stresses that: "the hope of a nation that expects to return to the country of Israel cannot even be met by death and a grave, because Yahweh opens the graves, gives his spirit to those who are in them to come alive and leads them to the country" . God will make their people the only nation ruled by one king (cf. Ez 37:22).

## 2. Hope in the Gospel

The New Testament continues the theology of hope in the Old Testament. It is based on the eschatological act of salvation in Jesus Christ and waits for him to appear in parity. In Jesus all the promises of the Old Testament are to be fulfilled. According to G. Sauter, "hope is born from the fact that Jesus Christ is seen as the One who is to come as the Last. The eschatological dimension of hope is therefore shown here. Jesus clearly directs human hopes towards the promise of communion with God. In this way hope in the New Testament takes on a salutary character. It leads to the presentation of the work of Jesus - the Church.

Neither in the Synoptic Gospels nor in the Gospel of St. John does the word "hope" appear there. Only St. Matthew and St. Luke use the phrase "hope" only once in the spiritual sense. In turn, St. John uses this phrase once, but in a different context. It refers to the Jews to whom Jesus Christ addresses himself: "Moses, in whom you place your hope." (J 5,45). The Evangelists show that great Hope is rooted in small hopes. The idea of hope in the New Testament is mainly contained in the Gospels - the preaching of Jesus. This is evident when Christ speaks of the end times, of the coming of the eschatological Kingdom of God and of parity.

The New Testament calls for eschatological hope. This term is used in Mk 15:43; Lk 12:36 to signify the expectation of the Kingdom of the Lord. By it we mean the final victory over Satan. A man of hope accepts the words of Christ: "And behold, I am with you all days, until the end of the world". (Mt 28,20). The New Testament convinces us that a believer is "born to hope". to enter into a relationship with Christ. For Christians, the principle of hope is the person of Jesus and his message.

Jesus in the four Gospels, especially in the description of St. Luke is constantly on the move. He strengthens hope in his disciples. St John

shows the discourse between the realized hope and the hope that will be realized in the future. Words bear witness to this: "the hour is coming, yes it is". (J 4,23). The hope of fulfilling the promises of Christ results from faith in the resurrection.

The New Testament also presents the problem of false hope. Jesus points out the Jews' lack of faith and the weakening of hope. They only lay it down in Moses or Abraham. Only Jesus gives true hope because it destroys sin. Losing the hope to be freed from sin is not only a resignation, but an experience of the powerlessness from which the Son of God can free us (John 3:5). Man has the opportunity to choose hope or to reject it.

Human hope does not transcend the contradiction that freedom experiences. It is only "thanks to God's hope that life has flown out of death" . Anyone who believes in Jesus can hope for true eternal life. St John shows it as supernatural, not subject to rubbish. Believers in Jesus can hope that they will always be with God, for He has prepared a place for them (John 14:2). The condition is faith in Christ.

St John emphasizes the hope for the coming of Jesus in the final time. For this judgment is inevitable. It is a unique focus on human hope because people can choose Jesus or reject Him.

### **3. Hope in St Paul's Letters**

The Gospels focus on the different dimensions of the term hope. St. Paul, in turn, is considered to be the theologian of hope. In his writings he devotes much space to this issue. That is why the vocabulary and themes of the theologically understood hope fully appear in St. Paul: "Hope is an essential characteristic of Christian life and the main feature of Paul's theology. One of Christ's greatest persecutors, after his conversion, deeply

understands "the need for faith, hope and love to be properly incorporated into the structure of human existence".

The Acts of the Apostles clearly show the object of Christian hope, and that is the resurrection. St. Paul believes that hope and resurrection were the main reason for his detention in Jerusalem, Caesarea and Rome. St. Paul emphasizes in the Acts of the Apostles that the hope that was fulfilled in Christ through the resurrection has its source already in the Prophet David. This aspect is often highlighted in the Acts of the Apostles and in St Paul's Letters. One can quote from A. De Vogüé that: "The Acts of the Apostles define our expectation more precisely: the eternal life we wait for is neither an exemption from death nor an extension of death by the existence of a soul separated from the body. Just as Christ entered glory through death and resurrection, so will Christians.

