

THE ISRAEL OF GOD (VARIOUS)  
SYLVANIA SUNDAY NIGHT (3/17/2013)

One of the clearest differences between the various end-times views concerns the relationship between ethnic Israel and the Church.

How are we to understand this relationship theologically?

## DISPENSATIONAL VIEW (TWO PEOPLES)

“Whoever reads the Bible with any attention cannot fail to perceive that more than half of its contents relate to one nation: the Israelites. He perceives, too, that they have a distinct place in the dealings and counsels of God. Separated from the mass of mankind, they are taken into covenant with Jehovah, who gives them specific promises not given to any other nation...

Continuing his research, the student finds mention in Scripture of another distinct body, which is called the church. This body also has a peculiar relation to God and, like Israel, has received from Him specific promises. But similarity ends there, and the most striking contrast begins. Instead of being formed of the natural descendants of Abraham alone, it is a body in which the distinction of Jew and Gentile is lost. Instead of the relation being one of mere covenant, it is one of birth. Instead of obedience bringing the reward of earthly greatness and wealth, the church is taught to be content with food and raiment, and to expect persecution and hatred; it is perceived that just as distinctly as Israel stands connected with temporal and earthly things, so distinctly does the church stand connected with spiritual and heavenly things.” - C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*.

For the Dispensationalist, during the Millennium, Israel will reign on the earth as God’s people and enjoy the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8; 2 Sam. 7:8-17; Ps. 89). The Temple will be rebuilt. (e.g., Ezek. 40-48). All the promises of God left unfulfilled will be fulfilled.

However, the Church is a parenthesis in the plan of God, instituted because Israel rejected her King at the cross. The Church was born in Acts 2. But, the Church will be taken up to heaven during Christ’s secret return for His saints, “the rapture,” to receive her promises there. (Heb. 3:1; Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 1:4)

**Most importantly, it is not right to think of Old Testament believers and New Testament believers as together constituting one Church.**

***Progressive Dispensationalists*** (such as Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, Robert Saucy) do not see the Church as a parenthesis, but **a first step toward the establishment of the kingdom of God.**

The Church and Israel are one people, not two. However, Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel will be fulfilled in the Millennium *by ethnic Jews who call on Christ* and live in the land as a “model nation” among the nations. The Church will reign on the earth in glorified bodies during this time also.

## CLASSIC VIEW (ONE PEOPLE)

Classic view affirms that God has one plan for all believers of all time and that is to be united in Christ. (Acts 13:32; Romans 15:8-9; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 3:13-17, 29; Phil 3:3).

The Church is not a parenthesis, but, in Christ, a continuation. The Church is not a replacement for, but an expansion of, Israel. The Classic view points to how the Apostles handle the Old Testament.

James: James 1:1 – “to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” – indicates that James is viewing New Testament Christians as successors to and fulfillment of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Peter: 1 Peter 1:1 – “exiles of the Dispersion,” 1 Peter 2:4-10 – God bestows the blessings on the Church. The dwelling place for God is not the Jerusalem Temple, but the Church (v. 5). The priesthood offering sacrifices is not descended from Aaron, but Christians are the “royal priesthood” (vv. 4-5, 9). God’s chosen people are no longer said to be physically descended from Abraham, for Christians are the “chosen race” (v. 9). The blessed nation is no longer said to be national Israel, but God’s people are the “holy nation” (v. 9). National Israel is no longer said to be the people of God, but, Gentile and Jewish Christians are “God’s people” who have “received mercy” (v. 10).

Paul: Romans 2:28-29 – a real Jew is one inwardly, not outwardly. Though there is a literal sense in which the descendants of Abraham are called “Jews,” there is a deeper spiritual sense in which those whose heart has been cleansed by God are true Israel. Romans 4:11-12. Abraham is the “father of all who believe” without being circumcised. Of course, Romans 9:6-8, not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. Along with a stark statement by Paul in Ephesians 2:12-22.

The author of Hebrews: Hebrews 8 makes an extensive quote from Jeremiah 31:31-34 and applies it to the new covenant by which Christians are brought into the Church. (Hebrews 8:1-2, 5, 8-13) The New Covenant is an extension and unfolding of the Abrahamic covenant. The Church of Jesus Christ is the present-day expression of the one people of God whose root is in the faith of Abraham.

As to the land, the Classic view points to the fulfillment recognized by Scripture. (Joshua 21:43-45, 23:14-15; 2 Chron. 6:12-17). Paul points out that Abraham’s hope was not that his descendants would one day inherit a small strip of land in the Middle East. (Rom. 4:13) In Christ, God’s promise to David regarding an eternal descendant upon the throne is fulfilled. (e.g., Luke 1:32). Christ is Abraham’s seed and David’s Son (Matt. 1:1)

## THE FUTURE OF ETHNIC ISRAEL

Even those of a non-dispensational view may hold that there will be a future large-scale conversion of Jewish people. (Romans 11:12, 15, 23-26, 28-31). However, that conversion results in Jewish believers becoming part of the one true Church, i.e., they will be “grafted back into their own” tree. (Rom. 11:24) Others would take the view that this does not point to a large-scale conversion, but a normal process of conversion just like other nations.

## HISTORY OF THE LAND (587 BC – 1948 AD)

| PERIOD        | EMPIRE      | EVENTS   |
|---------------|-------------|--|
| 587 BC        | Babylonian  | Destruction of the First Temple  |
| 538-333 BC    | Persian     | Return of the exiled Jews from Babylon and construction of the Second Temple (520-515 BC)  |
| 333-63 BC     | Hellenistic | Conquest of the region by Alexander the Great (333 BC). The Greeks generally allowed the Jews to run their state. But, during the rule of Antiochus IV, the Temple was desecrated. This brought about the Maccabean Revolt, which established brief independent rule.  |
| 63 BC-313 AD  | Roman       | Roman army led by Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple in 70 AD. Jewish people were then exiled and dispersed, "the Diaspora." In 132 AD, a revolt was organized against Roman rule, but crushed by the Romans. The Romans subsequently decimated the Jewish community, renamed Jerusalem as Aelia Capitonlina and Judea as Palaestina to obliterate Jewish identification with the Land of Israel. |
| 313-636 AD    | Byzantine   |  |
| 636-1099 AD   | Arab        | Dome of the Rock was built on the grounds of the destroyed Jewish Temple.  |
| 1099-1291 AD  | Crusaders   | Crusaders, on appeal from Pope Urban II, conquered the Holy Land. Jewish community in Jerusalem later expanded by immigration of Jews from Europe.   |
| 1291 -1516 AD | Mamluk      |  |
| 1516-1918 AD  | Ottoman     | Walls of Old City of Jerusalem were rebuilt. Population of Jewish community in Jerusalem increased.  |
| 1917-1948 AD  | British     | Great Britain recognized the rights of Jewish people to establish a national home in Palestine. Split "Palestine Mandate" into Arab state, now Jordan, and Israel.   |