

The Church In God's Eternal Plan

I. When Did the Church Begin?

■ A. The Historical Debate

- 1) With Adam
- 2) With Abraham
- 3) With Christ
 - The call of the first disciples
 - The Confession of Peter in Matt. 16
 - The Last Supper, which established a New Covenant
 - The united belief of the Apostles in the Resurrection
- 4) With Pentecost
- 5) With Paul

I. When Did the Church Begin?

■ B. The Biblical Data

■ 1) Matt. 16:18

■ Rock on which the church is built:

- 1) Peter (17 early church fathers); all the apostles (8 early church fathers)
- 2) Christ (16 early church fathers)
- 3) Peter's confession (44 early church fathers)

■ Three conclusions:

- The church was still future when Christ spoke these words: "I will build"
- The church is distinct from but related to the Kingdom of God (16:19).
- The church is distinct from the nation of Israel.

I. When Did the Church Begin?

■ B. The Biblical Data

- 1) Matt. 16:18
- 2) Eph. 1:20-23
- 3) Eph. 2:14-16
- 4) Eph. 3:5-6
- 5) Eph. 4:7-12
- 6) Col. 1:24-27
- 7) 1 Cor. 12:13

II. What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

- A. Covenantalism
 - 1) Two Predominant Views
 - a) The entire nation of Israel = the OT church
 - b) The true believers in Israel = the OT church

II. What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

- 2) Their Biblical Defense
 - The name assembly or congregation is given to Israel in the OT; the *LXX* uses *ekklesia* (Josh. 8:35; Ezra 2:65; Joel 2:16).
 - The NT church is called the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22).
 - Jesus recognized the church as already existing (Matt. 18:17).
 - Stephen refers to Israel as “the *ekklesia* in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38).
 - Paul equates the OT and the church (Rom. 11:17-21; Eph. 2:11-16).

II. What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

- A. Covenantalism
- B. Traditional or Classic Dispensationalism
 - John Nelson Darby (Plymouth Brethren), C. I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Ryrie
 - Traditional Dispensationalism: God has two completely distinct purposes in human history: one for Israel and a second for the church.
 - Chafer: “the dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity.”

Classic Dispensationalism

- Two distinct ways of salvation:
 - *Scofield Reference Bible*, in its note on 1 John 3:7: “The righteous man under law became righteous by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous (Rom. 3.22; Rom. 10.3).”
 - Commenting on “forgive us our debts” *Scofield* states, “This is legal ground. Cf. Eph. 4.32, which is grace. Under law forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace we are forgiven for Christ’s sake, and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven.”

Classic Dispensationalism

- Two compartments in eternity
 - Some of them teach that in eternity Israel will occupy the new earth and the church will occupy the heavenly Jerusalem.
 - Others, like Ryrie, teach that both Israel and the church will share the heavenly Jerusalem in eternity.

II. What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

- A. Covenantalism
- B. Traditional or Classic Dispensationalism
- C. Progressive Dispensationalism
 - Robert Saucy: *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Great Similarities

- a) Both contain the true people of God.
- b) Both OT Israel and the NT church are saved by the work of Christ.
 - **Rom 1:1-2** Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.
- c) Both appropriate the salvation accomplished by Christ in the same way—by faith alone.
 - **Rom 3:21** But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Great Similarities

- d) Both benefited from the work of the Spirit.
 - Regeneration
 - Sanctification
 - Abiding Presence

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Great Similarities

- e) Both were assigned the same responsibility—to be a witness nation.
 - Israel:
 - **Ex. 19:5-6** 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Great Similarities

- e) Both were assigned the same responsibility—to be a witness nation.
 - The Church:
 - **1 Peter 2:5** you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
 - **Rev. 1:6** and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father-- to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
 - **Rev. 5:10** "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Great Similarities

■ f) Both are beneficiaries of the New Covenant.

■ Israel

- Jer. 31:31 "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.

■ The church

- **1 Cor. 11:25** In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood."
- **2 Cor. 3:6** who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant.
- **Heb. 8:6-8** Jesus is the mediator of a "better covenant... new covenant."

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

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- d) Both benefited from the work of the Spirit.
- e) Both were assigned the same responsibility—to be a witness nation.
- f) Both are beneficiaries of the New Covenant.

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

■ Distinct Identities

■ OT *Israel*

- An ethnic people—the physical descendants of Abraham.
- A nation.

■ NT

- *Israel* occurs 66x in the NT.
- All but one clearly refer to the physical descendants of Abraham.

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- Distinct Identities

- NT

- Jesus (only 2x)

- Matt. 16:18; 18:17ff

- 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.”

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- Distinct Identities

- NT

- The early church:

- 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* (*kai*):
 - 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 (church) 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.”

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- 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

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- Distinct Economies
- 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.

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

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

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- Distinct Promises
- 1. 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”

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

Distinct Promises

■ 1. The Church & Israel share many promises

■ 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.

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- 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.”