In his letters, St Paul shows hope in a perspective of parity. The kingdom of God will be fully realised in the end. It will not be without difficulties. That is why the Apostle stresses that, apart from faith and love, there is also a need for hope - an attitude of readiness and expectation.

Christian hope encounters obstacles and is put to the test. It is about overcoming sin and death, which will be definitively defeated by Resistance 1 Cor 15:26), which will lead to the final victory of Jesus Christ. For 'God's action, however incomprehensible it may be to us, is not without hope, moreover, it is done precisely because he has a hope in perspectives' . This leads to the conclusion that a life without hope loses its meaning.

In the First and Second Letters to Timothy (cf. 1 Timothy 6:11 and 2 Timothy 3:10) and in the Letter to Titus (Timothy 2:2), hope is replaced



by the term perseverance. St Paul wonders whether Christ is the basis or the object of hope.

He goes on to show that hope, which is a kind of way out of the encounter with future, eternal goods (cf. 1 Theses 1:10; 2 Thes 1:4; Rom 5:2; 8:17; Phil 3:20), trust (cf. 1 Thes 2:19; 2 Cor 1:10) and patience in their expectation (cf. 1 Thes 1:3; Rom 5:4), is inseparable from faith and love. These three elements of expectation, trust and patience form the Pauline concept of hope. As the Letter to Thessalonians underlines, "those who do not believe that Jesus died and rose again have no hope (cf. 1 Theses 4:13-14)" . According to St Paul, the object of hope is Christ, who suffered, died and rose from the dead.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul stresses that people have never had any promise before. Yet they often live without God and without hope (cf. Eph 2:12). A similar thought is conveyed in his Letter to Thessalonians (cf. 1 Theses 4:13). Hope for believers is the resurrection. On the basis of these texts, Benedict XVI draws the conclusion that "according to Paul, hope is a feature of the Christian, and hopelessness is a feature of the atheist".

Through his teaching, St Paul wants to stimulate hope. According to him, belonging to Christ consists in having hope. Hope consists in the fact that death will not destroy the community with Jesus Christ and man, after passing through the gate of death, will continue to live with him forever. St Paul, above all, emphasises hope in the resurrection. She cannot fail (cf. Rom 5:5). When we speak of hope, Saint Paul has something in mind that elevates man to God. In the key of hope, he sees death as following Christ in the glory of God the Father, to whom Christ has already entered (cf. Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8) .

Hope in St. Paul's Letters is connected with the ghostly vision of Christ and the anticipation of His coming again. The day of pariah is an expression of the fullness of what hope is all about and therefore believers are to expect Christ towards it. What happens to us in life should be aimed at meeting Jesus in glory.

In his Letter to Titus, Saint Paul raises the question of the hope of eternal life, stating that his task is to develop that hope. It is Jesus who is the fullness of all that God has offered man. He has merited the gift of a certain hope, which is given by the Holy Spirit. In St. Paul's, there also appears an apocalyptic picture of pariahosis, presented as a procession of believers to meet God. In the Letter to the Romans a certain paradox is revealed: having hope against hope . Living without hope is particularly difficult in the face of suffering.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the issue of hope and its biblical sources is explained very precisely. The issue of hope is addressed in both the Old and New Testaments. The characteristic themes of these approaches are, first and foremost, the presentation of hope in terms of the promises God makes to the prophets of his choice in order to fulfil them. The history of the Chosen People shows people who have served God with great commitment, placing their hope in God. The new dimension of hope is shown by the person of Jesus Christ. Hope is based here on the eschatological act of salvation that took place in Jesus. It is He who calls for hope in Him, so that all His promises can be fulfilled. Another element is to draw attention to the kingdom of God, which is linked to the final coming of Jesus Christ. The hope contained in the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of Saint Paul is to await the coming of the

kingdom of God, which will be fulfilled in the final days. Hope is characterised here by an attitude of readiness and expectation for the second coming of Christ in parity.

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