

Distinction between Israel and the Church

There is a distinction between Israel and the Church. Natural Israel and the Gentiles are contrasted in the New Testament in Acts 3:12; 4:8; 21:28; Romans 10:1. Israel is addressed as a nation after the establishment of the Church and the term “Jew” continues to be used as distinct from the Church (I Cor. 10:32) which proves that the Church has not replaced Israel.

A Jewish person will always remain part of Israel

When a Jewish person accepts Jesus as their Messiah, while they obviously become part of the Church, they are still part of the national Israel. Romans 9:6-8 addresses the fact that there are two Israels:

Israel the whole, composed of all Jews

Israel the elect, composed of all believing Jews, which is the true Israel of God

Both groups are Jews and both are called Israel. The Jews who are Messianic, who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah, are part of Israel the whole.

Israel as a nation

God chose Israel. Israel is the only nation God has elected (Isa. 43:7). National election does not mean that everyone in the nation will be personally saved. National election guarantees that God will accomplish His tasks through that nation. When the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah, God placed Israel on hold as a nation. He continues to deal with them individually regarding salvation. During the tribulation, Daniel’s 70th week, God will once again deal with them as a nation. Two thirds will die during the tribulation. At the end of the tribulation, the third remaining will repent and recognize Jesus as their Messiah (Hosea 5:15 – Hosea 6:3) at which time He will return to the earth physically and set up His Kingdom which He had promised to Israel.

The “mystery” in Ephesians

The existence of this present age, the Church age, which was to interrupt God’s established program with Israel, was a mystery (Matt. 13:11). That Israel was to be blinded so that the Gentiles might be brought into relation to God was a mystery (Rom. 11:25). The formation of the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles to form a body, was a mystery (Eph. 3:3-9; Col. 1:26-27; Eph. 1:9; Rom. 16:25).

It was no mystery that God was going to provide salvation for the Jews, nor that Gentiles would be blessed in salvation (Gen. 12:3). The fact that God was going to form Jews and Gentiles alike into one body was never revealed in the OT – and this forms the mystery of which Paul speaks to in Eph. 3:1-7. This whole mystery program was not revealed until after the rejection of Jesus by Israel. It was after the rejection of Matt. 12:23-24 that the Lord first speaks to a prophecy of the coming church in Matt. 16:18.

The Church is an interruption of God’s program for Israel, which was not brought into being until Israel’s rejection of the offer of the Kingdom.

The “Gospel of the Kingdom”

There is only one way of salvation – through the blood of the Messiah Jesus. Salvation is by grace alone. Jews and Gentiles must repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Messiah Who has shed His blood for forgiveness of sin. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4). Only the Lamb of God could take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

God has always required a heart attitude – a broken and a contrite heart - Psalm 51:16-17. While God chose Israel as a nation, they individually had to accept His provision by faith (Gen. 15:6).

The Jews at the time of Jesus were anticipating a literal fulfillment of the theocratic Kingdom promised by God.

At Jesus’ first coming, the Kingdom was announced and offered by Jesus – the same theocratic Kingdom as seen in the Old Testament. Jesus began His public ministry with the announcement: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). In sending out the twelve disciples, Jesus commissioned them to preach, saying, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 10:7). This is also told to the 70 who are commissioned in Luke 10:9, 11. The Kingdom at hand spoke to its being imminent.

The Kingdom was announced only to Israel (Matt. 10:5-7; Matt. 15:24).

The offer of the Kingdom was contingent upon the repentance of the nation (Hosea 5:15) as both John the Baptist and Jesus called upon the people to repent. Peter in Acts called upon the nation to repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19)

The preaching of the cross and the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom are not mutually exclusive. The Gospel of the Kingdom did not offer a way of salvation, but rather offered the King Himself – Jesus. The Gospel of the Kingdom offered the hope of the fulfillment of Israel’s eschatological promises which contained within them the hope of salvation. John the Baptizer exclaimed, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand,” (Matt. 3:2) and “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John declared the cross and the Kingdom.

Wrath in the tribulation period

The nature of the tribulation is divine wrath and divine judgment. Jesus bore our wrath in His body on the cross. Therefore, those who have accepted Him are not appointed to wrath (I Thess. 5:9).

Holy Spirit’s ministry during the tribulation

Salvation during the tribulation will be by the work of the Holy Spirit even though He is believed to be the restrainer of II Thess. 2:7. During the tribulation the Holy Spirit will not indwell believers. The Holy Spirit did not indwell OT saints, yet those who placed their faith in God’s provision – God accounted it unto them as righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

When Jesus addressed Nicodemus in John 3 (under the OT economy at that time), salvation was clearly by the operation of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-6).

In the tribulation the Holy Spirit, Who is omnipresent, will do the work of regeneration as He did during the OT economy.

If the modern church is Israel. . .

- Romans 9-11 makes no sense.
 - o Then there has been a stumbling and temporary falling ("casting away" in v. 15) away of the Church, according to Romans 11:11.
 - o Who are the "Gentiles" in Romans 11:11?
 - o Which branches of the Church were broken off (Romans 11:15)?
 - o So - blindness in part has occurred in the Church until the fullness of the Gentiles? Who are these "Gentiles"?
 - o Then Romans 11: 29 is not true. If God can change His mind about what He has promised to Israel - might He change His mind regarding what He has promised the Church?
- How then do you interpret I Cor. 10:32 wherein 3 distinct groups are mentioned, the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church?
- The land then belongs to the Church. Why aren't we then fighting for the land?
- Why does the Church only claim the blessings God promised to Israel and not the curses God promised Israel?
- Then God is finished with the Church since the Gentiles have been grafted into the covenant God made with Abraham which promised that salvation would be extended to the world (Genesis 12:3).
- Gentiles have no hope. Romans 15:8: Jesus has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God - He has fulfilled His covenant to Israel - to confirm the promises made to the fathers and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. When God's call to Israel ceases, His mercy to the Gentiles ceases.
- There are also no distinctions between slave or free, male or female (Galatians 3:28)!

This view reduces the glory of God. This view makes God unfaithful. And, one who espouses this view is forced to allegorize parts of the Bible. The question must then be asked - at what point to you stop allegorizing?