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- 2) Israel maintains distinct promises.
 - a) A Future Restoration to the Land
 - Covenantalists:
 - “Israel forfeited these promises because of her unfaithfulness, and now the church receives these land promises.
 - 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.
 - Contra: The land is included in the New Covenant promises to Israel!
 - Ezek. 36:28-38

C. Progressive Dispensationalism

2. Clear Distinctions

- 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

REVIEW

What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

■ A. 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.

II. What Is the Relationship Between Israel & the Church?

- B. The Clear Distinctions
 - Different in their Distinct Identities
 - Different in their Distinct Economies
 - Different in their Distinct Promises
 - a) A Future Restoration to the Land
 - b) A Leading Role in an Earthly Kingdom

III. What Is the Relationship Between the Church & the Kingdom?

- The Kingdom...
 - Dominates OT prophecy.
 - E.g., Dan. 2:36-44
 - Permeates Jesus' teaching.
 - E.g., Matt. 13:1ff
 - Summarizes the apostles' message.
 - Acts 8:12; 20:24
 - Climaxes in Revelation.
 - Rev. 1:9; 5:10; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4

A. The Kingdom Defined

- 1. It's history.
 - The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, housed the Ark of the Covenant which served as YHWH's throne from which He ruled as Israel's king.
 - Promised to David and his descendants
 - 2 Sam. 7:16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""
 - Promised of Christ (Luke 1:46-55, 67-79)
 - Announced by John the Baptist as imminent
 - Matt. 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - Announced by Jesus at the outset of his ministry
 - Matt. 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

A. The Kingdom Defined

- 2. It's meaning
 - The rule of God
 - Two distinct realities:
 - a) the universal sovereign rule of God
 - Ps. 103:19 - The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.
 - b) the messianic or mediatorial rule of God
 - God's rule through his Messiah, His Son the mediator.

The Kingdom in the OT

- Gen. 3:15 – a conquering Person would come
- Gen. 49:10 – "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples.
- 2 Sam. 7:16
- Ps. 2
- Ps. 110:1 – The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."
- Dan. 2:44; 7:13-18
- Is. 9:1-7
- Micah 5:1-4

The Kingdom of God vs. the Kingdom of Heaven

- Some classic or traditional dispensationalists make those two phrases refer to two totally different realities.
- The two expressions are used synonymously in the synoptics:
 - Matt. 19:23-24 vs. Mark 10:23-24
 - Matt. 4:17 vs. Mark 1:15
 - Matt. 13:11 vs. Mark 4:11
 - Matt. 13:31 vs. Mark 4:30-31
 - Matt. 13:33 vs. Luke 13:20-21
 - Matt. 18:3 vs. Mark 10:15
 - Matt. 19:14 vs. Mark 10:14
 - Matt. 8:11-12 vs. Luke 13:28-29
- Matthew: kingdom of heaven about 50x and kingdom of God 5x.
- The rest of NT: kingdom of God or similar expressions

The Kingdom of God & the Kingdom of Heaven

- One kingdom
- Two distinct aspects:
 - 1) A Present Aspect
 - 2) A Future Aspect

1) The Present Aspect

- The kingdom is connected to Christ and his coming.
 - Col. 1:13 -- He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.
 - Matt. 12:28 - "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
 - Luke 17:20-21 - Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."
 - John 18:36 - Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."
 - Matt. 19:16, 23-26

1) The Present Aspect

■ It was the ministry of the apostles:

- Acts 1:3 - To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a *period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- Acts 8:12 - But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.
- Acts 20:24-25 – "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

1) The Present Aspect

- It was the ministry of the apostles:

- Acts 28:23 - When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.
- Acts 28:31 - preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

1) The Present Aspect

- The present aspect of the kingdom is “the people over whose hearts Christ rules.”

2) The Future Aspect

- Matt. 19:27-30
- Matt. 20:21 - He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."
- Matt. 26:26-29*
- Luke 1:32-33 - He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
- Luke 19:11ff *

2) The Future Aspect

- 1 Cor. 6:9 - Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals (cf. Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5)
- 2 Th. 1:5 - *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.
- 2 Tim. 4:1, 18 - I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom... The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- Jam. 2:5 - Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

2) The Future Aspect

■ (a) The millennial kingdom

- Matt. 8:11-12 - "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43
- Matt. 25:31-34
- Rev. 20:1-4

2) The Future Aspect

■ (b) The eternal kingdom

- 2 Pet. 1:11 - the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.
- 1 Cor. 15:23-25 - But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

B. The Kingdom Distinguished

- The church is not the kingdom.
- The church and the kingdom are closely related.

Implications for Us

- 1) Remember that you belong to the church, Christ's body.
- 2) Remember that you are in Christ's kingdom!
- 3) Never confuse the kingdom of Christ today with any earthly kingdom (John 18:36).

Implications for Us

- 4) Make sure your obedience shows you have truly entered Christ's spiritual kingdom and will enter His future kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9).
- 5) Pray for His literal, physical kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10).