



Israel and The Church

Every believer is enjoined by 2 Timothy 2:15 to be “accurately handling the word of truth.” This passage commands the believer to accurately apply to their life the *epignosis* Bible doctrine they have learned and believed. In so doing, distinctions between certain categories of Bible doctrine become apparent. Two such large subjects involve Israel and the Church.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15, NASB)

Israel was Founded on Regeneration

The nation Israel was the only nation ever founded on regeneration. Abraham began life as a Gentile (then Abram), but through salvation became the father of the Jewish race. Abraham had “believed in the Lord” in Genesis 15:6 and so had his sons Isaac and Jacob. God often identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Certain promises were made to Abraham. This Abrahamic Covenant had three promised parts; land, seed (descendants) and blessing.

“Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6, NASB)

In Genesis 12:2, Abram is told by God, “I will make you a great nation.” The “great nation” refers to the Land that would later be designated. The “great name” refers to the descendants of Abraham, and “a blessing” indicates the spiritual production from faith in succeeding generations.

“And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;” (Genesis 12:2, NASB)

Later, this basic covenant was amplified by three more covenants, the Palestinian Covenant (land promises), the Davidic Covenant (seed promises) and the New Covenant (blessing promises). These unconditional covenants were given only to Israel. Rom. 9:4.

“who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,” (Romans 9:4, NASB)

The Palestinian Covenant stated that although Israel was given the title deed to the Land of Palestine forever (boundaries defined), occupation in that Land was conditioned on obedience, with scattering outside the Land for disobedience. Deuteronomy chapters 28 through 30 clearly teach this.

The Davidic Covenant made provision for a qualified Administrator, Jesus Christ, to rule over Israel in the land. He would be in the lineage of Abraham, be virgin born, and sit on the throne of David at a future time on earth in the Millennium. 2 Samuel 7:1-16 gives background and information on this covenant.

The New Covenant provided for Jesus Christ dying spiritually on the Cross for our sins and the subsequent blessing when the individual Jew accepted Christ as their personal Savior. Although these covenants pertain to Israel, we benefit from the New Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:14.

“in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:14, NASB)



The Church is Also Founded on Regeneration

Although there were many believers in the Old Testament, some well-known, some obscure, there was no Church in the Old Testament. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build My church.” Our Lord was referring to Himself as the “rock” which is used throughout Scripture in reference to Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Messiah. 1 Cor. 10:4; Deut. 32:4.

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18, NASB)

“and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4, NASB)

“The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:4, NASB)

Since the Church was still future when He made the statement, the Church Age would begin on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:4.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” (Acts 2:4, NASB)

That the Church Age began that day is proved very simply. Acts 1:5 speaks of the unique Baptism of the Holy Spirit where God the Holy Spirit places every Church Age believer into union with Jesus Christ as members of the Body of Christ, His Church. In Acts 1:5, this operation is yet future. But in Acts 11:15-16, Peter identified what happened on the day of Pentecost as the baptizing work of the Spirit, the placing of individual believers into the Body of Christ.

“for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:5, NASB)

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 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.'” (Acts 11:15-16, NASB)

The Church in Contrast with Israel

The vocabulary differs when referring to the Church in contrast with Israel. The terms “in Christ,” “Body of Christ” and “Church” never occur in the Old Testament. There is no concept of a universal or local body of believers in the unique way described in the Old Testament. Also there are certain synonyms for the Church found in the New Testament. For example, the last Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45, the “head of the Church” and the “Savior of the body” in Ephesians 5:23, and the “good shepherd” and the “sheep” in John 10:11 and John 10:14-15.

“So also it is written, 'The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Corinthians 15:45, NASB)

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.” (Ephesians 5:23, NASB)

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (John 10:11, NASB)

“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” (John 10:14-15, NASB)



The figure of the vine and the branches is used in John 15:4-5 in reference to the Church.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5, NASB)

In Ephesians 2:20, He is the Chief Cornerstone identified with the stones of the building. 1 Peter 2:5-7 refers to the high priesthood of Christ and the Church as "a holy priesthood."

"having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone," (Ephesians 2:20, NASB)

"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. For this is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," (1 Peter 2:5-7, NASB)

Ephesians 5:25-27 speaks of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as the bride.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." (Ephesians 5:25-27, NASB)

Israel is always identified with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. The Church is not. Israel is declared to be a "servant" in Isaiah 41:8, whereas the Church enjoys the status of friendship in John 15:15.

"But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend," (Isaiah 41:8, NASB)

"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15, NASB)

Israel is referred to as an unfaithful lover to illustrate their unfaithfulness and negative volition to the God of Israel and His mandates in Jeremiah 3:1 and Jeremiah 3:20. For the Church, Ephesians 5:22-33 uses an illustration of the leadership authority of the husband to his wife for the relationship of Jesus Christ to the bride of Christ.

"God says, If a husband divorces his wife And she goes from him And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me," declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 3:1, NASB)

"Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her lover, So you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 3:20, NASB)

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." (Ephesians 5:22-23, NASB)

"for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,



because we are members of His body.” (Ephesians 5:29-30, NASB)

To Israel, Christ is the King, Immanuel, and their Messiah. To the Church, Christ is the Savior, the Lord, the Bridegroom and the Head.

