

The Church In God's Eternal Plan

What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

- Three primary positions:
 - Covenantalism
 - Traditional or Classic Dispensationalism
 - Progressive Dispensationalism
 - Robert Saucy: *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*

Great Similarities

- Both contain the true people of God.
- Both OT Israel and the NT church are saved by the work of Christ.
- Both appropriate the salvation accomplished by Christ in the same way—by faith alone.
- Both benefited from the work of the Spirit.
- Both were assigned the same responsibility—to be a witness nation.
- Both are beneficiaries of the New Covenant.

Clear Distinctions between Israel & the Church

Distinct Identities

- OT: *Israel* refers to an ethnic people—the physical descendants of Abraham—and a nation
- NT
 - *Israel* occurs 66x in the NT.
 - All but one clearly refer to ethnic Israel, to Jewish people, the physical descendants of Abraham.

Distinct Identities

- NT
 - The early church:
 - In Acts 1:6ff, the apostles wanted to know if the kingdom would be restored to Israel, the nation composed primarily of Jews.
 - In Acts 2:22, at Pentecost, Peter addresses the Jewish people as "you men of Israel."
 - After the founding of the church, the church and Israel are referred to as separate, distinct entities.
 - Acts 3:12, 4:8, 10, 5:21, 31,35; 21:19-20
 - Rom. 9:3-4
 - 1 Cor. 10:32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.
 - Never once is the church clearly referred to as Israel, or the new Israel.

The Most Commonly Debated Passage

- **Gal. 6:16** And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.
 - 3 interpretations, based on the meaning of the word *and (ka)*:
 - 1) the church is the new Israel; "those who walk by this rule even the Israel of God"
 - 2) the church and Israel are completely distinct in every way; "those who walk by this rule (Gentiles) and [on the other hand] the Israel of God"
 - 3) the church now includes those who were once Israelites physically, and now have become the true spiritual children of Abraham; "those who walk by this rule, especially the true Israel of God."

Distinct Economies

- One key spiritual difference: the baptism with the Spirit
 - Prophesied in the OT (Is. 4:4; 11:4; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-3)
 - John the Baptist prophesied that the Messiah would accomplish it.
 - **Matt. 3:11-12** "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."
 - **John 1:29-34**
 - Acts 1:5 – not yet
 - **Act 1:5** John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
 - Acts 11:15-16 – already happened
 - **Acts 11:15-16** "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"
 - 1 Cor. 12:13 – now standard for anyone who is part of the body of Christ, or the church.
 - **1 Cor. 12:13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Distinct Economies

- Other Passages
 - **Matt. 21:33—22:10**
 - **Rom. 11**
 - **1 Th. 2:14-16**
 - **1 Pet. 2:9-10**

Distinct Promises

- The Church & Israel share many promises
 - a) The Abrahamic Covenant
 - **Luke 1:72-77**; **John 10:16**; **11:51-52**; **Rom. 15:27b**; **Gal. 3:7-9, 29** (cf. **Gen. 12:3**); **Eph. 3:6** – "fellow heirs"
 - b) The New Covenant
 - **Jer. 31:33-34** – "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
 - **Luke 22:20** – this is the New Covenant in my blood
 - **2 Cor. 3:6** – a minister of the New Covenant
 - **Heb. 12:22-24** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.

Distinct Promises

- 2) Israel maintains distinct promises.
 - a) A Future Restoration to the Land
 - **Gen. 17:7-8** "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."
 - Covenantalists:
 - Say that Israel forfeited these promises because of her unfaithfulness, and now the church receives these land promises.
 - Cite **Heb. 11:16**: they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.
 - Land is included in the New Covenant promises to Israel.
 - **Ezek. 36:28-38**

Distinct Promises

- 2) Israel maintains distinct promises.
 - a) A Future Restoration to the Land
 - b) A Leading Role in an Earthly Kingdom
 - **Jer. 3:17** "At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the LORD,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart."
 - **Is. 60:14-21**

Why Does this Matter?

- Because it mattered enough to God to reveal it to us.
 - 2 Tim. 3:16-17
- Because it guarantees God will fulfill his promises to us.
 - Rom. 11:1-2, 28-29