Unique Distinctions of The Church

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was not an Old Testament operation. Nor was the believer’s position (standing) in Christ a reality in the Age of Israel. 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 5:17.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 12:13, NASB)

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB)

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer did not occur before the Church Age. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was for special purposes and less than one per cent of believers were ever indwelt.

The universal priesthood of every believer was not a reality in the Age of Israel. The Canon of Scripture was never completed during the Age of Israel, as in the Church Age in 96 AD. Also the unique controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit, every believer being an ambassador representing Christ, and the doctrine of spiritual gifts are exclusively for the Church Age.

The Church has an unique identification of personnel in contrast with Israel. When one accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, they lose their identity of race in God’s sight among other things. A Jew becomes a member of the Body of Christ and shares in the heavenly blessings of the Church, not of His covenants, which mention many earthly benefits. Gal. 3:28.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28, NASB)

Gentiles being fellow heirs and of the same body of believers was never true in the Old Testament. Saved Israelites in the Old Testament keep their identity as they will also do in the Tribulation. Eph. 3:6.

“to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,” (Ephesians 3:6, NASB)

The Mystery Doctrines of The Church

The mystery doctrines of the Church were not revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. However, the purposes of Israel are very much revealed there. Eph. 3:5.

“which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;” (Ephesians 3:5, NASB)

The Old Testament Scriptures give much information on the death of Christ, His resurrection, and many other factors, but no information is given on His unique relationship with the Church. Saints in the Old Testament, yes, but no organism, the Church, as revealed in the New Testament. On the other hand, the purposes of Israel were made very clear. They are to keep their national identity, their blessings and cursing center around the land, their descendants, and their treatment of the truths of Christ in type. This leads to another distinction, their worship.



Worship in the Age of Israel and in the Church Age

Israel was authorized to worship in only one place, the Tabernacle, and later the temple in Jerusalem, whereas the Church is authorized to worship “wherever two or three have gathered together in My name.” Lev. 17:8-9; Matt. 18:20.

“Then you shall say to them, 'Any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man also shall be cut off from his people.’” (Leviticus 17:8-9, NASB)

“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20, NASB)

The “door of the tent of meeting” or tabernacle was authorized for worship for Israel, whereas for the Church, the simplest form of worship is a local church, “where two or three are gathered together in My name.” Israel’s worship involved ritual and externals such as the sacrificing of animals, the washing of garments, and the prohibition against the touching of the unclean. The worship in the Church emphasizes the inner man, the internals. Heb. 13:15.

“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15, NASB)

The Rules of Life

The Church contrasts greatly with Israel in regard to “rules of life.” The Mosaic Law had its glory. It spelled out God’s high and righteous standard and His intolerance of sin. It pointed out that man could never attain God’s perfectly righteous standard and that he was a sinner. It indicated through type or shadow that the Israelites were in need of a Savior, the Messiah who would come at a future time. It also laid down rules for diet, for stability in daily life, and conduct.

However, when Jesus Christ walked the earth, He fulfilled the Law by keeping every portion of it. He did this by being obedient to the Father through the sustaining ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now, in the Church Age we live under a higher law, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” When we walk in fellowship with the Lord, we fulfill the righteous demands of the Law. The emphasis now is to “walk by the Spirit.” Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:16.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” (Romans 8:2, NASB)

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16, NASB)

The Future of the Church and Israel

The Church, when completed, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This is the Rapture of the Church when the “dead in Christ” shall rise, and a living generation of believers will go to be with the Lord. This is a promise centering in the heavenlies. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Eph. 1:3.

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and



remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, NASB)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,” (Ephesians 1:3, NASB)

Israel, on the other hand, looks forward to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, seven years after the Rapture when the unconditional covenants to Israel will be fulfilled. The Land that Israel has owned since the days of Abraham will be enjoyed by them because they have received Jesus Christ as their Savior and can be obedient to Him. Christ will have regathered them in the Land and will live physically in their midst. He will reign as their king, the qualified administrator of their earthly kingdom.

Genesis 17:8 states that the Land promises to Israel are eternal. With a promise of this nature, there must be an indication of a new earth at a future time. In Revelation 21:1 we have that very truth. The New Earth will be the abode of Israel forever. Our abode will be in the New Heaven and the New Jerusalem the administrative center of eternity. Apparently the New Jerusalem will be suspended between the New Heaven and the New Earth.

“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.” (Genesis 17:8, NASB)

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.” (Revelation 21:1, NASB)

What a beautiful picture, the eternal home of the Church. Rev. 21:2, John 14:1-3.

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2, NASB)

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3, NASB)

In application, more damage has been done by Judaizing the Church than any other form of apostasy. Dr. Scofield said in his book, *The Word of Truth Rightly Divided*, page 13, “It may safely be said that the Judaizing of the Church has done more to hinder her progress, pervert her mission, and destroy her spirituality, than all other causes combined.” Consequently, a clear understanding of the Church and Israel will enable the believer to properly grasp the entire Scripture and enjoy the stability of a life sustained by proper biblical interpretation.